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Aspects of Kinship, Family and Gender in a Deindustrialising Australian Town

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This thesis is entirely my own work. Some of the material covered in chapters one, six and seven was included in two publications (Uhlmann 2000; and Uhlmann 2001).

[Signature]

Allon Joseph Uhlmann
To Jennifer:
One down; one to go.

The endless cycle of idea and action,
Endless invention, endless experiment,
Brings knowledge of motion, but not of stillness;
Knowledge of speech, but not of silence;
Knowledge of the words, and ignorance of the Word.

T.S. Eliot
(from Choruses from 'The Rock', part I)
Acknowledgments

This thesis was made possible by the generosity and patience of a large number of informants, respondents, and participants in the ethnographic component of this project. To protect their identity, these people will remain anonymous.

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Abstract

This thesis explores aspects of kinship, family and gender behaviour as a unified field of practice. It is based on fieldwork among working-class Australians, mostly White, and on published sociological and historical material. The theoretical apparatus that is deployed is grounded in Bourdieu's theory of practice and in cognitive science.

A close and systematic investigation reveals that the nuclear family remains the prototypical family, and is both conceptually and experientially dominant. While the nuclear family—conceptualised as a life trajectory—remains dominant, the distribution of individuals in the different stages of this trajectory has changed. Moreover, the actual trajectory is undergoing some change, too. A clearer distinction between a childbearing and a child-rearing phase is emerging, as is a distinction between social maturity and economic independence.

I describe the kinship system, the ideology of relatedness and the world view which inheres in the system. I focus on the gender order, and use both articulated and unarticulated practices to tease out the internalised structures of masculine domination. Following this I describe how practice in the field of kinship, family and gender interacts with practice in other fields to produce the broader social order, particularly the prevailing class structure and the political economy.
After systematically consolidating the theory of practice which informs the analysis in this thesis, I situate my work within the relevant anthropological literature, and in relation to the sociological analysis of the Australian family. In light of the work reported here, I offer a critique of the conceptualisation of practice in much of the social scientific study of the family.
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Chapter One

Introduction: The Project and the Field

This thesis deals with aspects of kinship, family and gender in a deindustrialising Australian town. In what follows, unless otherwise indicated, I use the term kinship to denote kinship, family and gender. This is partly in order to avoid cumbersome repetition, and partly because gender inflects many other fields of practice, and while I argue that these inflections are fundamentally rooted in the field of kinship and family practice (cf. Yanagisako & Collier 1987), this field does not exhaust the manifestations of gender in practice.

The word “Aspects”\(^1\) was included in the title to emphasise that this study does not exhaust all themes which might come under the rubric of kinship in anthropology. This is in part because the breadth of anthropology’s preoccupation with kinship would make it impossible to encapsulate the whole gamut in any single research project. More significantly, though, the pragmatics of the research have made some aspects of kinship practice more amenable to observation and analysis than others. These pragmatics include both my own interests and preoccupations, as well as my informants’.

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\(^1\) As a rule, I use two inverted commas to indicate a quote, and single inverted commas to indicate a quote within a quote, or a figurative or ironic use on my part.
Chapter One

This thesis relies on ethnographic fieldwork which took place from late 1994 until early 1996 among workers and their families in Newcastle, NSW, Australia. In addition, my research was informed by my firsthand familiarity with Australian society as an observant participant since 1989 (most of the time living in Canberra, ACT, the federal capital city whose social life is dominated by the Public Service and academic institutions).

The fieldwork unfolded in various phases, each lasting a few months. In the first stage I conducted interviews with union organisers and local politicians, as well as started approaching potential informants. In the next phase I conducted formal interviews with community organisers, with professionals and activists in areas of family, youth and gender, and with family and relationship counsellors. At the same time I was keeping close contact with several families—learning about their daily lives—while conducting a series of formal and informal interviews with other informants. In the following stage I continued my work with ethnographic informants, while starting to formulate preliminary observations. In the final phase of my fieldwork I focussed with my informants on discussing my preliminary observations, rather than trying to generate new observations. In this phase I also conducted focus groups.

In total I had rather close and continuous contact with around fifteen informants. I also administered four focus groups (two with men, two with women) whose participants numbered between five and six each, and conducted interviews (both formal and informal) with many more. Some of my informants came through contacts I established in the union movement, others through personal contacts, a few through community organisations (such as the local branch of the ALP, a Toastmasters club, religious community organisations, and adult technical and continuing education institutions) or through random coincidental meetings. A few neighbours in the ‘rough’ inner-city suburb of Islington where I lived also became informants. Some of the youth I interviewed were contacted through a few community organisations that deal with youth, such as a youth theatre group. The participants in the focus groups were recruited through the distribution of fliers at shopping centres, followed by phone interviews.

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2 NSW—New South Wales. Here and throughout this thesis I have attempted to define Australianisms and acronyms in the text. I also list them in Appendix A below.
3 ACT—Australian Capital Territory.
4 ALP—Australian Labor Party
This description might convey the impression of a well-organised ethnographic fieldwork, carried out in a premeditated and systematic manner. In reality, however, much of the fieldwork unfolded haphazardly rather than by intentional pre-planning. For example, I had originally intended to focus my study on workers in a particular industrial site, using that site as a bounded community of sorts. I chose one of BHP's steel-making plants, and proceeded to get the approval of the manager of the site. This approval was later revoked by BHP's head-office in Melbourne.\(^5\) By the time the negative response from Melbourne arrived I had already established contact with informants on the site. While I continued working with a few of them, I gave up on my original attempt to delineate a clearly bounded population. I subsequently relied, among others, on the snowball method to recruit further informants. Another dead end in my research was my attempt to use social network analysis, which I had originally hoped to integrate into the analysis.\(^6\) As it turned out, I had underestimated the amount of data which such an analysis would both generate and require. I concluded that given the great restrictions on my resources, I could not pursue this avenue of research.

As a result of the collapse of my strategy to create a bounded community, my increasing realisation of the limits on my resources, and the abundance of well-resourced statistical data on Australian families, I decided not to attempt survey work or other quantitative data collections, and to focus rather on in-depth, qualitative studies. As I proceeded to concentrate on qualitative work, I continued to experiment with different research methods. Towards the end of my fieldwork I conducted four focus groups. These proved surprisingly useful in the data they provided. I conducted two focus groups with men, and two with women.\(^7\)

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\(^5\) BHP was at the time the largest Australian-based multinational. The reason for denying me access was most likely a reluctance of top BHP management to have outsiders in the plant just as they were about to launch a massive restructuring and downsizing drive. The extent of the planned closures and the intentional escalation of industrial conflict were not known to either workers or local management at the time I began my fieldwork. Once the negative response arrived from BHP's corporate Headquarters, workers, especially staff members, were warned by management in no uncertain terms not to cooperate with me. I decided not to try to recruit any more employees from that workplace, and did not put any pressure on those who bowed to company pressure and decided not to continue.

\(^6\) Social network analysis has a long and respectable association with family studies (e.g. Bott 1957; for a recent glowing review see Milardo 2000, and the references cited there; on the methodology of network analysis see, inter alia, Klovdahl 1994; Scott 1991).

\(^7\) Focus groups are not a standard component of ethnographic fieldwork. Unfortunately, I do not have enough space here to discuss the methodology and its implications. There is a growing body of manuals dealing with the design, administration, and interpretation of focus groups. (The following proved particularly helpful in constructing my research: Krueger 1994; Morgan 1993; Stewart & Shandasani 1990; Whittaker 1995; Whittaker n.d.; additional advice from practitioners in the field was also very useful, especially advice given by Andrea Whittaker, currently of ANU.) While all informants contributed to this thesis voluntarily, those who participated in the focus groups were paid A$40 for their participation. Profession child care was also provided to participants, free of charge, during the sessions. (Initially I tried to recruit participants on a voluntary basis, but met with very little success. One common practice among some researchers with low budgets is to get a pre-existing group of people, such as a club committee, to participate as a group.
Chapter One

This shift in methodology towards an exclusive focus on qualitative research coincided with a general shift in my interests from providing a description of the patterns of practice, to trying to understand the logic of practice. This shift was influenced by the fact that the practice of my informants was rather disappointingly ‘typical’. An original hypothesis I had entertained before heading off to the field, to the effect that terminal monogamy was being replaced with serial monogamy, fell flat. My informants did not take lightly to divorce and separation, nor did they experience it as an integral part of the normal life experience. Divorce and separation were still very much marital breakdowns rather than stages of a novel life trajectory. ⁸

Further, confronted with the realities of my field I found it necessary to raise fundamental questions that ideally should have been answered by works in other disciplines. For example, while plenty statistical data exist on family-related regularities of practice, the current historical and sociological literature does not provide a useful account of what is changing and what is not in the practice of kinship and family. Moreover, the analysis of the logic of these patterns of practice is not very useful by anthropological standards. For instance, it is not clear from the literature if changes in practice reflect what, following David Schneider (e.g. Schneider & Smith 1973, chapter 8), one might call normative changes. Even less clear in the literature is the nature of what, again following Schneider, one might call the cultural level. In confronting the latter I also came up against one of the most frustrating and fruitful limitations of ethnographic data—the silences and lacunae in the data that result from the fact that what is taken-for-granted escapes explication. These silences are all the more interesting as they were echoed in much social research, and resonate with much of the experience of both producers and consumers of anthropology alike.

My shift in focus towards the logic of kinship practice led me to an in-depth engagement with the work of Pierre Bourdieu, and with cognitive sciences. This engagement began while in the field, but grew in intensity in the period following my return. In the process I had to discard a few crude

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in a focus group. I decided not to follow this route, as it is an essential aspect of the focus group methodology that participants should be strangers to one another. Furthermore, Newcastle is saturated with commercial research companies who run focus groups, and who pay their participants. This had created an expectation, which was not unreasonable, among potential participants that they should be remunerated for turning up at an allotted place at an allotted time for the interview. The payment did, in fact, ensure that participants turned up on time.)

⁸ My original hypothesis probably reflects much of the self image of the intellectual elite of Australia—academics, public servants and so forth—which dominates life in Canberra, where I had spent most of my time in Australia. I no longer think that the serial-monogamy hypothesis holds even for the intellectual elite. I am convinced it does not hold in working-class circles.
materialistic misconceptions, and reevaluate the very questions which had guided my research. Bourdieu’s theory of practice came to form the analytical backbone for the discussion below. However, in the course of bringing it to bear on my ethnographic data, I found it necessary to modify several aspects of his theory, and to integrate elements of cognitive sciences into the broad scheme of things. Consequently, this thesis attempts to contribute not only to the understanding of kinship practice, but also to the refinement of a theoretical approach to practice. In so doing, I also found it necessary to confront some theoretical commonplaces in the scholarship of the Australian family.

Put bluntly, then, this work is ethnographically driven, but not an ethnography in the narrowest sense of the word. Rather, it is a broader exploration of various theoretical issues relating to the kinship practices which were observed in the field. The ethnographic component of the research serves two primary functions in what follows. One is to provide a socially specific qualitative pool of data. The other is to raise the questions that motivate the reexamination and reevaluation of broader analyses of kinship and family. Thus, the reader might encounter fewer quotes than might be expected in an ethnography, and a greater preoccupation with ethnological questions, and broader theoretical and analytical issues. Furthermore, I also attempted to quote, as it were, what my informants did not say, as well as what they did say. This step is particularly significant in highlighting the culturally naturalised order of things—what following Bourdieu I analyse below as doxa. Finally, while I did not collect quantitative data myself, I did not shy away from incorporating the vast array of relevant information which has accumulated, and integrating it into the overall object of contemplation here.

Before delving into the analysis in the chapters that follow, I should situate my fieldwork, and my informants. I do so in the remainder of this chapter.

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9 In deciding on the organisation of this thesis I assumed a basic familiarity of the reader with Bourdieu’s general theoretical framework. I therefore only systematically present my appropriation of and modifications to Bourdieu’s theory of practice near the end of this thesis, in chapter eight, after demonstrating the need for these modifications and their use in earlier chapters. (Nevertheless, the interested reader may well read the whole of that chapter, or any parts thereof, out of order.)

10 I should perhaps qualify this observation—it is ethnography in ‘Western’ societies which tends to be nearly exclusively qualitative and replete with quotes, as the ethnographic fieldwork tends to instantiate quantitative analyses produced by practitioners of other social sciences. Ethnographies of societies which are not particularly interesting to sociologists, demographers and economists often exhibit a different balance of qualitative to quantitative research, as anthropologists conduct elementary surveys and gather other quantitative data.
THE CONTEXT OF THE FIELDWORK

Newcastle at the time of my fieldwork was in the throes of a major political-economic structural shift. From the early years of the twentieth century Newcastle’s economy had been based on heavy industry. However, major structural reforms that flowed from the increased globalisation of the economy resulted in the progressive exodus of heavy industries from Newcastle, beginning in the early 1980s, and culminating in the mid 1990s. For example, in the early 1980s BHP was the town’s main employer. In 1982–1983 BHP shed well over 10,000 employees, reducing its workforce to around 3,000. Beginning in 1995, BHP began progressively restructuring, eventually winding down virtually all operations in the city. More generally, by the time of my fieldwork heavy industry’s share of employment in Newcastle had dropped substantially. The largest employer in Newcastle in 1995 was the University of Newcastle (Boreham & Hall 1993; Metcalfe & Bern 1994; Metcalfe & Bern n.d.; Docherty 1983; Mills 1997; Sexton 1997; Hextall et al. 1997; Greg Heys (Lecturer in Social Work at the University of Newcastle and Lord Mayor 1995-1999), Personal Communication; Serge Zorino (TLC), Personal Communication; Mick Savin (AWU-FIME), Personal Communication; Bob Ritten, (CEPU) Personal Communication; Denis Nichols (AMEU), Personal Communication).  

This reflected national trends which saw the share of manufacturing drop, while tertiary service industries increased their proportion of the formal economy. Over that period Capital grew stronger in relation to both organised Labour and the State apparatus. This was reflected economically in the drop in the ratio of wages to profit, in the wages’ share of production, and in the wages’ share of the national income. The structural shift was accompanied by the rolling back of social spending by government, the pacification of labour, and a progressive deterioration of the labour experience. Unionisation rates dropped, unemployment increased, as did casual and part-time work. Full-time work entailed progressively longer hours of work and greater effort, in conjunction with a decline in job security. Good jobs became rarer, and degraded jobs proliferated. Apprenticeships which had previously been important in securing young people’s economic independence became very rare indeed. All these transformations affected the labour market unevenly. Consequently, the economic and social inequalities within the working class increased.

11 TLC—Trades and Labour Council; AWU-FIME—the AWU-FIME Amalgamated Union (currently called the Australian Workers’ Union); CEPU—Communications, Electrical and Plumbing Union; AMEU—Automotive, Metals and Engineering Union.
so that the best-off of the working class—invariably core employees in well-unionised industries—shrank in ratio, but were doing comparatively better than before. At the same time the people at the bottom of the socioeconomic hierarchy increased in numbers, and were worse off. Newcastle itself failed to develop any alternative economic bases to the rapidly fleeing heavy industries, and was exhibiting, in a magnified form, all the ailments of the national structural transformation (Gittins 1997; McGregor 1997; Connell & Irving 1992; Boreham & Hall 1993; Greg Heys (Lecturer in Social Work at the University of Newcastle and Lord Mayor 1995-1999), Personal Communication).

LOCATING MY INFORMANTS

My ethnographic informants came mostly from the shrinking traditional industrial working class. The vast majority could be classed as members of what Bourdieu (Bourdieu 1984) has dubbed the dominated class. Among my informants there was a higher representation of members of the dominant fraction of the dominated class, than of the dominated fraction of the dominated class. They included tradesmen, semi-professionals, foremen, mid-level clerical workers, trade unionists and their families. They were mostly from Northern and Western European extraction, or at least identified with the ‘non-ethnic’/‘true-blue’ mainstream society. While my informants’ age range varied, my main focus was on men and women in their twenties, thirties and forties.

The distinction between a dominant class and a dominated class derives from Bourdieu’s analysis of French society (Bourdieu 1984). Within the dominant class he distinguishes between dominated and dominant fractions. Adapting his relational scheme to my dominated-class informants, I distinguish between two fractions of the dominated class—the dominated and the dominant—according to the segment of the labour market to which they are attached.12

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12 What I call the dominant fraction of the dominated class is referred to as the aristocracy of labour in some formulations, is included in the middle class in other formulations, or is counted as working class in yet other formulations. So long as the class structure is taken as a heuristic device, the consequences of these different formulations are not great. They all tend to point to a structural divide between the groups I distinguish as dominant and dominated fractions, and which others might distinguish as middle and working class. The controversy becomes a bit more central when the definition of class becomes a stake in its own right. I will avoid this controversy in this thesis. (For a concise analysis of class theory see Edgell 1993; for a summary of different class approaches in Australia see Western 1993; and see McGregor 1997; and Connell & Irving 1992 for two powerful arguments for the centrality of class to the understanding of Australian society.)
The Australian labour market, like all modern capitalist labour markets, is segmented (Boreham & Hall 1993; cf. Sawyer 1989, chapter 3; Edwards 1979; Norris 1993). The distinction I am drawing between the dominant and dominated fractions of the dominated class relates to the distinction often drawn between the primary and the secondary labour markets in various studies, for example the distinction between the “secondary” labour market, and “subordinate primary” labour market in Richard Edwards’ formulation (Edwards 1979). The secondary labour market offers casual employment and dead-end jobs, is characterised by great worker mobility, low skill level, low investment by employers in employee training, poor working conditions, job insecurity, and ultimately, low wages. The labour-market participation patterns of those who sell their labour power on this market can be typified by great horizontal job mobility, normally between employers, without promotion, accompanied by high levels of unemployment. By contrast, the primary labour market, which is largely organised around large corporate employers’ internal labour markets, provides workers with better working conditions and greater job security. Positions that are filled with labour power bought on the primary labour market normally require greater skill levels than those that are filled on the secondary labour market. Employers invest more in training and maintaining such employees. The primary labour market, which normally takes the form of a manorial internal labour market (see Norris 1993, 98-113), contains the jobs of the old industrial working class, and the lower-level clerical, service and supervisory positions. Workers who sell their labour power on this labour market normally enjoy higher levels of unionisation, exercise greater control over their labour process, and ultimately, earn much higher wages. Compared with those from the secondary market, they are more likely to stay with their current employer, more likely to win promotions and more likely to advance up the skill and remuneration levels. Further, in transition between industries, workers tend to remain within their segment of the labour market. This was particularly visible during my fieldwork, which occurred at the peak of deindustrialisation in Newcastle. All those whom I encountered who had made the transition from blue-collar work to...
primary labour-market white-collar jobs had been employed in the primary segment in their original industry.

I class those who live in households whose income derives primarily from the secondary labour market as the dominated fraction of the dominated class, and those whose households rely primarily on the primary labour market as the dominant fraction of the dominated class.\textsuperscript{14} Members of the dominant fractions of the dominated class directly dominate members of the dominated fractions of their own class in various contexts. The following instances reflect the specificities of my fieldwork site. At the workplace, the secondary labour market jobs in large firms would usually come under the supervision of the firm’s core workforce, which was composed of those who were attached to the primary labour market. In other words, the members of the dominated fraction of the dominated class came under the supervision of the dominant-fraction members of the dominated class. Similarly, in formal grassroots organisations such as lay church groups, unions, ALP branches, single-issue organisations or parental mobilisation around schools—those in leadership positions were much more likely to be members of the dominant fractions of the dominated class, rather than their counterparts in the dominated fractions. Another form of domination occurred in the home-rental markets. Many members of the dominant fraction invested in real estate, usually in the cheap, impoverished, inner-city suburbs. These investments required a relatively modest initial capital investment, which was one reason they were popular. Also, being members of the working class, my informants were “good with their hands”, and often used their embodied cultural capital (their skills) to improve the real estate and increase its value. The loans taken to finance the acquisitions were paid off from the rent collected from tenants. The tenants on such properties were very likely to be members of the dominated fractions of the dominated class, who could not afford even the initial investment to gain a mortgage to buy a family home. Through this relationship between landlord and tenant too, then, members of the dominant fraction came to dominate members of the dominated fractions of the dominated class. Even in State agencies that manage and control the dominated class (e.g. police, Department of Social Security), those employees who directly interacted with the public normally belonged to the dominant fraction, while clients or those subjected to the work of these agencies were usually members of the dominated fraction. Finally, occasionally a member of the dominant fraction of the dominated

\textsuperscript{14} One reason the class structure of my informants is emphasised here is that later in this thesis I will argue that class structure and kinship practices are to a considerable extent mutually constitutive.
class might try to set up an independent small business. When such businesses became successful enough to require the recruitment of employees, the latter were most often members of the dominated fractions of the dominated class. All these instances of daily domination of the one fraction by the other represent a major structural fault line which cuts across the dominated class (cf. McGregor 1997, 55-56, 89-93, 199).

Further, the daily conflicts within the dominated class—either through direct domination as I described above, or merely through exclusory practices like the closed shop at unionised workplaces—continuously put the dominant fraction and its style in opposition with that of the dominated fraction and its style. (I will return to the intertwining of class structure and gender style in chapter seven.) Nevertheless, both fractions shared their basic position in the social structure, namely opposition to the dominant class, and were furthermore not separated in a clear-cut fashion. Mobility between the two fractions occurred frequently. During my fieldwork, at a time when heavy industries were fleeing from Newcastle, mostly offshore, the most common mobility was downwards through retrenchment and unemployment, from the dominant fraction to the dominated fraction. More importantly, most of my dominant-fraction informants had little which had distinguished them as adolescents from many others who ended up in the dominated fraction. To my informants, adolescence seems to be a limbo of sorts from which some emerge in the course of their early adulthood to the dominant fraction, and others into the dominated fraction. This is exemplified, among other things, in the fact that siblings may quite commonly find themselves in different class fractions. For example, in one set of siblings among my informants the two elder brothers were in secondary manual labour positions, the third brother was in a salaried middle-level supervisory position (in charge of training in a heavy-industry plant), and the youngest sister was an academic, specialising in education, and very much in the dominated fraction of the dominant class.

In fact, reproduction of class-fraction location down the generations was fraught with uncertainty. Youths were not usually guaranteed a place in the dominant fraction. The discipline of work and on-the-job training which are part of the disciplining process which makes the respectable working-

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15 The reason I qualify this statement with the word “many” is that it applies only to the working-class members of the dominant ethnic group—my informants of Western and Northern European origin, whether members of the dominated or dominant fraction—all of whom had a realistic chance of making it into the dominant fraction. Indigenous Australians did not enjoy the same likelihood of getting into the dominant fraction, nor did members of some other non-mainstream ethnic categories.
class male was often no more than a future prospect. If they should fail to market their labour power on the primary labour market, they were likely to miss out on training opportunities, and consequently fail to develop the cultural capital which is necessary for access to the primary labour market. Such a situation would almost certainly assure them a permanent place in the secondary labour market. This, and the fact that spatially and socially the two fractions were not separated very clearly, limited the divergence of styles in that class, including patterns of kinship and family.

I have noted above that my informants largely belonged to the dominant ethnic group. Ethnicity and Aboriginality are strongly connected with the division into classes and fractions. Marginal groups are more likely to be represented in the secondary labour market, and thereby in the dominated fraction of the dominated class. This may be attributed in part to poverty in cultural capital (e.g. formal qualifications, English literacy), poverty in social capital (social contacts are critical in recruitment to primary labour market jobs and assist in membership in trade unions), as well as economic capital (which can be converted into marketable cultural capital through further education and training) (cf. Boreham & Hall 1993; McGregor 1997, 265–266). Another marginal group which is overrepresented in the dominated fraction is that of single parents, especially single mothers (Winchester 1990; and see chapter two below). Yet another group which did not fare well under the transformation was youth who do not live with their parents—youth unemployment has dramatically increased, while working conditions have worsened along with a drop in youth wages and welfare support for the young (Boreham & Hall 1993; Parliament 1995).

The rest of this dissertation relies on my ethnographic work and on published research to explore Anglo-Celtic Australian kinship practice from various perspectives. First I set the stage for the analysis that follows by providing a brief historical narrative of the emergence of the current regularities of kinship practice. This is done in chapter two, which also attempts to establish, based on current statistical and historical data, what is in a state of flux in the field of kinship practice, and what is not. Chapter three turns to the nuclear family—the prototypical family—which is at the core of my informants’ kinship practice. I analyse its function as a realised category, and then, in chapter four, I conceptualise the status of alternative practices. Chapter five expands the purview of the discussion to include the underlying logic of this kinship system, focussing on the logic of relatedness, and the distinctions which this system of practice draws. A main focus of this expanded view is genderedness. Chapter six analyses how the gender order is constituted within the field of kinship practice. Chapter seven discusses how kinship practice is implicated in and
Chapter One

shapes practice in other fields of practice. I focus on the mutual constitution of class and gender practice, and on the structural development of the political economy. Chapter eight follows with a systematic consolidation of the theory of practice that underlies my analysis of kinship practice. In a nutshell, I am trying to reconstitute Bourdieu’s heuristic theory of practice by incorporating a conceptual apparatus from cognitive anthropology, and cognitive sciences (especially the study of categorisation and of metaphor). I attempt to use this reconstituted theory to incorporate the affective and the embodied domains into a systematic heuristic analytical framework. The discussion tackles a few intricate enigmas of practice in order to demonstrate the use and utility of my proposed revision of Bourdieu’s theory of practice. Finally, chapter nine recapitulates the main points of this thesis, and puts the work in its context—first in relation to the anthropology of kinship, and then in relation to the social analysis of Australian kinship practices. I conclude by offering a critique of current analytical practices in the social study of Australian families in light of the theoretical elaboration of practice in this thesis.
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The Australian Family Past and Present

The previous chapter set the stage for the analysis that follows by outlining the project and identifying the social context of the ethnographic component of the research. This chapter contextualises the field of practice which is analysed in the following chapters. The first part of this chapter sketches the recent evolution of the mainstream Australian family. This brief summary is intended as an outline of the kinship practice to be subsequently explained and analysed, and as a point of reference for further analysis. The narrative emphasises the influence of external forces—political, economic and social—on the development of Australia’s families, particularly the working-class family.¹

The second part of this chapter outlines the form of the family as it emerges from quantitative studies, and highlights the current regularities of kinship practice. In light of much debate over the crisis in the family, I identify that which has recently changed, and that which remains constant. I argue that while there have been some changes in family practices, there has been an even greater continuity in those practices over the two centuries of White Australian settlement. The chapters that follow seek to account for these broad societal patterns, while referring to my informants for a concrete sense of the logic of practice.
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PART I: A BRIEF OUTLINE OF THE HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF THE AUSTRALIAN FAMILY

The nuclear family has been the structurally prevalent family form in Northern and Western Europe for many centuries (Goody 2000; Goody 1983; Mcfarlane 1987). The internal workings of the family, though, and its function within the social order have shifted considerably, along with the evolution of European political economy. Up to the emergence of capitalism, the nuclear family was firmly embedded within broader social networks. With the emergence of capitalism, families were increasingly dislodged from earlier bonds of authority, kinship, and estate which tied the feudal family to broader social networks. Early capitalism was driven by small-scale commodity production for the rapidly expanding impersonal market. Production became concentrated within households. While there was a division of labour between the genders and between the generations in this early capitalist household, all activities were explicitly geared towards production (Goody 2000, chapter 9; Zaretsky 1986, chapters 1–2).

Household size did not change dramatically with early capitalism. In England for the most part of the past millennium, the typical household numbered five residents. While the underlying dispositions and normative conventions did not change much when Britons emigrated or were transported to the Antipodes, the special conditions of early settlement (e.g. inclusion of indentured workers in households) skewed the demographic picture. Before the 1860s, European households in Australia averaged over ten residents. Conditions changed gradually through the middle of the nineteenth century. The demographic and social structure of the colonies began normalising by the early 1860s, following the gold rush. Households were organised around nuclear families, but were not exclusively nuclear-family households. Affluent homes normally included servants and governesses. Bourgeois households might also include apprentices and journeymen. Established working-class households often supplemented their incomes by taking in lodgers—normally working-class men. In 1901 11.3% of Sydney households included at least one lodger. In addition, both bourgeois and working-class households might have included, usually on a temporary basis, relatives in need, such as women, children and elderly. On the other hand, among the working class in the cities, by the end of the nineteenth century, many men did not live with their families, but rather moved in pursuit of employment (Snooks 1994, 63–69; McDonald 1995, 10; Gilding 1991, 32–35; Zaretsky 1986, chapters 1, 2).

1 Chapter seven highlights the influence which flows from kinship practice onto other fields of practice.
In Australia, as in other similar settler societies, the disconnection of the nuclear family from the original community was definite and absolute. Those who emigrated from the British Isles left mostly as individuals or in nuclear-family groups, not as communities. For various reasons, early settlers did not recreate strong community networks in Australia. The agricultural technology and the political economy of farming made it impossible for most early settlers to support large family groups on the land. Furthermore, in the bush, families were isolated because of the great distances and the poorly developed transportation system (Aspin 1994, 31–34; Grimshaw 1983, 31–39). While there was a gender imbalance, especially in the bush, throughout the nineteenth century (Snooks 1994, 108), the vast majority of men were involved in nuclear families of their own at least part of their adult life (Grimshaw 1983, 36).

In pre-industrial colonial Australia the essence of family life was the material maintenance of the household. Women and children participated in production. Individual survival was bound with familial survival. Among the growing urban working class there were many families which were materially organised along similar lines, only their source of income was wages. In such families, children would join the workforce and support the family, while mothers would typically support the family income through productive activities such as taking in lodgers, laundry work or the performance of piecework for factories. The father of the family was the main breadwinner. Often family members might reside elsewhere in pursuit of work. The father and the sons might follow seasonal or distant work, and girls might move to affluent households to work as live-in servants. In such fragmented households it was the mother of the household—the practical hub of the family—who would permanently reside at home. The paucity of broader support networks or a developed civil society meant that in the early stages of colonisation the fate of patriarch-less families was grim. Then, as now, abandoned, orphaned, or otherwise homeless children were most vulnerable. This economic dependency on men also spelt disaster to those women and children who were unfortunate enough to depend on a violent male. Bourgeois families at the time were already moving away from production and focussing on consumption. Young bourgeois children, especially boys, were put through lengthening and deepening educational processes which were supposed to ensure their entry into the burgeoning professional ranks, and women were domesticated and circumscribed in their maternal role (Grimshaw 1983, 31–39; Burns & Goodnow 1985, chapter 1; Gilding 1991, chapters 2, 3, 4, 6).

2 In Australian English “the bush” denotes the countryside and the rural sector, in juxtaposition with cities and the urban sector.
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Compared with England, patriarchy—that is, the authority exercised by the head of the family over his dependants—was attenuated in Australia for various reasons. The demands of frontier society meant women were involved in production and the material support of the family long after Victorian bourgeois women were confined to hysterically wallow in unproductive domesticity. This need for women’s labour combined with the over-supply of men to put women in a good bargaining position in the marital markets. In addition, rich families with substantial patrimony who exercised control over their children by virtue of the estates they owned were proportionally far fewer in Australia than in England, making young adults, ipso facto, much more economically independent. Finally, the fragmentation of the household in pursuit of distant employment left women in full control of, and responsibility for, the household (Grimshaw 1983, 38).

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The rise of industrial capitalism in Australia in the early twentieth century (Connell & Irving 1992, chapters 4, 5) meant that production was progressively removed from the family household and socialised in factories. The division of labour between the genders came to take the form of the division between production, which was masculine and socialised, and the domestic domain, which was feminised and privatised. In formal workplaces the industrial-relations regime came to be premised on the specialisation of men in breadwinning, and women in homemaking. Even in areas where women had carved out an independent existence, they found themselves squeezed out by the new breed of entrepreneurs and the State. Throughout the nineteenth century, midwifery and prostitution were largely controlled by women. In fact, sex work was the highest paying employment for independently employed Australian women. Pimps and physicians, supported by police and politicians, took control over these two industries around the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with the consequent deterioration in working conditions and income of women in both sectors and an initial increase in maternal morbidity and mortality rates (Gilding 1991, 55, 83). The marginalisation of women’s economic activity continued well into the inter-war period.

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3 While medical intervention reduced infant mortality, maternal mortality rose well into the 1930s before medical practice was improved. The main reason for the increased maternal mortality rate was the spread of infections at hospitals. Otherwise, birthing in general was an unpleasant and risky experience by today’s standards. Among the poor, women who had suffered from rickets (often immigrants from the UK) had damaged pelvises. This made childbirth particularly complicated and painful. Effective analgesics were not widely available. Childbirth was also complicated by the tight lacing which was fashionable among women in the late nineteenth century (Reiger 1991, 14; Reiger 1985; Gilding 1991, chapters 5, 6).
Such informal activities as hospitality and backyard dairy farming, which women had normally controlled, were displaced by the economy of scale of commercial production (Gilding 1991, 58).

Work became increasingly commodified as labour markets developed. For the serialised industrial working class at least, the kind of work one did constituted progressively less of one’s identity. Rather, being a worker was what constituted one as working class. One’s identity and self were increasingly disconnected from one’s trade, and invested in the home and family. Thus, the domestic sphere became the sphere of privacy, as against the public sphere. Home was the site of one’s individuality, where one could be oneself, and not just a cog in the large industrial machine. Increasingly, the essence of the family shifted from production to the pursuit of happiness and satisfaction, meaningful personal relationships, and the exclusive site of love and eroticism. But while generally the home became the site of the personal, of individuality, of lifestyle and hobbies, the public domain became the idealised site of calculated utility maximisation, that is, the rationalist selfishness of Homo Oeconomicus (Goody 2000, chapters 9, 11; Zaretsky 1986, chapters 1, 2).  

This process of separating the household from production is not complete. Family owned, run, and operated businesses, for example, still retain much of the character of the families of early capitalism. Also, the continuous process of commodification of household activities attests to the fact that households still carry out major productive activities. In addition to the recent transfer of clothing production from working-class homes to the market (Game & Pringle 1983, 92), the current on-going proliferation of fast-food retailers reflects the current commodification of food production. Some recent figures suggest that while some tasks are being progressively ‘outsourced’ by households, others (e.g. laundering) are being ‘insourced’ as it were, mostly as a result of technological developments that enable these tasks to be done more easily in-house (Bittman et al. 1999).

Early conflicts between and within Labour and industrial Capital eventually led to the evolution of the family wage as the governing principle of industrial relations (Connell & Irving 1992, chapter 4; cf. Zaretsky 1986, 47 ff.). The family-wage system in Australia was crystallised in 1907 in a ruling handed down by Justice Higgins in the Harvester judgement. His ruling required that every

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4 While Zaretsky was not concerned with Australia, the dynamics he describes played out in Australia too. Thus his observations are echoed by Bittman and Pixley (Bittman & Pixley 1997, 63–64). The doxic qualitative opposition between family relations and market relations is unwittingly reiterated not only by mass media, but also by scholars who seem oblivious to the weight of evidence regarding the social and institutional constitution of the family as a private domain (e.g. Snooks 1994, 64; Becker 1991).
working man should earn wages which are sufficient to maintain a wife and three children in frugal comfort (Game & Pringle 1983, 86). The principle of the family wage formed the foundation of welfare capitalism in Australia throughout the century. It was a male wage-earner’s welfare system. It operated through the labour market, to which members of the working class gained access either directly, as workers, or indirectly, as dependent family members of workers. Direct welfare payments and other welfare programs which operate outside the labour market were not given much prominence compared with other OECD countries. Separation from the labour market became highly correlated with poverty and destitution among working-class Australians. The regimentation of the labour process made it harder to balance caring obligations with full participation in the labour market, thereby accentuating the feminisation of caring and the labour-market marginalisation of women (Boreham & Hall 1993; Bryson 1995; Weeks 1995; Grimshaw et al. 1994, 199 ff.).

Industrial capitalism saw the emergence of childhood as a qualitatively distinct life stage. Childhood was born of industrial capitalism’s need to develop a progressively skilled workforce, and out of the bourgeoisie’s increased reliance on education for social reproduction. Educational institutions proliferated and school attendance increased, initially in bourgeois circles, and then progressively in the proletariat. The expansion of education throughout society was accompanied by the exclusion of children from production. Laws were introduced to eliminate child labour and enforce compulsory full-time education. These changes reflected the increased mechanisation of production in the nineteenth century, and the declining demand for child labour. Children were removed from the formal labour market, and were less available to carry out housekeeping activities. This had profound effects on familial authority, and on the channels of social reproduction. Specifically, the dominant class, through the State, sought to exert more influence on the social reproduction of the working class, and to bring working-class children more effectively under the influence of the prevailing power structures. Children, for their part, were exposed to greater influences outside the family household, and were given greater opportunities to develop alternative allegiances, which were paradigmatically embodied in peer groups. Children became increasingly dependants, and an economic burden (Reiger 1991, 10 ff., 50–51; Reiger 1985, chapters 6–7; Gilding 1991, chapters 2, 5; Zaretsky 1986; Aspin 1994, 28–30).

The increasing economic burden which children posed to families, with their continuing marginalisation in the labour market, and the increasing cost of social reproduction, combined to provide a great incentive to reduce the number of children. It was also recognised that continuing
pregnancies had detrimental health effects on women. It seems that the affluent middle classes led the way in reducing the birth rates (Reiger 1991, 14; Reiger 1985; Gilding 1991, chapters 5, 6). 

The period of early industrial capitalism saw the increase in power of the newly emerging professional elites—State bureaucrats, and experts such as physicians—who came to exercise more influence over the lives of the working classes through the arms of the State. Their training, professional contacts (especially in Britain, the USA and Canada), and ethos transcended the borders of the nation state. In addition to the formal State apparatus, the savants and mandarins exercised their influence through the nominally independent, State-funded spheres of academia, NGOs, and professional organisations. The distinction between bureaucrats and experts is not clear-cut, because many functions are carried out both by State agencies and NGOs, and because there is a great deal of horizontal mobility between the different spheres. These elites formed an independent fraction in the dominant class motivated by a different ethos from the plutocrats who came to be organised around the control of industrial capital. While the plutocrats remained committed to the distinction between the private and public domains, the savants and mandarins espoused an ideology of efficiency and scientific management which was to be extended universally to the family and to reproduction. Under the influence of the latter, the State, which assumed the role of supporting the vitality of capitalism and the White race, took a great interest in the conditions of the working class (Reiger 1985; Gilding 1991, chapter 6; Grimshaw 1983, chapter 8 ff.; Connell & Irving 1992, chapter 5). At the time, degeneration was a main concern in European culture, and great fears regarding the deterioration of the race resonated throughout the British world, especially after the Boer War (Pick 1989, chapter 7). Public concern grew further when it became clear that birth rates had been declining since the 1860s. Alarmed savants and mandarins, concerned over the fate of the European stock, were driven by their responsibility to the race, as well as by considerations of social efficiency, to intervene in the management of families, especially working-class families (Grimshaw 1983, 39 ff.; Grimshaw et al. 1994, chapter 8; Reiger 1991, 13 ff.; Reiger 1985, chapter 5). Women now came to assume primary responsibility for social relations and the emotional well-

5 Related to the debates over reproduction are the debates over sex, especially contraception, which unfortunately cannot be adequately covered in this context. (On the changing attitudes among the elites towards contraception see Reiger 1985, chapters 5, 9; Reiger 1991, 13–29; Grimshaw 1983, 39 ff.; Gilding 1991, 73–79.)

6 Grave concerns over the reproductive under-achievement of White Australian women, and its consequence to the security of the race, continued to dog Savants and Mandarins well into the post-WWII era. The White Australia immigration policy was put in place in part to take out the reproductive slack that was left by Australia’s obdurate young and fecund (Grimshaw et al. 1994, chapter 11).
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being of the members of the nuclear family household. Unlike earlier times when the father initiated his sons into an occupation, the increased predominance of the wage economy, coupled with paternal absence from the home, left the mothers—in conjunction with State experts and educational institutions—in charge of socialising their children into work, managing the family fund, and keeping the family together (Gilding 1991, chapter 6; Reiger 1985; Zaretsky 1986, 131).

Public health campaigns touching upon proper child-rearing strategies—having bourgeois ideals in mind, the working-class family as an object, and the working-class mother as a target—came to be a permanent fixture of public life in Australia. One such example was the campaign launched at the turn of the century to encourage mothers to breastfeed their own children. Another was the concerted effort to restrict the access of women to the labour market in the first two decades of the twentieth century with the explicit intention of encouraging the healthy breeding of more members of the British stock. Such campaigns were quickly replicated by marketers of products whose health benefits were not always quite so clear, such as industrial substitutes for milk (Reiger 1991, 14–16; Gilding 1991, 59; Grimshaw et al. 1994, chapters 7–9).

Concerns about the enfeeblement of the British stock were alleviated with WWI which eliminated the excess male population in the bush. For the first time since the European invasion of the continent, the gender ratio was normalised. Thus, along with about 1% of its population (Clarke 1989, chapter 6), Australia lost the social basis of the unruly masculinist frontier style, although the highly masculine Australian self image, epitomised in mateship and the ANZAC digger, continues to thrive in popular mythology, and in the nationalist/sectarian ideology of Australia’s Anglo-Celtic mainstream (e.g. Kapferer 1996).

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The 1920s saw a great wave of suburbanisation as increasing numbers of working-class households sought to adopt the trappings of bourgeois domesticity, and joined others in the race to the suburbs. This was not altogether new, as a wave of suburbanisation had taken place in the 1880s, especially in Melbourne. A strong building industry existed in Australia since the 1860s, and home ownership rates were comparatively high in the colonies. Even large segments of the working class could become home owners. Ever since the 1880s the proportion of urban dwellers among the population increased steadily. By the end of the nineteenth century the majority of Australians lived in cities (Snooks 1994, 38). The wave of suburbanisation of the 1920s saw the increasing extension of the
nuclear-family household form both up and down the social ladder. Suburbanisation was accompanied by improvements in household technology which reduced the demand for servants, so that increasingly households which had previously relied on domestic employees came to rely on the labour of the wife/mother of the family. Thus progressively more married women from further up the social scale were becoming housewives. By the 1940s, live-in servants had all but disappeared from most upper-class households, along with the movement of working-class Australians to the suburbs. At the same time, many of the causes of working-class household fragmentation had disappeared: the mechanisation of labour in the bush reduced the demand for seasonal labour, and the reduced demand for domestic service, in addition to new opportunities for young women in education and in the labour market, meant that young women continued to live with their parents for longer periods of time. The piecemeal development of social welfare policy—predicated upon the nuclear family—further reduced the fragmentation rate of working-class households, and with it multi-family households, as fewer people required hospitality from relatives (Reiger 1991, 33 ff.; Reiger 1985, chapter 1; Gilding 1991, 40–47; Game & Pringle 1983, 83 ff.; Grimshaw 1983, 39 ff.).

This period saw some interesting shifts in the visibility of class conflict. On the one hand, the polarisation of the working class became more visible than ever before, as the better off fled to the new suburbs, while the worse off stayed put. On the other hand, class differences between women lost much of their visibility. More than ever before women were disconnected from the formal labour market, and with the disappearance of servants and domestics, class distinctions in the privatised, feminine sphere became less visible (Gilding 1991, 61–63).

A new emphasis on the quality of the household and family life spread with the progressive suburbanisation of the more affluent segments of the working class. This emphasis centred on the role of the mother of the family. Extended networks of support which once played an important role in childcare, as well as baby-farming, gave way to the mother as the major, and often sole, carer of infants and children, in conjunction with the State apparatus. It became progressively a domain in which women were deemed to have control and expertise. The home became the stronghold of women. The savants and mandarins—many of them bourgeois women—who concerned themselves with the functions of the households addressed their learned advice and

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7 Baby-farm—"A derogatory term for a place where the lodging and care of babies is undertaken for profit. Hence baby-farming vbl. n., the keeping of such a place; also ppl. a.; baby-farmed ppl. a.; baby-farmer." (Oxford English Dictionary, Second Edition, s.v. "baby-farm").
administrative guidance directly to mothers. Their influence was exercised through such institutions as domestic-science classes at school, suburban baby clinics, women’s magazines, and medical consultations. Women were not passive in the process, and responded quite favourably to such intervention (Reiger 1985; Reiger 1991, 19–21; Game & Pringle 1983, 85–87; Grimshaw 1983, 39–47; Gilding 1991, 56–63, chapters 5, 6; Grimshaw et al. 1994, chapters 8–9). The increased recourse to the State-sponsored clinic and medical services must have been partly due to the elimination of older, urban, networks and services such as midwives, as a result of the process of suburbanisation.

Inter-war suburbanisation followed the paths of public transportation routes which in those days enabled the commute necessary for people who lived more than a walk or a bike-ride away from work. The new suburbs formed endless rows of bungalows set in quarter-acre blocks, broken up by public transportation routes, shops and schools (Gilding 1991, 45). While household production for the market was being supplanted by market forces (e.g. commercial dairy farms replacing backyard dairy farming), the new suburban arrangements allowed for increased production for use by households, as there was more space for veggie patches and poultry. This production for use proved very important with the rapid collapse of the markets in the 1930s (Gilding 1991, 61).

Alongside suburbanisation, another process which began in the 1920s, but was felt more strongly in the decades following WWII, was the progressive dismantlement of the family-wage system. New South Wales led the way. Its *Industrial Arbitration (Declaration of Living Wage) Act* reduced the standard family for purposes of the living wage to a childless couple. The State was to subsidise the care of children, a role which began with the N.S.W. Family Endowment legislation. NSW* was followed by the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth Arbitration Court’s decision of 1931 identified the industry’s ability to pay as the main criterion for wage fixing. In the late 1940s the federal government adopted the N.S.W. Family Endowment legislation (Game & Pringle 1983, 86–87; Grimshaw 1983, 42). This was a major step in an ongoing process of consolidating industrial capitalism in Australia, by further socialising its cost while privatising its profits.

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8 NSW—New South Wales
The 1920s’ wave of suburbanisation was temporarily halted by the Great Depression and WWII. But suburbanisation was not held back for long. The 1950s were a period of great economic growth. Credit became more widely available than ever before, and the automobile was for the first time accessible to the majority of Australians. The conditions were ripe for most of the working class to be suburbanised. A post-war flight to suburbia quickly turned into a flood. Home ownership peaked, and the nuclear-family household achieved near universality throughout society. Craig McGregor aptly summed up the spirit of the time: “the middle class in Australia seems to have a persistent drawing power in terms of ethos, image and lifestyle. At its centre is the home, classically a bungalow with its own front garden and backyard in which the middle class lives, dreams, procreates, raises children and enacts a ritual of work/sleep/sex/love/kids/family/death which is at the very heart of the Australian dream” (McGregor 1997, 141–142; cf. Whitwell 1989).

The long spell, associated with the Great Depression, of declining marriage rates and rising ages at marriage, ended abruptly immediately after WWII. The result was a rapid increase in household formation, the virtual universalisation of the nuclear family, and the baby boom. A great many marriages in the post-war era were precipitated by an unexpected pregnancy. However, these changes were not permanent as age at marriage started climbing back in the 1960s. The arrival of the contraceptive pill and IUD in the 1960s has all but eliminated ‘shotgun’ marriages, and probably contributed to this increase of age at marriage, as well as to a greater proliferation of recreational sex both within and without marriage (Game & Pringle 1983, 80–85, 88–89; Gilding 1991, chapters 5, 8).

The forced savings from war-time rationing compounded the increase in disposable household income to fuel consumerism, as need exceeded mere access to food, health and shelter, and became progressively defined by preference and lifestyle. Consumerism was centred on the home and household, the site of personal individuality and the pursuit of status and happiness. Thus the pursuit of subjective experience—previously the domain of the leisure class—trickled down the socio-economic order (Game & Pringle 1983, 81, 87 ff.; Reiger 1991, 35 ff.; Zaretzky 1986, 49ff.; Gilding 1991, chapter 8).

Ironically, the increased accessibility of food, health and shelter did not result in a parallel decline in the dependency of workers on the labour market. Rather, new needs were created, and whole industries emerged to produce and amplify those needs (Whitwell 1989; cf. Galbraith 1969). The consumerist drive was maintained through a constant creation of a sense of lack, a need to acquire
something in order to achieve fulfilment, happiness and worth. This drive was highly sexualised in form, and related differently to the two genders. The types of needs and satisfaction it offered males assumed a social agent which was characterised by aggressiveness, activity, and a desire to control. The types of needs and satisfaction which it offered females assumed a social agent which was characterised by passivity, narcissism and receptiveness (Game & Pringle 1983, 94–95; Gilding 1991, 116–118). This is not to argue that consumerism produced this genderedness or this kind of social agency. But it definitely reflected and amplified a clearly gendered mode of sociality that is prevalent in Australian households.

Accompanying the increase in home ownership and the flight to suburbia was the quick and comprehensive drop in shared accommodation. The Australian home was now well and truly identified with a detached house. The new suburban working-class home was disconnected from earlier neighbourhood networks. Gone were the tradesmen and vendors who regularly visited homes to sell their goods. Shopping malls and department stores came to dominate the retail sector. Increasingly people found themselves commuting to work a considerable distance from where they lived. Leisure activities were domesticated too, with the proliferation of the gramophone, the radio, and eventually the television. Thus the household was further privatised, and much of the social basis of working-class mobilisation dissipated (Game & Pringle 1983, 88–89; Reiger 1991, 36–38, 54; Gilding 1991, 37–47, chapter 8).

The post-war economic growth was accompanied by some fateful structural shifts. Capital increasingly replaced labour in the production process. Especially heavy work and skilled labour were replaced by machinery, thus reducing the capitalists’ dependence on the comparatively expensive male labour power, and opening the way for the greater exploitation of cheaper, less-skilled female labour. Furthermore, the relative size of manufacturing in the total economy declined as the tertiary, service industry rapidly grew in importance (Snooks 1994, 104–112; Boreham & Hall 1993). These two processes—the development of technology and the increase in service industry—brought about a radical realignment in Australia’s political economy in the form of a rapid increase in active participation of married women in the labour market.⁹

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⁹ It must be stressed that, to some extent, the change was not as great as might at first seem from the figures. Married women’s labour-market participation and other market activities throughout the nineteenth century were probably underestimated by census takers and official figures. When women actively participated in family ventures, especially small business, this was not recorded. Women often worked from home, taking in lodgers, baby-farming, running backyard dairy farms, fortune telling and so forth, activities which tended to pass unnoticed by statisticians. Often married women worked on a casual basis in dominant-class households, an activity not often recorded either (Gilding 1991, 53–55, 85–86). Nonetheless, the transition which followed WWII in Australia was remarkable.
This shift was driven primarily by changes in the demand for labour. In the manufacturing industry demand increased for non-skilled, light labour. The tertiary and service industries offered jobs that suited women's dispositions. What made jobs feminine was a direct result of the gendered division of labour at home. Thus, jobs were classed as feminine if they involved primarily caring, personal-relations skills, or dealt with children. Feminine jobs tended to be part-time, attract low wages, and demand low skill level. This was possible because married women were normally second wage earners. The increase in demand for women's labour occurred at a time that household technology changes had enabled women to cut down on the time spent on household chores and increase their time spent in paid labour. Further, the insatiable needs which consumerism had produced made the acquisition of cash more desirable than before. These drives to participate in the labour market came hot on the heels of the dismantlement of the family-wage system and the associated barriers to full competition of married women on the labour market. All this resulted in the increase in women's participation in the labour market, as well as an increase in reliance on household technology. The increase in married women's labour-market participation rate in the 1960s and 1970s was accompanied by a decline in the participation rate of men. Nevertheless, the gendered division of labour did not change much, and men continue to earn higher wages than women, and work longer hours (Game & Pringle 1983, 89 ff.; Snooks 1994, chapter 5; Boreham & Hall 1993; Weeks 1995; Grimshaw 1983, 42–43).

As women participated in increasing numbers in the workforce, the status and value of housewifery declined. The new household technology reduced the level of skills required from housewives. Financial income, and its accompanying power and prestige, increased the value of the employed woman, at the expense of the full-time housewife. Double incomes increased the earnings of households, even though the relative value of wages declined, leaving single-income households comparatively worse off than before. Thus, while most households were better off than before, an

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10 Snooks makes this point in arguing against 'supply side' theories which attribute the increase in women's participation rate in the labour market to a change in women's attitudes, or to feminist action to remove discrimination against women (Snooks 1994, chapters 5, 6). While his argument, namely that the proximate cause of the greater participation rate was the change in the economy, seems to be supported by his evidence, his regression analysis—which shows that women's participation rate can be virtually completely accounted for by the change in capital to labour ratios and capital to labour prices—does not rule out a decisive role for feminist action in creating the conditions which enabled women to join the workforce in the first place. Furthermore, it is not at all necessary that the transformation in the market sector should be viewed as the cause, and the participation rate of women as the effect. It is precisely the availability of women as cheap unskilled labour (cf. Weeks 1995) which has rewarded the particular direction that technological development took, by providing the incentive for the technological transformations that took place.

11 The main parameters of the feminine-ness of jobs seems to have been established by bourgeois women long before the shift in the labour market. Hospitality and philanthropy, alongside the maintenance of personal relations, were clear feminine concerns in nineteenth-century bourgeois Australia (Gilding 1991, 49–55; Boreham & Hall 1993).
hour of work in the labour market was producing less real income than before, and the total supply of working hours per household to the labour market increased. In fact, Australia’s relatively high level of home ownership was only sustained by dual income earning (Game & Pringle 1983, 86; Gilding 1991, chapter 8).

There was a strong class logic to the degradation of housewifery. Up until WWII, a full-time housewife and a home in suburbia distinguished those better-off families from the working-class majority. The 1950s saw the popularisation of the suburban lifestyle, among working-class Australians, but now fractions of the dominant class were shifting away from the single-income household. The kinds of employment opportunities which were progressively opening up to women were not themselves equally distributed across society, as the well-paid, personally-rewarding, high-status occupations were mostly the preserve of the dominant class. And so, if in the early century it was the destitute women who were thrust into the workforce, in the post-war era it was the affluent who spearheaded the charge of married women into the labour market (Wolcott et al. 1997, 103; Grimshaw 1983, 42–43; Game & Pringle 1983, 92; cf. McGregor 1997, 174; Reiger 1991, 41–43; Gilding 1991, 124; Rapp 1992).

Along with the spread of consumerism and rapid technological development, came an increase in the cost of social reproduction, driven by a rapidly increasing inflation rate in cultural capital (know-how which is often objectified in education qualifications and professional certification). This inflation was expressed, for example, in higher retention rates of educational institutions, and higher levels of qualifications which were required to enter into prized careers (Gilding 1991, 116 ff.; cf. Bourdieu 1986; Bourdieu & Boltanski 1981).

Just as the rise of industry cut men off from women, and reconstituted masculine domination, so did the rise of mass education and mass media create the contemporary form of youth and adolescence. The concentration of youth in and around educational institutions, youth’s marginalisation in the labour market, and the development of youth-specific mass media, supported the emerging constitution of youth as an imagined community which is united by youth culture. The lag of the family behind mass culture, and the intense separation of experience between the parents at home and the youth in the educational institutions have contributed to the emergence of the generation gap as a permanent feature in Australian society (Grimshaw 1983, 44; Zaretsky 1986, 53–56).
Youth culture clearly emerged in the 1950s. This was strongly linked to the booming marketing industry. The extensive use of sex in marketing in those pre-pill days, when contraception was not very efficient, was probably a major cause of the drop in age of marriage and the rise in marriage rates (Game & Pringle 1983, 92–93; Gilding 1991, 116). This, and the increasing participation of women in the economic and public spheres, intensifies the generation gap which exploded in the late 1960s in new cultural and political movements. The family came increasingly under scrutiny by youth, by revisionist academics and professionals, and by intellectual tone setters. A sense of crisis started emerging throughout the 1970s, and with it the view that the ‘traditional family’—in effect the stereotypical suburban family of the 1950s—was under attack, in crisis or collapsing (Game & Pringle 1983, 80; Grimshaw et al. 1994, chapter 13).

One of the consequences of the radicalism of the 1960s and the 1970s was the passage of the Family Law Act (1975), and the establishment of the Family Courts system. Divorce was made easier, judges were given greater flexibility in resolving custody disputes (with the child’s well-being being of primary importance), and homemakers enjoyed greater protection in property settlements. De facto unions also came to be regulated along similar lines (Goodman 1983).

The dramatic economic growth of the 1950s and 1960s slowed down in the 1970s and beyond. While the process of globalisation sees more manufacturing jobs move off-shore, the rate at which new manufacturing jobs are created has slowed down. This has resulted in an increased deterioration in the conditions of labour, as the relative ratio of primary labour-market jobs has dropped. Unemployment rose and remained high well into the 1990s. This process was accompanied by the pacification of labour. The unions were tamed, strike action and industrial disputes dropped along with the real wages of most workers, while the hours workers spent at work increased. The ratio of wages to profit has continuously dropped, as inequality between and among classes has increased (Boreham & Hall 1993; Gittins 1997).

The effects of these changes were not felt uniformly across society. Youth unemployment rose sharply. Largely as a result of this, the rate of inflation in educational qualifications accelerated. Teenagers were no longer able to achieve economic independence, and the prospects of people in their twenties achieving economic independence were grim compared with the 1960s. Large

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[12] The ‘traditional family’ is mistakenly used in public discourse to conjure up the image of the stable arrangement that has always been around until the last generation. This is a mistaken impression, as the practices which are denoted by
numbers clogged up the educational institutions in the hope of getting ahead and finding a place in the job market. This was probably the major cause of the generational conflict between youth and adults in working-class Australia. (Bourgeois youths have been accustomed to prolonged periods of education before economic independence.) Welfare expenditure was continuously reduced. External support for family households was cut as the costs of social reproduction were progressively transferred from Government and Business to households. Tertiary education fees were re-introduced, as were below-award youth wages. Entitlements such as AUSTUDY were reduced, eligibility for sole-parent pensions was terminated when the youngest child reached sixteen years of age, and the family allowance was removed for dependent children aged eighteen and over (McDonald 1995, 28–29; Gilding 1991, 121–122). Inequality grew within the working class, and the fate of those who depend on welfare, like many single-parent families, worsened.

Feminism reemerged as a strong public voice in the 1970s, although the effect it had on actual family practices is not clear. As the balance of power in the elite shifted away from the mandarins back to the plutocrats, and as the welfare state was progressively rolled back during the 1980s, many of the feminist-inspired reforms have dissipated. One area in which feminism seems to have left an indelible mark was in reversing some of the control asserted by the State and the Market over reproduction. The earlier decline in breastfeeding—which resulted from the promotion of various infant formulae—began to be reversed. Hospital and medical practices were liberalised, and finally, alternative childbirth models were accepted by State authorities, leading to something of a resurrection of midwifery (Reiger 1991, 23–24). The influence of institutionalised religion was also waning at the time. This was reflected in the increase in civil marriages and de facto arrangements (see page 38).

The explosion of generational politics has complicated the process of the collapse of personal life and family into one another. Since the late 1960s, it seems, individuality has been progressively juxtaposed to the family, rather than being identified with it. Individualism was now extended to women and children, as the family came to be seen as a site of domination and conflict. The

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13 Award wage: "a wage arrived at by mutual consent or arbitration and fixed by an industrial court, payable by law to all employees in a particular occupation" (Macquarie Dictionary of Australian English, Second Revision, s.v. "award wage").

14 AUSTUDY was a federal program which provided financial support to students.

15 When classical English liberalism valorised the individual, English liberals were imagining the male head of a family as that individual, and remained mute about the status of the majority of humans (Zaretsky 1986, chapter 3). This left some serious cracks in the ideological edifice of modern capitalism. These cracks became visible especially after the 1960s, and
constant drive towards consumption aggravated the conflicts between breadwinners and dependents within the family. The greater participation of women in the workforce, and the positive work experience of women in the intellectual and professional elites made housewifery look very oppressed and miserable. Consequently family is seen, especially among the dominated fractions of the dominant class, as a potential hindrance to individuality, rather than its site. The goal of marriage has come to be couched in terms of partnership, personal reward and personal growth and fulfilment. Failure to meet with such expectations has become legitimate and reasonable grounds for separation and divorce (Gilding 1991, chapter 8; Bittman & Pixley 1997, 64-70).

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Currently, at the end of the twentieth century, there is a general sense that the family is in crisis, that the institution is facing a major challenge like never before. There is a sense that the nuclear-family household—the essential Australian institution—may no longer be as viable or as attractive as it once was. This sense of crisis may be seen as the result of various processes.

One is the effect of feminist challenges to much of the rationale which underlay public policy towards the family. Another is the economic squeeze on much of the working class as the cost of social reproduction rises. Yet another is a shallow historical memory which pervades public discourse, and which identifies the family of the 1950s as "the family" or the 'traditional' family. Consequently, any changes to the patterns of the 1950s may be seen as a retreat from the family. The historical record, however, shows that in many ways the family in the 1950s was unique, and many of the features which appear as a retreat from the family, are in fact a return to older, pre-1950s patterns.

The longing for the 'good old days' might also reflect the profound sense of loss and anxieties of some of Australia's 'true-blue' who feel threatened by globalisation, secularism, politicisation of the personal and the rising profiles of non-Whites in the country.

To this sense of crisis in the family must be added the move away from structuralism in social sciences and the re-discovery of the subject, along with an attempt to adopt a more genuinely multi-cultural style among large circles of Australia's intelligentsia. Together these factors predispose

most acutely in bourgeois liberal circles. Women and children were set to become no lesser individuals than men, and family came to be seen as a potential hindrance to individuality.
social observers to discover historical transformations, oppositional styles, subversion, individual agency, resistance and so forth, at the expense of constancy. Further, the penchant some conservative elements in society have for familism must be at least partly responsible for the zeal with which iconoclasts target the family, exposing its darker sides (e.g. violence) and its mythical nature.

PART II: THE STATE OF THE NUCLEAR-FAMILY HOUSEHOLD

In her piece published in the mainstream daily *The Australian*, historian Ann Curthoys captured the focus on change and the sense of increased fluidity in the family among Australia’s social observers:

> At the end of this millennium, the family is being remade, yet again. Relationships within it are fluid and changing, and there is no single dominant pattern. Two-income families, single-income families, and one-parent households are all common. Unmarried women have children on their own, and homosexual couples, many with children, are increasingly evident. Too often the old classifications simply don’t work, as many families operate in a borderland between single-parent and two-parent households, as separated parents in some way share the care of children, and blended families are formed and reformed. Growing numbers of adults of all ages live on their own, yet adult children leave home at a later age than before (Curthoys 1999).

The perception that the nuclear-family household is in decline normally revolves around a number of features. One is the increase in alternative household structures, mostly group households and homosexual families. Another is the statistical drop in official statistics of nuclear-family households (as defined by ABS\(^{16}\)) to below 50% of households. Yet another has to do with the increased divorce and separation rates, and the decline in fertility rates. Finally, some take the increase in de facto couples to suggest, too, that the nuclear-family household is in decline (cf. Gilding 1991, 128–130; Curthoys 1999; Bittman 1993).

However, a close examination of the form of Australian families and households fails to support the sense of an overwhelming shift, or a major collapse of the nuclear-family household in Australia.

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\(^{16}\) Australian Bureau of Statistics.
The resilience of the nuclear-family household is not surprising, given its historical depth, yet astonishing, given the constant and recently accelerating shifts in the social and ideological contexts in which it is embedded.

**THE NUCLEAR-FAMILY HOUSEHOLD**

In this section I outline the current regularities of practice in the area of family and household, and assess the recent change in these areas. I argue that alternative forms to the nuclear-family household remain rare and marginal. Moreover, most relevant changes do not reflect a fundamental shift in the lived experience of nuclear-family households.

Below I take nuclear families to be family units in which membership is that of two adults, male and female, who are in a *de jure* or *de facto* marriage, and their dependent offspring (whether by procreation or by adoption). 17

Further, rather than focus on the nuclear-family household as a static household with a full nuclear family, I consider the nuclear-family household as a trajectory with a developmental cycle. The developmental cycle of the nuclear-family household can be described by identifying the life cycles of individuals as follows: leaving the family-household of origin; achieving independence; partnering; expansion (childbearing and child-rearing); contraction; retirement; singlehood (cf. Aspin 1994, 20–24). I therefore consider all those who are on this developmental cycle to be in a nuclear-family household. 18 This will make it easier to assess whether some statistical changes (e.g. the increase in sole-person households) are due to a shift in normative family patterns (e.g. people

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17 This would include blended families which are neither new, nor alternative family types. In fact, blended families are nuclear families in the sense that they are composed of two adults, male and female, and their dependent children. Furthermore, the seeming unprecedented rate of blended-family formation is more the result of the unusually low rate of blended families in the decades following WWII than of the peculiarities of the 1970s and beyond. In the nineteenth century, for example, a shorter life expectancy and high desertion and separation rates resulted in many single-parent and blended families.

18 Some object to the concept of developmental cycle because it implies an inevitability—a structural determination which ignores the creativity of habitus. Rather than a developmental cycle, objectors prefer concepts like the life course or the career of the household (cf. Aspin 1994, 20–24). The difficulty, to my mind, is artificial. The notion of a household career is probably a better conceptualisation at the second, experiential, epistemological break (Bourdieu 1977). To the members of households there is little which is structurally inevitable—they make their decisions, take their chances, and bear the consequences (cf. Bourdieu 1990c, especially 98 ff.). But to lose sight of the regularity of practice because of a focus on the singularity of particular instances would be misleading. The developmental cycle is a concept which is essential for the first, observational, epistemological break (Bourdieu 1977), the one which involves bracketing behaviour off from the perception of social agents in order to chart the regularities of practice. It is also an integral aspect of the realised category of the family, a topic I will discuss in chapter three.
preferring not to marry, and live alone) or merely demographic trends (e.g. the increase in life expectancy and, consequently, the proportion of widows and widowers in society).  

The nuclear-family trajectory is not in itself historically fixed. The late stages of contraction and retirement are the most recent to emerge. They first became common in the late nineteenth century, when the increase in life expectancy meant a progressively larger proportion of the population lived past their offspring’s period of economic dependency and into retirement (Burns 1983, 50).

Most of the recent statistical changes in the family do not reflect a fundamental transformation in the nuclear-family household trajectory, but rather changes in the distribution of social agents among the different stages. The statistical drop in the rate of the nuclear-family household arrangement is mostly due to the conceptualisation of the nuclear-family household as a household which contains a full nuclear family. In fact, if we consider all households which are within the developmental cycle I have incorporated into my definition of the nuclear-family household, it will become clear that an overwhelming majority of households are within this developmental cycle, and that the overwhelming majority of householders are involved in such households. ABS figures for 1992 have 85% of the population living in family households. Of these 98.5% were either couple families or single-parent families (85.6% and 12.9% respectively) and only 1.2% were “other families” (mostly multi-family households). The remaining 15% of the population were divided between those living in institutions (3.7%); those living alone (8%) and those living in group households (3.3%) (de Vaus 1997c, 3-5). Those living alone or in groups are not themselves, usually, outside the normal developmental cycle of domestic units. The majority of those living alone or in groups are either before marriage, after marriage or between marriages. The number of

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19 I should point out that others (e.g. Rowland 1991) have put the life cycle approach to a somewhat different use from mine, namely to highlight the diversity of family life rather than to assess what is, in fact changing. These differences are the results of contradictory approaches. Thus while I conceive of de facto marriages as essentially equivalent to de jure marriages (in line with the way these relationships are constructed in practice), Rowland conceives of them as two different trajectories. More profoundly, whereas I simply nominate stages and allow individuals to move through them in somewhat idiosyncratic ways (e.g. marriage, divorce, and remarriage are conceived of as a repeat of certain stages of the life cycle), Rowland is concerned with modeling each specific trajectory so that marriage, divorce and remarriage become a different trajectory from simple marriage and divorce, leading to a very complex series of possible life trajectories and movements between different stages (see his “Fig 1: Possible Transitions between Life Cycle Types” Rowland 1991, 5). The difference in the use of life cycle is due in part to difference in intention. Rowland is trying to tease out behavioural patterns, whereas I am trying to conceptualise constancy and change in the underlying cultural/cognitive conception of the family. He does not clarify, though, how his approach is an advance on the common descriptive statistics of patterns of behaviour in simple terms of divorce rates, marital rates, household size etc. Also, he is only able to identify a transition towards greater diversity of practice because of a shallow depth of historical investigation. Had he tried to model the different trajectories of life in the early and middle nineteenth century, he would have faced a very bewildering array of trajectories (borne, among others, out of the migration of men in search of work, high desertion rates, low life expectancy etc.) which resulted from the specific social and economic conditions of the time, not from any cultural or normative transformation in family practices.
people involved in multi-family households (about 1.3% of households) probably accounts for less
than 2.6% of the population. Of these, 79.7% consist of adult offspring and one or more of their
ancestors (de Vaus 1997c, 4; Millward & de Vaus 1997, 41–43). This, coupled with the paucity of
other ‘alternatives’ (e.g. homosexual families) underscores the stability of the nuclear household.

Regarding the ‘alternative’ household arrangements, the following points should be made.
Homosexual couples account for less than one percent of all couples. Whatever rise there might
have been in the occurrence of homosexual-family households, these do not numerically undermine
the dominance of the nuclear-family household. (In chapter four I argue on different grounds that
the subversive effect of such families is very limited indeed.) From a statistical perspective the
emergence of this new family type is hardly a major shift (McDonald 1995, 32; Bittman 1993).
(The shift itself might still be a very significant statistical development in the gay sub-culture.)

As for group households, these account for 5% of households in 1991 (22% of households were
sole-person households, and 73% family households) (McDonald 1995, 19). They are composed
primarily of young people who are struggling to match social independence with economic
independence.20 Group households are convenient ways for youngsters to negotiate their social
commitments in the increasing time gap between social independence and financial independence.
The emergence of group households is thus closely linked to the increase in the age of marriage
since the 1960s, but does not indicate the emergence of a new household type. Further, young
people who are in the lengthening liminal stage between social independence and financial
independence often move in and out of their parents’ home, or use their parents’ home as an abode
of last resort (McDonald 1995, 25–27). In other words, many who live in group households still
rely on their family households of origin. Not surprisingly, this is accompanied by a tendency of
young people to live longer in their parents’ household than before (see figures in McDonald 1995,
28; Hartley & de Vaus 1997).

The proportion of sole-person households has increased from 10% in 1961 to 21.9% in 1991
(McDonald 1995, 19; de Vaus 1997c, 4). These households, however, account for only 8% of the
population (de Vaus 1997c, 4). Increased divorce rates and life expectancy have all served to
increase the numbers of sole-person households as has a drop in marriage rates. But by far, the
ageing of the population is the single most important cause of the increase in sole-person

20 The two main causes of the increase in the age of economic independence are the disappearance of reliable
apprenticeships and manufacturing jobs, and the increasing length of formal education and training (see page 27).
in households (de Vaus 1997c; de Vaus 1997d; de Vaus 1997b; de Vaus 1997a). In other words, the recent increase in sole-person households cannot be interpreted as the emergence of a new alternative familial lifestyle or as a normative shift. It is mostly a reflection of changes in the distribution of agents into different stages of the life cycle.

Single-parent families accounted for 12.8% of families in 1991, compared with 9.2% in 1974. This increase in the twenty years before 1991 was due primarily to an increase in divorce rates, and to a lesser extent to an increase in extra-marital births. Sixty-one percent of single-parents are divorced or separated. Eighty-eight percent of single-parent families are headed by women (McDonald 1995, 21–22; cf. de Vaus 1997c). In a broader historical perspective, though, the ratio of single-parent families in the 1890s was similar to that of the 1990s, although the proportion of those headed by males was higher (38% in 1891) reflecting the contribution of maternal mortality to single-parenthood (McDonald 1995, 22). Furthermore, for both men and women, for all age groups, remarriage rates are substantially higher than first-marriage rates (even though remarriage rates dropped between 1976 and 1995) (de Vaus 1997d, 20–21). This would suggest that divorcees do not reject familism in general, but rather the particular family they were involved in.

Further, the increase in divorce rates from the late 1960s (see Figure 3.1: “Crude divorce rates and numbers, 1947–95” in de Vaus 1997b, 27) cannot be taken as a reflection of a similar rise in family strife. The modern rise in divorce rates in Australia began in the late 1960s, accelerated during the 1970s, and levelled off during the 1980s (McDonald 1995, 53–54). Comparisons of figures following the introduction and implementation of the Family Law Act (1975–1976) with divorce figures for earlier periods overstate the rate of family breakdowns. The greater ease of divorce in the period following the introduction of the Act means that a greater ratio of separations has been formalised in divorce. Thus, in the nineteenth century, desertion—a common masculine response to financial and familial hardship—was not officially consecrated in divorce (Gilding 1991, 36).

Further, the increase in life expectancy during the twentieth century means that the ratio of marriages ending in death has declined, thereby increasing the number of marriages which end in divorce, without this increase reflecting any greater likelihood of marital strife. (Against these two factors, the increase in de facto marriages means that a corresponding increase in marriage breakdowns is masked, because de facto marriage breakdowns are not normally formalised.) Lastly, the late 1970s saw a dramatic increase in divorce rates partly because the backlog of divorce applications from previous years was being finalised, as were many hitherto-informal separations. The effects of divorce rates on the long-term distribution of people into the different developmental
stages of the household is less than might be expected. Whereas a married couple in the 1990s was less likely to be married after 30 years than couples in the 1960s, a married couple in the 1990s was more likely to be married after 30 years than a couple in the 1890s. It is also important to note that past experience shows that at times of an economic squeeze, marriage rates drop, and divorce rates rise. These shifts are part of the general patterns of family life, not a sign of transformation in the family (de Vaus 1997b). Had divorce and marriage rates become insensitive to the changing economic fortunes of society, that would have been a departure from existing patterns.

The significance of divorce in the general life experience is often exaggerated. Children’s experience is a case in point. About 1% can expect to experience the divorce of their parents for each year of life—that is, 10% by the age of ten, and 20% by the age of twenty for example (McDonald 1995, 55). The ratio of children experiencing the separation of their parents is, obviously, greater because not all separations end in divorce. A survey conducted in Western Australia in 1986 shows that three-quarters of children continue to live with both biological parents for most of their childhood (91% of one-year-olds; 85% of six-year-olds; 80% of twelve-year-olds; 77% of 15-year-olds) (McDonald 1995, 23). So for the vast majority of Australian children (including children of divorced parents), the nuclear-family household is a critical and normal aspect of their childhood. Also, due to the high remarriage rates, a very substantial number of children whose parents divorced ends up living with a step-parent in a new nuclear-family household.

Another recent development which has contributed to the seeming crisis in the nuclear family is the increase in the age at marriage. The median age at first marriage in 1974 was 20.9 for women and 23.3 for men, and in 1995 the median age at first marriage was 25.3 for women and 27.3 for men (de Vaus 1997d, 14). In 1940–1970 Australians married younger and at higher rates than ever before in order to commence sexual activity and gain independence from their parents. The expansion of the labour market facilitated this process. Around the mid-1960s, about a quarter of all new brides were pregnant at marriage, a phenomenon which all but disappeared a generation later (McDonald 1995, 30–33; Aspin 1994, 40). The increase in the age of marriage by the 1990s reflects, at least in part, the postponement of the formation of new households. This is the product of various factors. One is the reduction in work opportunities and the inflation in cultural capital, which delay the attainment of economic independence. Other reasons are the increased access to more effective contraception, and the greater financial and social support to extra-nuptial births, both of which have all but eliminated ‘shotgun’ marriages (McDonald 1995, 30–33). Significantly,
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the average age differences between newly-weds has remained steady, women being around two years younger than their partners (the median age at first marriage in 1974, 1984 and 1995 were 23.3, 25.1 and 27.3 respectively for men; and 20.9, 22.9 and 25.3 respectively for women) (de Vaus 1997d, 14). Accompanying the increase of age at marriage was a drop in marriage rates. In 1976, 62.9 of every 1,000 unmarried men, and 61.1 of every 1,000 unmarried women, married. In 1995 the figures were 36.7 and 35 respectively (de Vaus 1997d, 14).

Crude birth rates have been consistently declining since the middle of the nineteenth century, with the exception of the baby boom following WWII and its ‘echoes’—slight increases in birth rates as a result of the increased ratio of women in child-bearing ages at the time when the women born during the initial baby boom reached childbearing age. The boom itself did not reflect a reversal of the trend towards reduced marital fertility. In fact, marital fertility was in a constant decline since the 1880s until the 1950s when it stabilised. (The baby boom resulted from an immediate drop in the age of marriage after WWII, and from an unprecedented level of marriage rates.) The drop in fertility was accompanied by a drop in infant and childhood mortality, so that the effects of reduced fertility on actual household size was mitigated. 21 From the mid-1950s the average issue of existing marriages has stabilised between 2.5 and 3 offspring (McDonald 1995, 23, 44; Grimshaw 1983, 39 ff.; Game & Pringle 1983, 84; Aspin 1994, 35–36; Gilding 1991, chapter 5; Snooks 1994, 70–71). 22 A further decline occurred in the 1960s and 1970s, with fertility rates stabilising in the 1980s and 1990s (de Vaus et al. 1997, 47). Social researchers have ascribed this recent decline to women’s increased workforce participation, and to a proliferation of effective contraception and abortion (de Vaus et al. 1997, 47; Snooks 1994, 69–73). This probably also reflects the increased cost of social reproduction (e.g. through the inflation in cultural capital).

The drop in fertility rates does not in itself signify the decline of the nuclear family household. Nuclear-family households have indeed fallen in size, although they still function as nuclear families. Further, the cumulative effect of the drop in family size on people’s experience can be exaggerated. From the parental perspective, based on the birth rates of 1988, 32% of women will

21 The causal link between infant mortality and fertility rates is not clear. It used to be thought that as the survival rate of children increased, women needed to produce fewer of them to reach their desired number of viable offspring. More recently it has been argued that the reduction in number of births per mother reduced the number of unwanted children who suffered neglect, and enabled more resources to be invested in those children who were born, thereby causing the increase in life expectancy of infants and children (Gilding 1991, 92–94).

22 Snooks’ figures on birth rates and death rates per household, as well as his analysis of the total size of households (e.g. figures 3.8 and 3.9 on pages 71 and 72 respectively Snooks 1994), do not seem to be corrected for the increase in household numbers which was brought about by the ageing of the population. This confounds the effects of divorce and ageing with transformations of birth and death rates.
bear 3 or more children, 24% 2 children, 24% 1 child and 20% will bear none. But the experience of children is different. Sixty-one percent will have mothers with three or more offspring, 26% mothers with 2 offspring, and only 13% will be single offspring (McDonald 1995, 45). This discrepancy between the two perspectives may account for the general feeling that the drop in family size between the previous generation and the current generation is more significant than it, in fact, is.

In the years 1971–1991 a gradual rise in the mean age of mothers accompanied the general decline in fertility and increase in age at marriage. There has also been an increase in births outside formal wedlock, although this is largely due to the increase in de facto relationships (McDonald 1995, 46–47; de Vaus et al. 1997, 49–54).

Related to the increase in the age of mothers is a concentration of childbearing in the mothers’ late twenties and early thirties (for detailed figures see Table 5.3: “Age-specific birth rates in Australia, 1971–94” in de Vaus et al. 1997, 49). The ratio of births in both older and younger age brackets has dropped (de Vaus et al. 1997, 48). Researchers explain these transformations as the result of the greater participation of women in the workforce. Childbearing is increasingly delayed until the woman’s education and training are largely complete and her career well on its way. After their career is established, women prefer to get childbearing out of the way in a rather short time to enable them to minimise the disruption to their career. Researchers usually imagine the modern career woman when discussing these trends (de Vaus et al. 1997). In those segments of society in which a career is not part of the normal working life experience—segments which incorporate the bulk of my informants—a similar process occurs, only it has a much less positive slant than that associated with the concept of career. Childbearing is often delayed in order to allow sufficient material capital to be accumulated to allow the added costs of reproduction to be borne. After having two children, economic necessity often compels couples to stop having children sooner, perhaps, than they might have otherwise, and to increase their cumulative labour-market participation to boost their income in order to meet the constantly increasing costs of social reproduction (Gilding 1991, 124–125).23

23 This concentration of childbearing required a shift in the technology of birth control, possibly because the pill and other means employed since the 1960s did not always give parents sufficient control over the spacing of children, or because of a drop in the cost of surgical intervention under the increased funding of healthcare by the State. In any event, in the 1970s the incidence of sterilisation trebled, and abortions doubled. In the 1980s there was one abortion for every four live
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It is very common for women in the childbearing phase of the household developmental cycle to limit their participation in the labour market by opting for part-time or casual work or temporarily opting out of the workforce. The labour force participation rate of mothers increases with the age of their youngest dependent child (Wolcott 1997, 84). ABS figures published in 1995 show that in couple families with dependent children where both parents were employed, only 42% of mothers were employed full time. Broken down by age of children the figures are 35% of mothers being employed full time in families with children aged under 4 years old; 41% in families where the youngest child is aged 5–9; and 50% in families in which the youngest child is aged 10–14 years old. All this contrasts with the nearly universal full-time labour-force participation of fathers (Wolcott 1997, 85).

De facto couples accounted for 8.2% of couples in 1991, a low figure which is nonetheless slowly increasing (McDonald 1995, 21). This increase is especially great among persons under thirty. In 1986, for the first time, women in the age bracket 20–29 were more likely to live in de facto, than in de jure, marriages (Gilding 1991, 122–124). The rise of de facto relationships, too, does not signify a major transformation in the nuclear-family household. De facto marriages have largely become preludes to de jure marriages. Sixteen percent of marrying couples had cohabited before their wedding in 1975, compared with over 50% in 1991 (McDonald 1995, 21, 34). It is plausible, therefore, that the increased cost of social reproduction which delays young adults’ attainment of financial independence brings about an increase in the rate of de facto couples, as the two persons involved delay their marriage until such time as they could afford to have children. In addition, current rates of de facto marriages in Australia are still lower than those that prevailed in the first half of the nineteenth century, when the only officially acceptable marriages were Anglican marriages (Carmichael 1988, 2–5; Aspin 1994, 38). In any event, the increase in de facto relationships accounts only in part for the drop in marriage rates.

To recapitulate—the nuclear-family household remains the statistically dominant form of household among Australians of Anglo-Celtic descent. This stability and the historical depth of the nuclear-family household in northern and western Europe is remarkable. Recent changes have occurred, although they mostly apply to the distribution of social agents among the different stages in the developmental cycle of the household, not to the developmental cycle as such. It is probably in that births. Furthermore, the relative use of long-standing contraceptive devices increased, compared with the rates of pill usage (Gilding 1991, 125).
area—the transition between the different stages of the nuclear-family cycle, that the effects of the State and the Market can be most easily seen.

Specifically, in the last generation the ratios of sole-person and single-parent households have increased, but not as a result of the emergence of new types of households. Other changes included an increase in divorce rates, an increase in age at marriage, and a drop in birth rates as well as the increase in de facto unions. These changes reflect transformations in other fields of practice. Although significant, they do not amount to a critical shift in the nature of the developmental cycle I have termed a nuclear-family household.

On the other hand, a transformation in this cycle currently seems to be taking place among the young adults who are not financially independent. A new and more prominent stage is emerging in which social and financial independence are separated into a prolonged transitional stage in which young adults move in and out of their household of origin, and otherwise reside on a temporary basis in other households, including group households. Another phenomenon which may turn out to be a historic transformation in the developmental cycle is the progressive concentration of childbirth in a limited period of time, normally the mother’s late twenties and early thirties. We might need to distinguish between a stage of childbearing—characterised, among the rest, by reduced participation rates of the mother in the labour force—and a stage of child rearing in which the mother is back in the labour market.

Having discussed the trajectory of the nuclear family, I will move in the remainder of this chapter to set out the main observable contours of the field of family, which I will discuss in the following chapters. The first theme I will discuss is the home—the stage and physical manifestation of the nuclear family. It is ultimately the nuclear-family in its home—the nuclear-family household—which is the prototypical family both among researchers of the family, and among social agents (the prototypical family is discussed in chapter three.) I will then focus on some of the main ways that relationships within the family households are organised. I do this in a section on the division of labour within the family. At the end of the chapter I will discuss some of the regularities in relationships between households.
THE HOME

An integral element of the household is the house, or the home. Household units are conceived of as atoms of society. They are integrated units which are clearly separated from other similar units. This is reflected in urban design, which is premised on the assumption that households are independent, equivalent units. The number of what the ABS defines as multi-family households is pretty small. Among non-indigenous Australians multi-family households account for 1.8% of what the ABS defines as family households (73% of total households). This amounts to 1.3% of total households (de Vaus 1997c, 4).²⁴

The suburban push in Australia occurred at a time when the dominant view of society saw the nuclear family in the family home as the cornerstone of society. State policy, church teaching, and professional intervention coincided with the 1920s’ drive to suburbia. The dominant view of the internal structures of the family home itself reflected both the lifestyle of the elites, and their deep-seated phobias. Boys and girls were to sleep in separate rooms, and the married couple itself was to have its own room. By the time of the 1950s’ flood to suburbia, this view and the material means to realise it trickled down to the bulk of the working class (Reiger 1991, 33–35).

An important characteristic of the suburban home—especially in the outer suburbs—is its distance from services. Modern suburbs are premised on the extensive use of cars and telephones. The corner store and visiting salesmen have been replaced with shopping malls and telephone marketing. Social relations are less dependent than ever on geographic proximity. People “keep in touch” by phone, and can conveniently visit relatives and friends who live in different suburbs and different towns (Gilding 1991, chapter 8). Among my informants in Newcastle, Sydney was within range of regular weekend visits, taking about two hours. Canberra, over a six-hour drive, however, was at a range of special occasion visits, but too far for regular weekend visits.

The vast majority of family households in Australia resides in detached houses. (For details see Figure 9.7: “Housing type by selected family type, 1992” in Wolcott et al. 1997, 103). Flat living tends to be associated with poverty, hence the higher rate of flat living among single parents (Wolcott et al. 1997).

²⁴ Incidentally, among Aboriginal Australians 13.1% of households were multi-family households. It is a moot point whether this reflects cultural heritage, the effects of socio-economic deprivation, or both.
In line with other similar settler societies (e.g. New Zealand, Canada, USA), Australian home ownership rates are rather high. According to ABS figures for 1992, 74% of families owned or were purchasing their homes; 22% were renting; and 4% were boarding or living rent or board free. While home ownership rates have fluctuated since the 1950s, these fluctuations reflect the fluctuations of the political economy, not the importance of home ownership to householders (Wolcott et al. 1997, 102–103; Whitwell 1989).

The capacity to own real estate, and the cost of home ownership, are not equally distributed across society. Living is substantially cheaper for the rich. Real estate is a prime example. The cheapest way to buy a home is by a single payment. Those who have sufficient funds at their disposal will get a house for less than those who need to rely on credit. Credit is the next cheapest way of buying housing. The greater one’s initial deposit, the better terms can one expect on one’s loans. This means that those who can make an initial deposit, and whose potential earning capacity is persuasive enough will be able to eventually own real estate. (Interestingly, those who determine the credit worthiness of applicants prefer married applicants, who are considered more securely and permanently tied to the labour market.) Finally, those who are too poor to afford an initial deposit receive the worst housing deal. They pay rent which is all too often not less than mortgage payments, but unlike mortgagees, they will never own the home they live in. In fact, this makes it economically viable to the better-off members of the working class to invest in real estate and use the rent they collect to pay off the mortgage. Eventually, the tenants who pay rent buy the house for the landlord, and enrich the lenders in the process.

Although the desire for home ownership was accounted for by my informants in terms of security, usually economic, this is not a sufficient explanation. In 1991 over 35% of home-owning or home-purchasing families lost over A$1,000 a year as a result of their home ownership strategy. These losses (negative net housing benefits) were calculated as gains on land value plus rent saved, minus interest on mortgage repayments, opportunity costs of owner’s equity, local government rates, house repairs, maintenance and depreciation, dwelling insurance and transfer costs (Wolcott et al. 1997, 104; Burbidge & Winter 1995; Richards 1990; Richards 1989). In other words, home ownership is much more important than simply a strategy of economic utility maximisation.

25 My study did not focus on homes. For an in-depth treatment of the subject of homes see Richards’ pioneering five-year-long study in a Melbourne suburb (Richards 1990).
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Being the physical manifestation of the household, the home is central to the constitution of the household, and home ownership a measure of control over the family destiny. The home is the backstage,\(^{26}\) as it were, for the members of the household. As such, it comes to be the physical expression, and experiential paradigm, of both the household, and the privacy of the domestic unit. By contrast with the modern home—one of whose main functions is to ensure the privacy of the family and its members—pre-modern homes of the popular classes typically had very few rooms, normally one. Houses were shared with farm animals, and with servants. Beds were shared, too. The separation of bedrooms from more public rooms, doors and corridors with rooms leading off them, are a legacy of the mid-eighteenth century bourgeoisie. These structures of homes diffused gradually throughout society. The norm of either one person or two spouses per bed has only become universal by the middle of the twentieth century (Bittman & Pixley 1997, 53; Richards 1990).

The home was also the privileged site of female labour, and the area where women exercised a fair degree of dominance. In the nineteenth century, when other family members might move in search of work, it was the mother of the family who would normally remain at home (see page 15). Before the radical increase in the participation rate of married women in the market economy following WWII, the home was the place where the mother/wife was usually found, although with the increase in the participation rate of women in the workforce, and the near-universal involvement of youth in educational institutions, more and more homes came to be empty during the day (Reiger 1991, 44; cf. Richards 1990 for the gender differences in the implications and meanings of home).

The emergence of the home as the site of family privacy is also both a cause and an effect of another twentieth-century process—the narrowing of household occupancy to the strict membership of the nuclear family. The suburbanisation of the 1920s and 1950s enabled nuclear families in multi-family households to move out and opt for single-family households. Many working-class families had lodgers who lived with them until the 1950s, but with the economic expansion following WWII the institution of the lodger has all but disappeared. Commercial rental accommodation has come to replace the working-class family in the provision of such accommodation services.

\(^{26}\) The concept of backstage is taken from the work of Goffman (Goffman 1959).
Another change which occurred in Australian homes has to do with the large-scale introduction of household technology and mechanisation to the domestic labour process. Household technology costs dropped considerably in the period 1890–1940, but remarkably the ratio of equipment to household worker dropped even more, reflecting the market stagnation of the period and the decline in household market income. However, with the great post-WWII economic growth which increased household income and the labour market demand for female labour, technology was introduced rapidly, and on a massive scale, into households. Equipment came to substitute a large amount of household labour in that period. This seems to have produced an increase in standards of household work, as well as a transfer of labour time from the household to the labour market as married women’s participation in the labour market grew. In any event, consumer spending on domestic appliances and automobiles grew rapidly, increasing the dependency of the working-class household on the labour market, and with it, the economy’s dependence on consumer spending (Snooks 1994, 53–60; Reiger 1991, 46–47).

ORGANISATION OF LABOUR

The continuous increase in married women’s labour-market participation rate is one of the most important transformations in Australia’s political economy of the twentieth century (Snooks 1994). (For details see Table 3 from McDonald 37: “Labour force participation rates of married women by age groups” McDonald 1995, 37; and Figure 8.2: “Labour force participation by men and women by age, 1970–96” in Wolcott 1997, 83.) Still, no less remarkable than the changes this involved in the gender order, are the aspects of the gendered division of labour which have not changed. Especially, the internal division of labour within the household in the 1990s does not differ radically from that which obtained in the first half of the century. The difference is that of degree, not of kind. Also, the division of labour in the marketplace bears all the hallmarks of the gendered division of productive and reproductive labour within the household. In this section I will briefly review some of the data on the division of labour within the household. I should stress that I use the term labour here in the broad sense, to include activities such as the maintenance of social relations.

But before delving into the internal workings of the domestic division of labour, a few points need to be made regarding the increased involvement of married women in the labour market. Most importantly, the evidence suggests that this change did not reflect a radical redefinition of masculinity and femininity. The driving force for the increase was the emergence of jobs and
industries which required typically feminine kinds of activity, and the development of unskilled, highly regimented labour processes. This created an increased demand for female labour in the labour market, labour that was cheaper than men’s as men were usually main breadwinners. In other words, in some areas of industry skilled men were replaced with unskilled women and machines. At the same time, service industries emerged which provided work that more readily appealed to women. Women’s wages increased at the time when the consumerist urge surged more than ever before. The relative value of material capital thus increased, making it more worthwhile for more married women to leave the household for longer periods of time to participate in the labour market. Households sought to replace with capital (e.g. appliances) the labour power which was now transferred to the labour market (Snooks 1994, chapters 4–6; Reiger 1991, 53–58; Game & Pringle 1983, 89 ff.). While the greater participation rate of married women in the labour market might have been an important shift in the structure of Australian capitalism, the default familial arrangement according to which the man is the main breadwinner, and woman the main homemaker, remained largely intact, as did the inventory of tasks that men are better at and prefer to do, along with those which women are better at and prefer to do.

While women were reintegrated into the labour market, the marginalisation of youth labour continued. Furthermore, in homemaking, too, children continued to play a limited role indeed compared with their nineteenth-century counterparts. Childhood, adolescence and young adulthood have become dedicated to formal and informal education, training and partnering. Those youths who have no choice but to seek employment (such as homeless youth) are in a very vulnerable position (Parliament 1995).

Thus, while thinking of the Australian family of the second half of the twentieth century, instead of thinking of men as breadwinners and women as homemakers, it is more accurate to think of most men as primary breadwinners and secondary homemakers, and of most women as primary homemakers and secondary breadwinners, while children are largely unproductive dependants (Gilding 1991, 121 ff.).

There has also been a concomitant narrowing of the gap in time spent on household chores between men and women. This was due primarily to a reduction in the figures for women’s time spent on household chores (Bittman 1995; Bittman & Pixley 1997, chapters 4, 5; Wolcott 1997, 88). Such figures underestimate the actual difference in time spent on household tasks. There is a greater tendency for women to perform household tasks through the labour market, yet official statistics
would classify a woman performing household tasks for others through the labour market as being involved in the labour force, rather than carrying out household chores.\footnote{Incidentally, social researchers found that the likelihood that respondents would support an equal sharing of responsibilities and work, was positively correlated with education and negatively correlated with age. There seems, however, to be a poor correlation between what respondents say they do, and what respondents do, in fact, do. Studies suggest that the magnitude of the gendered division of labour is not sensitive to education level or age (Bittman & Pixley 1997, chapter 6; Baxter 1993; Baxter et al. 1990; Reiger 1991, 53).}

Furthermore, the difference in actual time spent doing tasks itself underrepresents the genderedness of the division of labour. A different appraisal of the difference is the division of responsibility. Among my informants, even when the behavioural pattern as measured by time use would suggest an amelioration of the gendered division of labour, an analysis in terms of responsibility would align these arrangements with the broader gendered division of labour. Thus, men who do some kitchen work would often be helping their wives who are responsible for these tasks, rather than taking over responsibility for the execution of those tasks. (cf., inter alia, Bryson 1985; Richards 1985, chapter 12; Bittman & Pixley 1997 chapters 5, 6; Baxter 1993; Dempsey 1997b; Dempsey 1997a). This reflects the total division of labour in which family maintenance and emotional work are very much feminised (Di Leonardo 1992).

With industrial capitalism, the increased proletarianisation of the working class and the removal of production for the market from the household have radically disconnected household chores from financial gain. The lodger was probably one of the last main examples of confounding household chores and economic-capital accumulation. This process is not complete. For example, some women mind children for pay, while carrying out their own child-minding and household tasks. This phenomenon is distinct from the arrangement whereby centrally organised production is carried out in the home, textile piecework being a case in point. In the latter instance work is clearly separate from household chores. With the lodger, or with child minding, on the other hand, household chores are used to generate income. The gendered division of labour thus produces a gendered division of access to material capital. If in the past such differences could be narrowed by increased production within the household, the current configuration of the political economy means that the gap can only be narrowed by reducing the gendered division of labour. Further, very often, involvement in the labour market also translates into a constant increase in the acquisition of marketable cultural capital, through training and the accumulation of on-the-job experience. This
cultural capital itself is convertible into economic capital and increases the capital gap between breadwinners and homemakers.\(^{28}\)

It is the increased participation rate of women in the labour market which is the main reason for the narrowing of the gap in the gendered access to economic capital. According to ABS figures published in 1995, in couple families where both parents were employed full time, women contributed 43% of the couple’s earnings. In similar couples in which the women were employed part time, women contributed 27% of the family earnings (Wolcott et al. 1997, 93).

Another manifestation of the continuing gendered division in access to financial capital is the consequences of family breakdown to the financial well-being of men and women. An AIFS\(^{29}\) study over the period 1984–1987 revealed that fathers were likely to have an increased standard of living upon separation if they did not have children living in their household, or a standard of living similar to their pre-separation standard of living if they had children living in the household. The situation for women was different. Women tended to be worse off immediately after separation, and most remained worse off three years later (Funder et al. 1993, 33–55; cited and analysed in Wolcott et al. 1997, 94–95; on the marginalisation of single-parent families see Winchester 1990).

Interestingly, the fate of mothers was negatively correlated with the pre-separation earning level of fathers. Breaking down the patterns into three income-level groups, it transpired that the ex-wives of higher-income earners fared the worst; while ex-wives of low-income earners were best off, eventually improving, on average, on their pre-separation standard of living. (See details in Figure 9.1 “Mothers and children after divorce median financial living standards: (% above poverty line) by father’s pre-separation income group” Wolcott et al. 1997, 95.) This situation is accounted for in several ways. The wives of men with high income probably have a lower labour market participation rate, which reduces their post-separation earning capacity. They thus rely more heavily on inadequate maintenance payments (Wolcott et al. 1997, 94–95). One might also wonder whether fathers who are better off have greater bureaucratic, legal and financial means to undermine the requirements of legislation and avoid making maintenance payments. In any event, the researchers point out that “repartnering by mothers tended to be the only way in which adequate income compensation for low maintenance payments was achieved” (Wolcott et al. 1997, 95).

\(^{28}\) I systematically discuss the different forms of capital in chapter eight.

\(^{29}\) AIFS—Australian Institute of Family Studies.
This has two major implications. The one is that it highlights marriage as one strategy which mostly women use to convert social capital into economic capital. This is effective enough for the average ex-partners of medium-income men to have largely regained their living standards within three years, and for the average ex-partners of low-income men to have palpably improved their standard of living. The other implication is that by repartnering, women enjoy the income of their current partners, possibly at the expense of their partners’ children from previous unions. As the researchers point out, children of the first family enjoyed a lower share in their non-resident father’s income than the children of their father’s current family (Wolcott et al. 1997, 95). This puts many women in the position of both victims and beneficiaries of the tendency to spend more on children in one’s current household, at the expense of children in other households.  

It is important to emphasise that the gendered patterns of labour-market participation cannot account for this difference in time spent on the household chores. An ABS survey of time use among Australians published in 1993 indicates that partnered women who have children under fifteen and who work full time spend 22% of their day (5.1 hours) on household activities, as opposed to men in similar situations who spend only 11% of their day (2.5 hours) on such activities (Wolcott 1997, 87). This supports the conclusion that the gendered division of labour in the family is the cause, rather than the effect, of the gendered nature of labour-force participation, and the gendered structure of the formal economy. This conclusion is further supported by the fact that the majority of women with children say that they prefer part-time employment, regardless of whether they are employed full time, part time or not at all (see Figure 8.6: “Women with children: work preference by current work status” Wolcott 1997, 85; Baxter 2000; Baxter & Western 1998; Baxter et al. 1996).

This financial economy should be seen also in the context of the economy of time and social relations. Part and parcel of the division of labour is the division of time spent away from the household, and alienation from the social relationships of the household. The genderedness of different household tasks produces a gendered difference in the distribution of social capital within the family. An important instance of this is difference in time spent and access to children. Generally speaking, mothers spend more time with children, and play a greater role in their lives  

30 This might explain why most women I spoke with, as well as most men, did not share the views of most researchers, to the effect that child support which non-custodian parents are required to pay is insufficient, and that the enforcement of these regulations is inefficient. The only exception were single mothers I spoke with who felt hard done-by by their post-separation arrangements. (I will discuss these attitudes of my informants in chapter four below.)
than fathers do. One survey (Bittman 1995) found that women spent over three and a half times longer in the care of children.

Another measure of the gendered difference in the quality of social relations within the household is the custodial arrangements which follow marital breakdown. In well over 80% of instances, it is the mother who becomes the custodian parent, not the father. Approximately 87% of “single-parent families”, that is households of a parent and his/her dependent children, are headed by women (Aspin 1994, 129; Funder et al. 1993). To my informants, at least, the advantage in social capital was the flip side of the coin of the disadvantage in economic capital. In post-separation wrangling, custodian parents’ control of access to children was seen by my informants as equivalent to non-custodian parents’ control of the maintenance payments.

To sum this section up, while the gap in actual access to the labour market might have narrowed, the gendered nature of the division of labour and concomitant distribution of capital continues—men tend to dominate material capital, while women tend to dominate social capital. Youths remain marginalised in the labour market and in access to material capital.

EXTENDED FAMILY NETWORKS

Family-ness does not only organise the relationships within nuclear-family households. It also shapes relationships between separate households of related people. Such networks normally comprise the households of adult siblings and their parents, and occasionally might be extended further to uncles, aunts and cousins, normally on an ad hoc basis. Such networks often operate as mutual aid and support networks. They also greatly overlap with ceremonial kindred groupings, such as the descendants of elderly people who might get together on Christmas.

The volume of aid which flows, or is exchanged in extended family networks is considerable, and normally occurs outside the formal economy. The main types of transfers and exchange among households are: financial (money), material (goods or use rights in goods and capital), physical

31 These networks have received scant attention from historians and quantitative sociologists, probably to a large part because of the fixation of the sociology of the family on the ideology of the atomised nuclear family, and the lack of interest on the part of government agencies and public-policy shapers. To make up for the gap in the general literature, I will rely in this section on ethnographic data, including my own. Obviously, the normal caveats regarding the generalisability of ethnographic data apply to this material too, and to the conclusions it supports.
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(labour power), emotional (love, counsel), legal (guardianship), spiritual (religious duties) (McDonald 1995, 16; Millward & de Vaus 1997; Millward et al. 1997). Often households of kin can serve as temporary or alternative households for people who normally reside elsewhere—most typically young adults (McDonald 1995, 25–27) or newly separated adults. Incidentally, a quantitative measure of actual transfer among households would grossly underestimate the value of these networks. Often these networks function as an insurance—a solution of last resort which is “always there”. 32

The same gendered patterns of practice within households also mark extended kin networks. As part of the overall gendered division of responsibility, the responsibility for maintaining the household functioning is clearly gendered. Women generally assume the responsibility of ensuring and maintaining orderly social relationships both within and without the household. Extended family networks are therefore largely managed by women (Millward 1993; Short n.d.; Millward & de Vaus 1997, 40; Di Leonardo 1992; Rapp 1992, 56–58; Yanagisako 1977). The domination of women in the maintenance work of networks of related households has been noted in many segments of urban society (summarised in Di Leonardo 1992, 252–253). 33 In general, women among my informants were more interested in, and more adept at, maintaining and managing social relationships. This is part of the specialisation of women in the accumulation of social capital. 34

In line with British data (summarised in Yanagisako 1977, 220) and equivalent Australian data (Stivens 1974, chapter 6), there was much greater emphasis among my informants on intergenerational ties between mothers and daughters. 35 Collateral relationships were not nearly as

32 There are also other similar links, such as between non-custodial parents and the households in which their children live. The volume of support which flows in networks of the latter kind has increased considerably since the 1960s (and is regulated by the State in a way that other extended family links are not).

33 Following Yanagisako (Yanagisako 1977), I will use the term women-centred kin networks to denote such networks, because unlike matrifocality, this term highlights the centrality of women qua women (rather than mothers), and incorporates sororal relationships. Further, it does not highlight the particular way in which these networks are organised, as in practice they vary in different social contexts (Yanagisako 1977, 220-221). Incidentally, while interest in women-centred kin networks seems to have receded in studies of Northern European societies, the issue has recently been taken up by anthropologists studying Mediterranean societies (e.g. Brogger & Gilmore 1997).

34 The domination of women over family work seems to have increased under capitalism with the emergence of the separation between the public and the private (Zaretsky 1986; Collier et al. 1982). This is partly so because factors which would have supported strong masculine ties among relatives have disappeared. These include, among working-class Australians, the formalisation of vocational education at the expense of paternal initiation of sons into trades, the highly diminished tendency for sons to follow in the occupational footsteps of their father, and finally, the weakening of industrial trade unions and the closed shop which institutionalised nepotism in labour recruitment.

35 In a study in Adelaide in the 1960s which focussed on frequency of contact, wives appeared to maintain more contact with parents who lived outside Adelaide than their husbands did, although the frequency of contact within Adelaide was not very different. There did not appear to be a difference in contact with fathers and contact with mothers. When broken down by class (operationalised by residential area), women’s contact did not seem to vary among the sub-samples, but men’s did. The working-class suburb showed the highest level of gender difference in frequency of contact with parents.

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stable as lineal ones. Furthermore, most of the aid was transferred down generations lineally rather than collaterally. Among my informants there was not a great stress on families needing to be self-sufficient. The independence of households did not seem to be compromised by transfers down the generations. Parents gave their adult children gifts because “times are harder now” as one elderly man explained, and “to help with the children. It’s very expensive to bring them up today” as an older woman explained. (This latter quote shows some of the ambiguity that can be imposed on any transaction within the family—the gift was given by the woman to her adult daughter and son-in-law, but was construed as support for their children, her grandchildren.) There was also a great deal of transfer of resources among siblings’ households, although this took the form of reciprocal exchange in contrast with the acceptable unilateral nature of transfers across generations. So for example, sisters or sisters-in-law would exchange child minding, or otherwise would more generally exchange favours. In one instance a couple relied on the wife’s sister who was a single mother to do casual childcare work in return for money. This was construed as solving their need for reliable casual childcare, and her need for some extra cash. When money was transferred among siblings it was virtually invariably in the form of loans (even when it was not at all clear if they would be repaid). These transfers appeared much less common than inter-generational monetary transfers.

Typically, mothers would be the main driving force behind keeping their offspring in touch. They did so normally by enlisting the collaboration of their daughters or daughters-in-law. Hildred and Phyllis were, by their own admission, pretty close as a direct result of their mother’s efforts. Their mother would strive to bring her daughters and granddaughters together, often instigating shopping mall excursions with both her daughters and granddaughters. As it happened, Phyllis who was a single parent and more flexible with her time spent more time with their mother than did Hildred. Men took remarkably little initiative in these issues. In fact, women among my informants played a large role in managing and maintaining the networks of their husbands. Adult sons and fathers owed much of their concrete contact to occasions organised by women. In several families I came across the maintenance of relationships between male siblings was quite often heavily supported by their wives.

between men and women, with men having substantially less contact (Martin 1967, 50-51). The questions of why there was such a class difference and of whether frequency of contact is a fair operationalisation of contact still remain. Also largely unanswered is the effect of the proliferation of telephones on the actual patterns of contact.
More poignantly, two brothers I met had their relationships sour as a result of conflict between the two wives. The brothers did not harbour any ill feeling towards one another, but explained that the conflict between the wives made their actual contact less frequent. The wives themselves supported these views. While I have heard a few stories of men—either related or friends—whose relationships were badly affected by tensions between their wives, I cannot recall one instance in the field in which relationships between related women suffered substantially as a result of tensions between their husbands. Furthermore, whereas I have heard repeatedly of men being caught up in struggles between their wives and mothers, I did not hear of women who were in strife as a result of conflict between their husbands and fathers.36

This situation contravenes somewhat the description of women's networks as networks of solidarity. While solidarity, such as argued by Maila Stivens (Stivens 1974, Part 2; Stivens 1978), is definitely part of the picture, it is not the whole picture. In focus groups and interviews my female informants construed their relationships with their mothers and mothers-in-law as potentially stressful, and motivated by a sense of obligation. Whereas in conversations and interviews a few women identified their husbands as their best friends, or a close female friend, only one identified her sister as a best friend, and none identified her mother as her best friend.37 Interestingly, a study in north London found that adult women and their mothers were not very intimate and close, and that it was sisters who formed “very close” relationships (O'Connor 1990). Among my informants, relationships with sisters were construed as voluntary and free from obligation, and therefore potentially closer and more intimate. They were therefore also more volatile and more variable. Some women were not at all close to their sisters, whereas others were very close. There did not seem to be the same variation in relation between adult women and their mothers.

Rather than solidarity as such, it seems to me that women enjoyed a heightened all-round intensity of emotional relationships compared with men. When they were close, they could be more intimate, when they were in conflict, they could be more acrimonious, and when they felt obligation they could move and be moved by senses of guilt and shame to an extent greater than men. This

36 An essential aspect of the backdrop to this discussion is the general tendency towards gender-specific social networks. Men tended to associate with men, women with women (and couples with couples). My impression is that women were more vigilant in maintaining these networks. In one conversation I had with a couple the man said that even though his friends were generally male, and his wife’s were generally female, he did not think it would be a problem if he had female friends and she had male friends, and that he was sure his wife felt the same way. However, as it turned out, she did not, and proceeded to say that she would find it very hard to understand if he had a female friend, and that she did not think she would have a male friend. She then explained that between men and women “there is always the sex thing”, and that in any event, men and women like doing different things.
Chapter Two

reflects their greater investment—social, emotional and otherwise—in social capital. The stakes in social relationships in general, and in familial organising in particular, were higher for women than for men. I would therefore interpret women’s domination of the familial domain as an expression of internal dispositions which predispose women to invest more of themselves in social relations. These dispositions run the gamut of emotional, aesthetic, and intellective dispositions (I will further explore the genderedness of subjectivity in chapter six, and the concept of capital in chapter eight).

**CONCLUSION**

The brief historical review which opened this chapter attempted to situate the transformations of the Australian family within the broader transformations in the social order. In line with the historiography of the Australian family which underlay that synthesis, the profound changes in the Australian family were highlighted. However, not only changes need to be accounted for. Continuities are no less important (cf. Goody 2000, chapter 1). In fact, much of the history of the family is a story of remarkable continuity and immutability of the family structure in the face of profound historical transformations.38

As a preliminary step towards assessing both transformations and continuities in kinship practices, I reconceptualised the nuclear family as a life trajectory. I concluded that the nuclear family remains very much the dominant practice. The main changes seem to be in the distribution of agents in the different stages of this life trajectory (e.g. an increase in single-person households as a result of the increase in life expectancy). Nevertheless, there have been changes in the way people relate to the family (e.g. increased divorce rates and average age at marriage) but the extent of the change is often overstated. Some of the magnitude of change is artificial (e.g. many marital breakdowns which now end in divorce would before 1975 have ended in mere separation); so too the influence these changes have on experience is often exaggerated (e.g. most children of divorced parents live most of their childhood in nuclear families); and much of the change seems to reflect a retreat to

37 I should stress, though, that at the time of the fieldwork I was not specifically interested in this issue, so that it could be that I simply did not record statements about mothers being best friends.

38 Richards (Richards 1989, 173) made a similar argument about the sociology of the family being overly preoccupied with analysing and theorising change, to the neglect of continuity. Anthropologists, for their part, have traditionally been criticised for overemphasising constancy, and for adopting an ahistorical analytical stance. Obviously, in the zeal to reintroduce constancy into the analysis one should be vigilant to avoid ahistoricism too.
normalcy from post-WWII idiosyncrasies rather than a novel trend. Nevertheless, alternatives to the nuclear-family household trajectory remain remarkably rare.

Two new trends in the nuclear-family household trajectory appear to be taking place. One is the growing liminal stage between social adulthood and economic independence, characterised by low income, marginalised labour-market status, involvement in educational institutions, and dependency to varying degrees on the household of origin. The other is a growing differentiation of childbearing and child rearing into two distinct stages with different patterns of division of labour.

When reviewing some of the data on other kinship practices I argued that home ownership is significant beyond mere economic rationalism. The gendered division of labour inside the home is proving to be resilient beyond expectations. I associated this division of labour with the general differences in distribution of capital (social vs. economic), a theme I will take up in later chapters. The total division of labour inside the household is mirrored in the feminisation of broader kin networks. Generally, such networks which link family households of closely related people follow the very same logic which structures nuclear-family households.

In the next chapter I take the preliminary step towards analysing the historical resilience of the nuclear family by highlighting its cultural and cognitive dominance which greatly complements its statistical dominance.
Chapter Three

The Doxic Family

In the previous chapter I argued that the nuclear family household, conceived of as a trajectory, is statistically dominant, and is undergoing significant but limited transformations. I now turn to the symbolic dominance of the nuclear family. In this chapter I analyse the realised category of the family. In the following chapter I focus on a few heterodoxies, and how they both challenge and reinforce the realised category of the family.

**Family as a Realised Category**

The nuclear family is the best example of family, as far as my informants were concerned. It functions as the unmarked variant against which all other variants are compared. What makes other arrangements ‘family’ is the fact that they resemble the prototype of family, namely, the nuclear family. In other words, to my informants, the nuclear family is *the* family par excellence.¹ What makes all other familial arrangements family, is some critical trait that such alternative arrangements share with the nuclear family, although there is not one substantive characteristic that is common to all arrangements which are ‘family’. Social arrangements which have nothing in

¹ This has been the case among anthropologists no less than among my informants (Collier et al. 1982).
common with the nuclear family cannot be included in the indigenous category of family, nor can they be said to be an etic family in any meaningful way (on categorisation see Rosch 1978; Lakoff 1987, 39–67; Lakoff & Johnson 1980, 122–124).

In other words, the category of the family is structured as a radial category. It has a central subcategory, and various non-central extensions which are variants of the central subcategory. The variants are not deducible from the central category by recourse to a formally articulated rule of deduction. Rather, they all resemble the central subcategory in their particular ways, although each non-central extension may be quite different from other non-central extensions (cf. Lakoff 1987, chapter 6).

The nuclear family functions as a realised category (Bourdieu 1996). By “realised category” Bourdieu means that it is more than a cultural value, an imaginary mental construct, or ‘merely’ a word which is being used by social agents and social, political and cultural agencies to understand the world and thereby impose itself on social agents. It is also at one and the same time a social reality, the reality in which people live their lives. In Bourdieu’s terminology it is a nomos, a “tacit law [. . .] of perception and practice that is at the basis of the consensus on the sense of the social world (and of the word ‘family’ in particular), the basis of common sense” (Bourdieu 1996, 21). It is integrated into the habitus of social agents. It is a principle which organises both people’s apprehension of reality and their action upon the world. (The distinction between apprehension and action is artificial and made here for explanatory purposes only. In fact, apprehension is itself action upon the world.) In other words, beyond the statistical prevalence of the nuclear family, the category of family organises the way each individual experiences and interacts with the world in general and family in particular, as well as shapes the way other social agents operate in the world. The harmony between the internalised category and the category as it is in that intersubjective/objective world is what makes the world appear natural and self evident (Bourdieu 1996, 21). It is important to bear in mind that this category is not only an intellective construct but also an affective and emotive construct. That is, when social agents experience, think or imagine families, these orchestrate emotional states as well as intellective representations.

Those aspects of family life which deviate from the prototypical nuclear family are what makes people’s families different, what is unique and remarkable about them, what is noteworthy at dinner-table conversations, parties, gossip and ethnographic interviews. Those aspects of persons’ lives which do completely comply with the prototypical nuclear family are what people share with
The Doxie Family

the ‘collective’, with ‘everybody else’ as it were. These aspects are remarkably unremarkable, and are unlikely to be elaborated on at dinner table conversations, parties, or gossip exchanges. The doxic aspects of the family which are taken for granted and experienced as universal, escape unarticulated in the mundane discourse of familiarity. In a sense, the fact that one need not mention what goes without saying defines the discussion as one of familiarity (Bourdieu 1977, 16 ff.).

Orthodoxies are also not particularly interesting topics of familiar discussion. They do explicitly emerge, nonetheless, in the context of comparing, assuming, analysing and judging heterodoxies.

The transparency of normalcy, the fact that it passes un-interrogated by public opinion, is part of the privileged position it has acquired, the right to question and not be questioned, the authority to contemplate others but not be contemplated. Against the visibility of the aberrant, which always invites judgement, the transparency of the normal conveys the presumption of innocence, the immunity from prosecution, having no case to answer, as it were. This is the root of the symbolic privilege which accrues to the universal norm. It is hard to imagine somebody leaning over and whispering in the ear of an interlocutor “X is heterosexual”, or “X is a monogamist”, or “X and Y, who are married, have sex together”.

There are rare occasions in which normalcy makes itself plainly visible, as for example with one couple who celebrated their golden anniversary and basked in the glory of not having separated or divorced, unlike so many others. The point was made explicitly by the couple when all family members were sitting around the dinner table. At least one of the members of the younger generation perceived it as an injunction, as “a statement of this is how things should be; this is an example you should follow”. This visibility is specifically that of orthodoxy, not doxa. It is also a visibility of a different order from that of the constant visibility of the aberrant. It is the visibility of the witness for the prosecution, as it were. It is normalcy asserting its possibility and its existence, thereby shifting the gaze back to the aberrant which is yet again called upon to justify itself. In other words, that golden anniversary was as much a statement about marital breakdown, as it was about marital longevity.

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2 The discourse of familiarity is precisely the opposite of the discourse of estrangement which I attempt here. One methodological difficulty with focussing on doxa is that what goes without saying does not lend itself to recording or observation. And just as historians find it hard to confront constancy, because nothing happens, so ethnographers find it hard to discuss the unarticulated because nothing is said. One methodological step I have taken in this thesis is to quote silence, and relate what my informants did not say. (Another problem with probing the doxic is that it is hard to persuade the ‘native’ that the analysis is meaningful because “everybody knows THAT”. When one’s readers share much of the doxa with one’s informants it becomes that much harder to convince one’s readers—and oneself for that matter—of the significance of one’s findings.)
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It is thus by merely being normal that the normal places a demand on the aberrant. People are required to either conform, or take a risk and stand accused. The normal, by virtue of their normalcy, come to possess a certain element of symbolic capital. Their sense is the common sense (cf. Bourdieu 1996, 22–23). This forms the basis of the advantage of conformity.

The invisibility of the doxic makes it impossible to provide an immediate, exhaustive, systematic description of the constitution of the realised category of the family. In fact, giving visibility to the invisible, thinking the un-thought to use Foucault's terminology (Foucault 1974), is to do violence to the ontology of the doxic, to its invisibility. One way of doing so is to map out the visible—orthodoxy and heterodoxy—and thereby approach the invisible as that which is not included in the analysis of the visible. Whereas extrapolating the invisible from the visible may well turn out to be the more accurate way of approaching the subject, some tentative, positive approximation of the doxic is still required, if only to create an initial set of references. This is in a sense, an intuitive and suggestive projection of elements of one ontology onto another.

Ethnomethodologists have specialised in exposing the underlying foundations of social interaction. In his analysis of the family Bourdieu summarises the properties that ethnomethodologists have found in the family. 4 I propose to use this summary as a point of departure.

First set of properties: through a kind of anthropomorphism in which the properties of an individual are attributed to a group, the family is seen as a reality transcending its members, a transpersonal person endowed with a common life and spirit and a particular vision of the world.

Second set of properties: definitions of the family are seen as having in common the fact that they assume the family exists as a separate social universe, engaged in an effort to perpetuate its frontiers and oriented towards idealization of the interior as sacred, sanctum, (as opposed to the exterior). This sacred, secret universe, with its doors closed to protect its intimacy, separated from the external world by the symbolic barrier of the threshold, perpetuates itself and perpetuates its own separateness, its privacy, as an obstacle to knowledge, a private secret, 'backstage'. One might add to this theme of privacy a third theme, that of residence, the

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3 I further discuss doxa, orthodoxy and heterodoxy in chapter four (on this tripartite typology see Bourdieu 1977, 159–171).
4 Bourdieu explicitly attributes his summary to ethnomethodology alone, although he might well have mentioned symbolic interactionism in the broadest possible sense, including the work of Erving Goffman whose conceptual fingerprints are clearly visible in the summary.
house as a stable enduring locus and the household as a permanent unit, durably associated with a house that is endlessly transmissible (Bourdieu 1996, 20).

Family and kinship provide the practical idioms which organise both the internal structure of the household, and some of the relationships between households. As Rayna Rapp put it,

the family is the normative, correct way in which people get recruited into households. It is through families that people enter into productive, reproductive and consumption relations. The two genders enter them differently. Families organize households, and it is within families that people experience the absence or presence, the sharing or withholding, of basic poolable resources. ‘Family’ (as a normative concept in our culture) reflects those material relations; it also distorts them. As such, the concept of family is a socially necessary illusion that simultaneously expresses and makes recruitment to relations of production, reproduction and consumption—relations that condition different kinds of household resources based in different sectors. Our notions of family absorb the conflicts, contradictions, and relations that households hold to resources in advanced capitalism (Rapp 1992, 51).

These quotes accurately reflects my informants’ experience of family. Family, that is, the prototypical nuclear family, is first and foremost a father, a mother, their young children (two or three of them), comprising a single household and living in a family home. This is the default notion of the family. At least, this seemed to be what my informants had in mind when they uttered or heard the words nuclear family, or the general term, “The Family”. When applied differently, to extended families for example, it is in a sense a figurative, modified or borrowed usage.  

THE NUCLEAR FAMILY, THE PERSON, AND THE CONTAINER SCHEMA

The two main elements which are captured in Bourdieu’s summary are the corporate nature of the family and the emergence of the domestic/private domain. By corporate nature I mean that the

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5 Incidentally, pets are not thought of as part of the family. The majority of households I studied did not have pets, but a significant number did, invariably cats or dogs. My informants never mentioned them when asked about their family members and they were not a main source of preoccupation. This stands in contrast to the expectation of Kapferer (Kapferer 1988, 158) who argues that pet-loving and masculinist mateship are inherently linked in their underlying cultural logic, and that both are integral to working-class Australian culture (and see Ernst 1990). Later in this chapter I will also argue that mateship is not a key aspect of my informants’ life, so it is possible that mateship and pet loving are closely associated, only neither is associated with my informants.
family becomes an entity in its own right which exists quite separately from its individual members. If family members cease to exist the family might still exist, as when a family member dies. Still, if all family members die, the family ceases to exist. By the same token, families might cease to exist while family members continue to exist, as when a childless couple divorces. When thought of in relation to a specific group of people, the family does not reside in any particular individual but in the set of relationships between them.\(^6\)

The experiential construct of the person acts as a schema which metaphorically structures family. The person is an emic construct. The commonsensical ascription of a unified identity to a body as it transforms, and is transformed, throughout time and space; and the constitution of that person as somehow transcending in its essence the specific situations and the webs of relationships in which that person is embedded, are both fundamental, culturally specific, modes of being. They shape the experience of social agents like my informants.

The metaphor of the person carries many entailments. Families are given names and a distinct identity. The family bond encloses the family members within a clearly bounded symbolic space. This discreteness which the family shares with the individual is the basis for the extension of the container schema from the person to the family. In fact, the family ‘unit’ is structured by the container schema which Lakoff and Johnson identify as one of the very basic structural metaphors, and which they ascribe to the pre-conceptual experience of the body as container (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, 14, 24, 29–34, 56 ff.).

In its practical, daily, deployment family is a polysemic concept—it can denote, and thereby combine, any of a number of theoretically distinct categories of social relations. The concept operates metonymically. It pertains to a set of genealogical relationships, a particular group of social relationships, a physical space (home), a certain type of social relationship (suspension of explicit economic calculation), a certain element of corporate economic activity (household), a physiological function (reproduction), and more.

In fact, this polysemy implicates the study of family in the study of households and homes, two closely related concepts which are, nonetheless, distinct from it. In the context of my informants’

\(^6\) It should be noted that some anthropologists feel that the nuclear-family household lacks the necessary perpetuity to qualify as a corporate unit (e.g. Layton 1997, 41 ff.). It is, of course, true that nuclear families dissolve once all their
lives this distinction was quite artificial, as family relations structured household relations, and residential unity formed an integral aspect of the structure of family. In the family-household unit the two are indistinguishable in any straightforward observable way. Once one “settles down” and “has a family”, one would normally acquire a nuclear family which would be organised as a household, and centred around the home. In fact, to “have a family” is an idiom which among my informants (and elsewhere) means to “have children”. My informants rarely if ever used the term household spontaneously. They would normally use the words family or home to refer to household.

Family is critical to the functioning of households. The cooperation among members of family households is officially free from obligation of direct material reciprocity. Family involves the suspension of impersonal economic calculations, an active misrecognition of the material aspects of the social relations, in contradistinction to the marketplace. Hence the enchanted economy which operates within family households, and certain networks of households, is motivated by familial relationships. This misrecognition distinguishes the family household from nonfamilial households. One of the bases of this misrecognition is precisely the organisation of the family as an elementary unit—an atom, as it were—of which individuals are parts with different functions. Thus, family members are not fully interchangeable. Families, on the other hand, are nominally equivalent to one another and are structurally interchangeable. They therefore require an element of reciprocity in relations between them.

As one informant commented about her family of origin, “We’re a pretty close family. I mean, we might hate each other’s guts, [but] we’re still a pretty close family, you know, the blood ties are pretty tight.” The relationships within the family are not voluntary so much as obligatory. But this obligation is one which is to be actively sought after and reconstituted as voluntary. Love is the label affixed to this voluntarily sought-after obligation.

Interestingly, the misrecognition of economic calculations involves both a doxic and an orthodox element. It is doxic when applied to lineal relationships. It is orthodoxy when applied to collateral relationships. Inequality in lineal relationships is, in fact, an integral aspect of the quality of those relationships. Collateral relationships, as part of their seriality, require equity and parity. Parents I interviewed went to great length to stress that they treated their children equally. Some, however,
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pointed out to disparities in the way they and their siblings were treated. When it came to such complaints, people showed a remarkable capacity to calculate and compare. One woman, for example, put figures on the financial assistance her brothers got when they left home, to show how disadvantaged she was. These calculations went beyond financial capital. Differential treatment in freedom of movement, harshness of discipline, and so forth were all brought up and calculated. The difference between the calculability of serial relations, and incalculability of lineal relations is part of a broader difference between these two types of relations, a difference I will take up below.

As pointed out above, my informants’ notion of family was polysemic. Depending on the context, the kindred members (families of origin, uncles, aunts, cousins, grandparents) were also recognised as family. This, however, does not negate the argument for a clear boundary around the nuclear family. Relatives who are included in one’s extended kin network are deemed to be related by virtue of being primary kin of primary kin, that is, having been within the nuclear family of members of one’s own past or present nuclear family. Thus one is related to one’s grandmother because she is one’s mother’s mother. Conflict between granddaughter and grandmother would be felt by the woman in between, the connecting link, whose allegiances might be challenged.

Such networks are occasionally referred to as extended-family networks. This is somewhat misleading in that it suggests a principle of familial organisation other than the nuclear family. A more accurate rendition than extended-family networks (with a hyphen indicating networks of extended family) is extended family networks (without a hyphen, indicating extended networks of family). In principle, what connects households to one another is the fact that members in the different households are still members of the same family, as is most typically the case with independent adults and their parents or siblings.

The organising principles of practice make themselves visible when adjustments need to be made in novel or unusual situations. When Alfred dumped Lucy (following a few extra-marital affairs on his part, one of which culminated in pregnancy) such a situation emerged. Her family of origin lived in Darwin, and she suddenly found herself on her own in Newcastle, destitute with an infant. Following the separation she stayed with Alfred’s parents for a few months. It was uncomfortable but she could not afford not to. Once she had time to make some alternative arrangements, Lucy set out on her own. She repartnered a few years later. Alfred’s parents continued to maintain a relationship with Max, their grandson, even though Alfred had no interest in maintaining contact. (I will discuss this situation in greater detail later in the thesis.) What is more important for the matter
The Doxie Family

at hand is that once Lucy moved out, Alfred’s parents did not provide any further meaningful support to the household, nor were they expected to. Moreover, Alfred’s parents’ interest lay primarily with Max, and their contact with Lucy was focussed on managing their access to him. While Max might go over and stay with them on occasional weekends, Lucy did not have much to do with them. This situation shows the remarkable extent to which the existence of a direct link between households is important for the maintenance of contact. While Lucy did not bear grudges towards Alfred’s parents, and was quite happy to allow the contact to continue, Lucy and Max’s household was clearly not in the extended family network of Alfred’s parents, (even though it contained one of their consanguines). Moreover, when the story was related to me, the lack of contact between Lucy’s household and Alfred’s parents was seen as self-explanatory, and was not elaborated on spontaneously. The only matters which received spontaneous elaboration from Lucy and others were the circumstances surrounding her residence at Alfred’s parents’ place immediately after her marriage broke down, the continued contact between Alfred’s parents and Max, and the lack of any contact between Alfred and Max. These were the remarkable aspects of the story which deserved explanation: either instances in which contact was maintained without an intermediary who is a member in both family households, or instances in which the contact between erstwhile members of the same family household (Alfred and Max) was severed.

THE NUCLEAR FAMILY AND PRIVATE TIME AND SPACE: FURTHER EXTENSIONS OF THE CONTAINER SCHEMA

To my informants the nuclear family was an experiential paradigm which was replicated spatially in the institution of the family home, and temporally in the distinction between time at work and “after-hours”. This paradigm may be manifest in many other situations, too, as social agents apply similar logics from one context to another.

The family home in Newcastle, and throughout most of urban Australia, is a spatial equivalent of the social unit of the nuclear family. Architects normally design residential units for a heterosexual adult couple and two or three children, existing separately from other family units around them. The family home is clearly demarcated from the rest of the world. There is no sense in which urban design allows for units greater than the nuclear family. There is no sense in which a cluster of houses, a street or a suburb form a socially coherent unit.
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Very few of my married informants lived in an apartment, although some apartment blocks were available around Newcastle. While students in particular, and young people in general, might have lived as tenants in an apartment, the usual pattern was to move into a house before marriage, or upon marriage (de facto or *de jure*), and to start paying off a mortgage on the family home. Home ownership was perceived as an anchor for the family, the way to ensure stability in the future and an ability to “leave something” for the children. Also, my informants viewed rent as a waste of money, because once paid it was gone, whereas the mortgage payments went towards securing their most prized acquisition, and possibly their greatest financial commitment.

The house itself can be divided in different ways between front stages and backstages depending on the context and various attributes of the persons involved. Significantly, each such distinction is not nestled within a broader distinction. Rather, those various divisions intersect with one another. This is in contradistinction with the Berber house where each division was encapsulated by a similar distinction at a higher level (Bourdieu 1990c, 271–283). The lounge room or dining room can become a front stage when somewhat distant guests are invited in, and the kitchen may become the backstage. The kitchen is more often than not the backstage for women, who are usually those responsible for cooking.

Thus in one of the families I was familiar with, the woman would normally entertain her friends in the kitchen, as opposed to the man who would sit with his friends out in the yard. When I interviewed him at home, normally at a time when his wife was home, we conducted the interview either outside or in one of the rooms which was being renovated upstairs. When I interviewed her at home it was normally during the day when he was at work, and we would normally sit in the kitchen. This pattern replicated itself in other families. In one other family, for example, when I was invited to dinner with a few other guests—a rather formal occasion—we sat around the heavy dining-room table. But when I just dropped in for a coffee or a beer, we would sit either in the kitchen around the counter, or out on the porch in the back yard.

For children, often their rooms would constitute a backstage and an area where they are allowed to have more control over the use of space and their time. Very often this is not necessarily a matter of greater power on the part of the children, but rather a means of exclusion which enables the

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7 In Australian English lounge room means living room.
parents to more comfortably dominate the rest of the home. ‘Misbehaving’ children are often sent to their rooms to cool off.

A main bone of contention between adolescents and their parents was the care and tidying of the adolescents’ rooms, a matter of freedom and basic human rights for the children, and of elementary hygiene and responsibility for the parents. At issue were the parents’ surveillance rights. The different forms of power that children and parents could muster to assert their position were very much a reflection of the state of the field of the family at the time.

The parents’ bedroom constituted a backstage to the non-familial world. Infants, toddlers and prepubescent children normally enjoyed greater access to this room, and might be allowed to sleep there with their parents, but by adolescence this practice became rare, and adolescents would rarely find reason to enter their parents’ bedroom, especially at night. An integral aspect of this sanctity of bedrooms was the centring of sex around the nuptial bed, and the privatisation of sexuality and its confinement to that particular backstage within the family home. It would be deemed inappropriate for parents to engage in sexual intercourse or in erotic exchanges (such as explicitly erotic caressing, and “deep kisses”) in the presence of their children. One woman recounted to me the story of a woman she knew who did not believe in locking doors or knocking, until one day, in the middle of sexual intercourse, she noticed her seven-year-old son standing near the bed and looking. The story teller did not feel the need to elaborate on the reason why the presence of the seven-year-old was a problem. That was self-evident. To my informants sexual activity in front of one’s children would border on the incestuous and the sexually abusive. (The only exception would be infants who might be sleeping in the master bedroom and who were presumed to not understand what was happening.) The avoidance of the parents’ bedroom was thus part of the broader incest avoidance. Anxieties related to the confounding of parent–child relationships with erotic relationships were further expressed by some informants with whom I raised the issue who admitted that it was hard and uncomfortable for them to think of their parents as sexually active beings.

Whereas the internal separation of back- and front stages was contextual, the house boundaries were a fixed, clearly demarcated, boundary which forms the backstage for the family members as family, against the world. This construct was metaphorically organised by the container schema. It was made up of clearly defined boundaries demarcating two qualitatively opposing entities—a set of binary oppositions. It was particularly consonant with an atomistic view of the world. The view of society as composed of or as divisible to a set of distinct, autonomous, equivalent, individual
persons is another manifestation of this structure. This construct is indigenous to European experience and ipso facto, to anthropology in general and structuralism in particular (cf. Keen 1995).

This atomistic, indigenous structuralism of my informants’ experience of private time and space is epitomised in their family. For my informants, marriage created a fence of exclusion around a couple and their children. The nuclear family was thus qualitatively demarcated rather than fading away into extended kinship networks. This conception is made up of clear boundaries which make qualitative distinctions between fixed, mutually antagonistic categories.

This structure is also manifest in the way time is experienced in Australian Anglo-Celtic society. One example is daily time management. Employees sell their labour power to their bosses for a clearly defined period of time. During that period of time they are supposed to leave all their concerns behind and dedicate themselves to the job. This ends when the working day ends, and as the workers commute back home, they are supposed to leave behind their working concerns and resume family concerns. This boundary is a major stake in the struggles between employers and employees. Workers among my informants who were forced to work extra time for no remuneration felt wronged. They felt that work at irregular hours, that is, time which is by rights that of the private domain such as night shift (“dogwatch”), should be compensated for by penalty rates. By the same token, employers are rather sensitive to their employees’ using work time to deal with their own private affairs. After all, that time does not belong to the worker to dispense of as s/he pleases, but rather is the property of the employer.

Commuting might well be approached as a ritualised temporal boundaries, or at least an adjustment time, in which one leaves one space, social role and persona, and adopts another one. To my informants commuting often meant a transition between workplace and home; between a dominated position and a dominant position; between time in which one is controlled by others and time which one controls oneself; between a situation in which one’s presence is contingent upon one’s use value and productivity, and a situation in which one is accepted unconditionally. The ritual of commuting applies also to the children who commute to school.

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8 Penalty rate—“a rate of pay determined by an award, higher than the usual rate, in compensation for working outside the normal spread of hours” (Macquarie Dictionary of Australian English, Second Revision, s.v. “penalty rate”.)
The ritual of the commute allows people to slide smoothly from the household—the private domain—to the public domain of the workplace or school. It is a spatio-temporal separation of two different contexts in which social agents adopt different personas. It clearly demarcates private time and space—private in that it is not under the control of State or Market agencies—from the time and space which ‘belong’ to others (e.g. employers) or, in the very least, are controlled by others (e.g. teachers). Commuting allows for the two spheres to be kept apart both physically and symbolically.

Generally, weekends, afternoons, evenings and nights were private times which were rightfully dedicated to ‘non-work’ activities, primarily to families. For parents of young children, night-time was a backstage from daytime when the children are around. This extended beyond sexual activities. Topics of discussion which children should not be privy to were raised in those times, as well as other activities like sharing a joint with friends and ethnographers. The physical exclusion of children to their room was often paralleled in curfew hours which ensured that the later night hours are free from children and become the parents’ own time.

**ON THE NATURE OF THE CONTAINER SCHEMA**

The container schema as applied to the person, and extended to the family is preconceptual according to Johnson and Lakoff. While preconceptual schemata emerge spontaneously from the bodily experience of the young human organism in the ontogenetic process, the effects of the real world vary cross-culturally with variations in experience, and are mediated by the preexisting conceptual structure (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, 154), as well as by social structures.

Lakoff and Johnson argue that the container schema is linked to the preconceptual experience of the body, especially to the division between the interior of the body and the outside world, both of which are separated by the surface of the body (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, 29–32). This is the image schema that underlies the metaphorical extension from the person to the nuclear family unit. It is also the common metaphor which is used to conceptualise property or place, like home, country and so forth.
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This metaphorical extension is clearly motivated, but by no means inevitable. Other schemata are also anchored in the human experience of the body. The core–periphery one, for example, is also very common.

An artistic expression of the core–periphery schema is given by Roman Polanski in his 1976 movie The Tenant. In it, the drunk, unhinged protagonist (played by Polanski himself), mumbles as he is being undressed by an eager young woman (played by Isabelle Adjani):

He: “Tell me, at what precise moment does an individual stop being who he thinks he is?”
She: “You know, I don’t like complications.”
He: “If I cut off my arm, right? I say me and my arm. If you cut off my other arm, I say me and my two arms [. . .] Take out my stomach, my kidneys, assuming that were possible, and I say me and my intestines. Do you follow me? And now, if you cut off my head. What do I say? Me and my . . . Me and my head, or me and my body? What right has my head to call itself me? What right?”

As it happens, the phrasing of the question, “if you cut off my head” rather than “cut off my body”, underscores the fact that it is “me and my head”, rather than “me and my body” which is the answer to Polanski’s question. In this conception of self which Polanski uses for the ruminations of his paranoid antihero, the core of the corporeal self lies firmly in the torso, with the limbs and head being peripheral members of the body. On the other hand, quite clearly the head is less peripheral than arms or legs. This indicates how the core–periphery distinction can be gradational, rather than a qualitative break between two discrete categories.

This core–periphery schema which is one way of organising the experience of the corporeal person, seems to also accord very well with family structures and concepts of place in other parts of the world. The difference between the two metaphors—the core–periphery schema and the container

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9 In the Middle East and North Africa, for instance, in different contexts of kinship practice one may encounter a gradational approach moving from a core outwards, in which no clear demarcation lines appear which transcend specific contexts, and therefore no real qualitative difference exists between different areas. Bourdieu's analysis of the Berber house is one example of such an arrangement. The house contains structural relations within itself, relations which are replicated in the position of the house within the village and in the position of the village within the broader social arrangement (Bourdieu 1990, 271–283; cf. Bahloul 1996, for accounts of different households in North Africa; Michael 1995, is a literary work which describes much of the domestic organisation in a Jewish family in Baghdad). Among Bedouins the kinship system can be expanded at increasing levels of generality and incorporate increasingly large segments of the social universe. The extent of kinship ties that would be mobilised differs by context (for a recent study of Bedouin see Abou-Zeid 1991; 'Abd A-Rahman 1991; for a general review of the anthropology of kinship in the Middle
schema—may be linked to their uses. The core–periphery schema lends itself to highlighting the content of the core. The core’s extension into the periphery depends on this content. The container schema highlights the exclusion of that which is outside, and stands rather independently from the content of the interior of the container. This may be linked to the organisation of the possession of land. The container schema stresses the impermeable boundary which clearly encloses and demarcates, over the actual essence of that which is enclosed and demarcated. This is epitomised, among others, in land ownership which in common law is constituted as the right to exclude others, with little regard to what use if any one makes of the land from which others are excluded.  

The same distinction, which I have applied paradigmatically to land ownership, seems to obtain in the cultural construction of family. The container schema which organises Western and Northern European family stresses the boundaries which enclose the essence. Thus, when applied to sexual access, my informants thought of marriage as creating a boundary which excludes extra-marital affairs, so that having any amount of extra-marital sex was improper. By contrast, my informants did not seem to have a notion of how much sex should be had between spouses. Not having sex, as such, was not a violation of familial propriety the way engaging in extramarital sex was. Furthermore, my informants did not conceive of marriage as the sole context for having sex, and thought of premarital sex as both common and legitimate. Premarital sex was the norm rather than the exception, (especially in the last few decades when age-at marriage has increased, as has access to relatively reliable contraception). In essence, among my informants marriage was less about providing people with sexual access to others (i.e. spouses), and more about restricting sexual access between those married and others. Marriage’s major function with regard to sexual access is thus the creation of a boundary around the married couple, and not the fixing of the relationship between them.

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East see Eickelman 1998, Part III). One may also cite the famous Bedouin saying: “I against my brother; I and my brother against our cousin; I, my brother and our cousin against the neighbors; All of us against the foreigner”. A similar situation prevails in kinship and related constructions among Yolngu, where European constructions of discrete, clearly bounded, elementary units are quite alien (Keen 1995).

10 By contrast, among Bedouins, as in many parts of the Middle East before the encroachment of Europeanised bureaucracies, the essence of land tenure was possession and action upon the land rather than exclusion rights. Thus people who have rights of possession over date palms exercise those rights regardless of who might have rights over the land, while the rights over the land are thought of in relation to particular activities (pastoral etc.) (Abou-Zeid 1991). In the once-common Mushaa’ land-tenure system, the land that was worked by the village was divided into plots which were rotated among the village families from year to year. In a sense the rights of the users here were to access to the land, not over particular tracts of land (Baer 1974). This contrasts with traditional English and current Australian legal formulations in which land ownership is embodied in the right to exclude others rather than the right to particular use and access. Thus, the land owner’s ownership is expressed in a right to fence off the land and exclude all others from it.
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Similarly, when it came to disciplining children, there was a great deal of variation in discipline policy, but one thing that all parents I talked to seemed to agree on was their objection to people other than themselves and their partners disciplining their children. That included the children’s grandparents. Some grandparents I spoke with were reluctant to overstep the mark and encroach upon the exclusive territory of the parents. They also saw it as an advantage—they could take a relaxed and forgiving attitude towards their grandchildren, leaving the unpleasantness of discipline to their grandchildren’s parents.

Interestingly, this attitude extended to children too. One teenager whose mother had repartnered stated that she did not think her mother’s new partner had the right to discipline her or tell her what to do. She volunteered the observation that her opposition was one way of driving home to her mother’s partner that he was not fully part of the family, and that he would have to put in an effort to win and maintain her approval.\(^\text{11}\) A man who had moved in with his partner and her adolescent children said that the best survival strategy for him was to leave all discipline problems to his partner.

While the container schema is crucial in structuring the nuclear family, the core–periphery schema does play a limited role too in structuring family. It may be used to organise one’s mental structure of one’s extended kin network. Some relatives are closer than others, and some relatives are distant. Further, the formal system of reckoning relationships with degrees of relatedness and removal (e.g. second cousin once removed) is based on a gradational extension from an inner core to a periphery.\(^\text{12}\)

Resolving Metaphorical Contradictions

The basic schema which organises the realised category of the family in Northern and Western European metropolitan and settler societies is that of the container. But the container schema is static. As I pointed out above, the prototypical family trajectory includes a whole cycle in which new families are made, and family members move out of their families of origin and into their

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\(^{11}\) The few adolescents in blended families I interviewed were all aware of their position of power and used it. It seems like the opposition to the outsider’s disciplining authority was a convenient way to assert this power.

\(^{12}\) The container schema and the core–periphery schema are not the only structures of household and families around the world. In a recent ethnography from sub-Saharan Africa, Brad Weiss describes a pattern of social organisation in which inside and outside are oriented towards one another rather than qualitatively separated and opposed (Weiss 1996).
families of orientation. This movement, too, is organised by (and for) my informants, by recourse to the metaphorical motivator of the person. Perhaps the clear entanglement of the cyclical developments of family units with the life cycles of individual family members motivates the way the seeming contradiction is resolved.

The formation of new families and movement of persons from the family of origin to the family of orientation would, on the face of it, contravene the earlier description of the family as a bounded entity. The contradiction is at least partly resolved metaphorically by further entailments of the metaphorical structuring of family as person. The emergence of new families is structured along the schemata relating to birth, whereby new entities emerge from existing ones, and once emerged, they are separate containers which nonetheless may contain similar substances.

Ironically, perhaps, it is because the family becomes an embodied individual of sorts at a higher level that it allows within its boundaries the relaxation of some of the physical boundaries which mark off the person of its individual members from one another. It is precisely because the nuclear family is sometimes perceived to be an ontological equivalent of the individual that this violation of the person of its individual members is possible; just as it is precisely because within the boundaries of the nuclear family the atomistic nature of the individual is suspended that the family can be transformed into an individual of sorts. The ultimate suspensions of the boundaries of the individual include sexual reproduction, explicit dependency, licence on physical punishment and physical proximity, and above all, the fact of birth which is a blatant, but unavoidable, biological violation of the very atomism ascribed to the person of the individual.  

Reproduction is a fundamental cognitive model in the collection of models which combine to make the gestalt of the prototypical family. “To have a family”, to my informants, means to reproduce within the family. As one informant explained, “until you have children, you are not really a family. You are just a couple.” When my informants talked about “settling down” and “having a family”, the settling down referred to marriage in anticipation of children, and having a family referred to reproduction. The physical reality of birth becomes a practical metaphor for the emergence of the new family out of two old ones. Just as within the family the mother and father

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13 Within the context of the violation of the individual boundaries inside the family we can locate the family as the epitome of the alter ego to the market, as the privileged site of benevolence. It is within the family that homo oeconomicus loses his/her egotistical edge and cooperates, for to the extent that individuals relinquish their discreteness as atoms of society and fuse to form the family as the bounded societal atom, so does the common destiny of family
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combine to produce a new person which still shares an essence with his/her parents, so do the two members of a new couple combine to make a new family which is distinct, although still shares a familial essence with the two previous nuclear families. And just as the relationship between parents and their offspring is construed as direct, unmediated, unseverable and ‘organic’ (by blood), so the relationships between the new family and its families of origin are experienced as direct and enduring; and just as the relationship between mother and father is construed as always contingent and potentially terminable, so too the relationship between the two families of origin are experienced as contingent and weak.

The creation of a new family as children leave their home and make their own families is a source of structural tension. The creation of a new family by marriage (*de jure* or *de facto*) marks the transition of a person out of one family household and into another. (This could either be an immediate transition as one person marries and moves out of his/her family of origin’s household into his/her own family household. More commonly this transition is the culmination of a process that began with moving out of one’s parents’ home.) Obligations relating to the family of origin become secondary to one’s obligation to one’s “own” family. A great deal of effort is then exerted to prevent conflicts from arising between the demands of the family of origin and those of the family of orientation. This negotiation is one of the main concerns of family politics.

When a couple becomes “a couple” through either *de jure* marriage or *de facto* arrangements, they establish an exclusive relationship which removes them from the domain of their families of origin and forms the basis for the creation of a new family. This has some very practical significance to my informants. For example, before one is clearly involved in one’s own family of orientation, one may make claims on the home of one’s family of origin. This, however, changes when one creates one’s own family of orientation. Thus, unattached single people would quite commonly move in to their parents’ home for short periods of time, such as during periods of financial straits. Another area in which unattached singles relied on their families included use of washing machines and motor vehicles. This reliance is reduced as the new family is formed. In fact, to most informants the achievement of a measure of economic independence was a prerequisite to marriage.

The intensity of the enduring link between independently living single persons, and the homes of their parents, is clarified in the story of Franz. His parents separated when he was roughly

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members translate into a collective project, and becomes the basis for the familial enchanted economy, as it were—the disenchanted market economy’s mutually-constitutive opposite.

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seventeen years old. For a while he lived with his father. It was his choice, as he blamed his mother for the marital breakdown of his parents. (His mother had had an extramarital affair, and eventually left the family home to live on her own and continue her relationship with her lover.) He then moved in with his mother in order to patch up the relationship. Shortly thereafter they had an altercation and he decided to move out. His father, who was anxious that the son should maintain his relationship with his mother, would not let Franz come back home until he sorted out his differences with his mother. Franz decided to leave his mother’s home nonetheless, and the following day moved in with his ex-girlfriend’s family (he and his ex-girlfriend had already broken up). By doing so, he earned the wrath of his family of origin, including his older brother and sister who had left home a few years before. As he put it, “when I decided to do that, move out and live up with them [his ex-girlfriend’s family], my family cut me off completely. . . didn’t want to know me.” When I asked about his siblings, he said that his elder brother “would talk to me. My sister, she talked to me. I’ve seen her up at Green Hills [a shopping centre] [. . .] I’ve seen her up there one day. She has [sic] seen me and she said, ah, if I see you on the street and that I will still talk to you and all that, ‘cos you’re still me brother, but, she said, mum and dad doesn’t [sic] want anything to do with you while you’re living with them [the ex-girlfriend’s family], so, all that time I was looking for another place to live, and I found that one [where he lived at the time of the interview] in the paper. Now I get on great with dad again. And mum as well.” When I asked what exactly was the problem his family members had with his moving out of his mother’s place, whether they objected to his having left his mother, he answered “Ah, yeah, or they kind of like put it like I moved out of there to live with another family, and they kind of like felt betrayed that I was going to another family and lived with them. But I didn’t see it like that. I just wanted to get out, get away from mum.” But having learned of the way his act had been interpreted, Franz quickly moved out on his own. It is obvious that Franz had inadvertently violated some of the conventions of practice. By relying on the home of a different family he broke the boundary of the household which includes all members of a nuclear family, including those who are living on their own. By rights he should live either with his family of origin, or on his own (possibly sharing a flat with some flat mates), or set up a new family household of his own.

This situation changes when a couple becomes a family. In my informants’ world marriage entailed neolocal, conjugal co-residence. In fact, co-residence is what distinguishes between de facto marriages and the relationship of boyfriend–girlfriend which are of lesser commitment. Hence, for a boyfriend and girlfriend to “move in together” is a major transition on the way towards terminal monogamy. Once co-residing, spouses are no longer likely to move back in with their families of
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origin unless their marriages break down. Reliance on the homes of origin was ephemeral among my informants, and generally reserved for situations of last resort, or unusual circumstances. Clifford and Hildred, for example, moved in with his parents for a few weeks after they sold their old house and before their new house was complete. They said things were fine, but they were glad that they did not have to stay there for long.

The transition of persons out of the family household of origin and into the family household of orientation is the source of another structural tension, namely between the two families of origin which come to stand in a state of structural antagonism. Indeed, one of the main concerns of a new family is to define the relationships with the two old ones, and to balance their interaction to avoid a situation of favouritism. This is not to say that the two families of origin are in a state of active conflict. The structural conflict can express itself in a great deal of social labour, including goodwill, being exerted in order to avoid conflict. The structural conflict also means that when things do go wrong between in-laws, people understand why. It means that if someone strikes a very good relationship with one’s in-laws, that feat would be note-worthy. This can be contrasted with the structural complementarity of husband and wife, a complementarity which need not imply that those relationships are necessarily peaceful and cooperative. It does mean that when husband and wife do get on together, it makes sense and is unremarkable. If conflict ensues, the grapevine will start generating information and interpretations as to “what went wrong”.

Some rituals like the wedding, or the honeymoon, are used to symbolically create the structural separation between persons and their families of origin. At the same time, the organisation of the wedding, the reception, and the like allow the two families of origin to get involved in the new family, and cooperate with one another thereby establishing a pattern of interaction which would enable them to continue in a positive way later. A common pattern, for example, was for the family of the bride to organise the wedding, and the family of the groom to attend to the liquor. In any event, the planning of the wedding often brought together the parents of the two spouses-to-be, especially the mothers, to coordinate the ceremony, including such critical aspects as the list of invitees.

This is particularly important at first marriages when the couples are still young, when they are well and truly leaving the domain of their families of origin. It was very common in second marriages or the marriages of people who had been living out of home for many years to downplay the
significance of the wedding and to invest less effort and resources in it, or to forego the formal wedding or the elaborate ceremony altogether.

Sometimes a fierce competition between families of origin may ensue without taking the form of open hostilities, but the form of matching each other’s investment in the new couple in what might be structurally reminiscent of the potlatch. Financial support flowing down the generations, for example, can be used to out-do the other family of origin. Some grandparents kept themselves informed about the Christmas gifts the other grandparents of their grandchildren gave. Grandchildren themselves from a young age become, according to my informants, masters of manipulation and playing off grandparents against one another as well as parents against one another. Lucy recounted how her son, Max, would play up the gifts he got from one set of grandparents when talking to another set of grandparents, and sometimes even lie about the gifts he got. Mary Catherine, a young woman of eighteen whose parents divorced when she was a young adolescent, said that she noticed that she and a few other children of divorced parents would get more gifts than other children, because of the competition between parents and grandparents. “It’s like they are trying to buy us with all these presents” she said.

Of all in-law relationships, it seems the ones between the women are particularly charged and particularly crucial. This is so primarily because of the social division of labour that allocates the areas of familial and social relations primarily to the women. It is they who have more at stake, and stand more to lose, in the relationships between in-laws. This situation was confirmed to me both in private interviews and in focus groups with both men and women. In one of the all-women focus groups, when I tried to inquire why this was so, one of the women explained that “two bosses can’t share the same nest [. . .] as a home manager”, an answer which won the tacit approval of the other participants in the group. I will further explore this issue and related ones below when focussing on gender.

One context in which the separation between family of origin and family of orientation comes to the fore is the granny flat. The granny flat is a solution for conflicting pressures at particular conjunctures. Such a situation arises typically when for some reason it makes sense for an adult couple to share a house with one or two parents of either spouse. Such situations may arise as a result of financial pressures; or when an older person’s spouse dies and that person prefers to move in with his/her adult child. A different reason might be the deteriorating health of the spouse’s parent, who requires more constant attention.
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Such situations give rise to conflicting pressures. On the one hand is the requirement to share a house among three generations. On the other hand there is the exclusive barrier around the nuclear family household of the younger adult’s family of orientation. Both older generation and younger generation are concerned about their independence. The younger adults seek to defend their control over their own destiny as adults, and are wary about the possible interference on the part of the older generation. The older person is equally concerned to secure his/her control over his/her own destiny.

The granny flat is created when the house is physically divided into two households. The major one, and an additional small one—the granny flat—often created by closing off a balcony or a garage, or by getting a caravan and parking it in the yard. It is a way of maintaining a balance between proximity and independence, and reducing possible causes of tension between the generations.

For example, Eleanor had gradually become a carer for her mother and her mother’s partner in the years before my fieldwork. She and her mother never got on terribly well together, she said. In the first few years the mother and partner lived in the same house as Eleanor. Eleanor described that period simply as “hell”. She described her mother as a “control freak” who would try to control everybody, especially Eleanor. Eleanor was performing her caring tasks out of her sense of obligation by her own account, although, by her own admission, she had also become dependent on the carer’s pension which is paid by the Commonwealth government. A couple of years before my fieldwork, she had her house split in two in order to regain her sanity, and a small portion of the house was converted into a granny flat, so that there are two separate households. This, she said, enabled her to regain control of her own life, and enabled her to interact very minimally with her mother if she so chose. She said she did not know how she managed before the house was split in two.

THE MATE

One theme that has been developed in the anthropology of the Australian family threatens to undermine my analysis of the family as a bounded entity. That theme is the “mate” and his role in the family. Thomas Ernst argued that there is an Australian atom of family which includes the mate
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as well as the conjugal couple (Ernst 1990). This theme was also touched upon in Annette Hamilton’s analysis of the once-popular children’s book by May Gibbs entitled *The Complete Adventures of Snugglepot and Cuddlepie* (Hamilton 1975).¹⁴

However, nothing in my experience with intact marital partnerships in the field suggests that the mate has any role whatsoever in the family. In fact, the friendship networks of my male informants were very restricted. A few told me that they had no friends. This is very much in line with the qualitative data and cultural analysis of Don Edgar’s recent treatise on the Australian family (Edgar 1997, chapter 3)¹⁵ and with the situation in the English working class as reported by Graham Allan (Allan 1979, 69 ff.).

The situation is also very close to that described by Maila Stivens for a middle-class suburb of Sydney in the late 1960s. Her sample included members of what I have termed the dominant fractions of the dominated class, and dominated fractions of the dominant class. For all men involved, family formed the core of their social network. There were some differences between men of different class positions, though, namely “in the extent to which kin relationships formed a central part of their social contacts. For the more ‘private reserved family people’ of the lower middle class and the working class, ‘family’ was central. Professionals had more friends, but even the most sociable did not replace family with friends and their most intimate relationships still frequently involved kin” (Stivens 1985, 30).¹⁶

There does not seem to be much support for “the Mate” (singular) as an integral part of the Australian family in research, although the significance of “mates”—peers of the husband—has been observed in social studies of families (Williams 1981, 136–139). Claire Williams has operationalised belonging to mateship cliques as follows: “if a husband mixed with his mates socially without his wife more than twice a week, he was deemed to belong to a clique” (Williams 1981, 137). Williams found, based on this definition, that 45% of men belonged to mate cliques (Williams 1981, 137). Curiously, women socialised with other women on a much larger scale

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¹⁴ The attraction of the institution of the “mate” to Australian researchers is augmented by its being a quintessentially Australian institution. Since the 1960s a certain element of nationalism has flourished in Australian social sciences and humanities. Mateship, central as it is in Australian national(ist) mythology, has become extremely attractive. (Much of the Australian celebration of Australian exceptionalism which colours the analysis of mateship seems to me to be misplaced. I do not have the space to pursue the matter here, though.)  
¹⁵ Edgar’s observations on mateship are based on his interview with 100 men (non-randomly selected) and on his own life experience both as an Australian male, and as a family researcher (he was founding director of AIFS). His book also incorporates much data from survey research, but its great power comes from Edgar’s unabashed stance as an observant participant in Australian society.
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(Williams 1981, 144–146), although this did not become an issue of equivalent significance to males’ socialisation. This is partly due to the fact that working-class male mateship has become an item of interest to social scholars, and partly due to the fact that males’ extra-conjugal socialisation is a source of controversy among spouses, in a way which female extra-conjugal socialisation may not be (given that normally women organise social relations). Stivens, too, when writing about the extra-familial social pulls that men experience referred to men’s social drinking, especially on the way home from work, and women who complained about that practice (Stivens 1985, 28–29). (The assumption in writings about women’s social networks is that they support women, and thereby the family.)

In any event, frequent interaction in social networks like those described by Williams was not common among my married informants. They rather saw the kind of mateship and bonding between males which is antagonistic with family relationships as something of an anachronism.\(^{17}\) Both married men and married women often identified their spouses as their best friends (as did Edgar’s interlocutors—Edgar 1997, chapter 3). Obviously, the exclusivity of their conjugal intimacy incorporated amity in addition to copulation. Moreover, married couples most commonly socialised with other couples rather than with individuals.

Still, the single friends of married persons tended to be of the same gender as the married person. Also when associating as couples, men would normally interact primarily with men, and women with women. While such a norm was not articulated spontaneously, it was confirmed to me in response to my questions. Thus, one woman who claimed she and her husband were best friends also said that she would feel awkward if her husband formed intimate, even if non-erotic, friendships with other women, and that she expected him not to.

On the whole, however, for my married informants, friendships outside the family circle tended to be contingent, non-committal, fragile, voluntary. This was both their attraction (“you can always choose your friends, but not your family”), and their weakness. The most comfortable friendships that married people formed were with other married people as one couple with another. Otherwise, old friendships from before the couple’s marriage depended for their continuation on the spouse accepting the friend and joining into the friendship, turning the one spouse’s friend into “a friend of

\(^{16}\) The situation appears to be a bit different in rural Australia (e.g. Dempsey 1992; Oxley 1974).

\(^{17}\) It should be noted that attitudes towards mate cliques even among Williams’ informants themselves were by no means uniform, and a few of her male interlocutors held a dim view of mateship cliques (Williams 1981, 136–139).
The Doxie Family

...the family”. The closest to mateship I found among married informants were strong friendship bonds formed among women, rather than men, especially those women not in full-time employment, who often used the time when their partners were at work to socialise and carry out home-making activities together (shopping, child minding etc.).

Several explanations may be offered to the differences between Williams’ informants and mine. One has to do with a change in leisure practices among working-class Australians between the mid-1970s, when Williams conducted her fieldwork, and the mid-1990s, when I conducted mine. Factors which might have contributed to such a putative generational change include the collapse of working-class consciousness and workers’ pride; the embourgeoisement of workers which included the strengthening of the ideology of familism; and the accompanying inflation in cultural capital which demands increased investment in schooling and learning from a very young age. Further, the social dynamics of mining towns, like Williams’ Open Cut, might also be different from those of established cities like Newcastle. In mining towns people often come from various places for a limited amount of time, and are situated both spatially and socially in a liminal space, something akin to what Victor Turner has termed “liminal state” (Turner 1969). According to Turner, participants in liminal states will develop “communitas”, and create strong bonds between each other as the individualising and distinguishing features of each individual disappear. Significantly, mateship cliques among Williams’ informants were rather specific to occupation types (e.g. mechanics with mechanics), supporting the proposition that the bond which tied such cliques had to do with similarity in working conditions.

Another potential source of discrepancy between Williams’ findings and mine is that her sample was heavily weighted in favour of young couples, presumably in their twenties, with pre-school children (Williams 1981, 135), while most of my married informants were in their thirties and beyond, often with older children, and mostly members of the dominant fraction of the dominated class. The discrepancy between the findings might therefore partly reflect the different life stages of our informants. Later in this thesis I will discuss the transformation in masculine style from larrikin masculinity to respectable masculinity which typifies working-class male life trajectories. It could be that the transition between the two is accompanied by a transition of orientation from a youthful orientation towards peers, to an orientation towards one’s family.

There remains the question of the discrepancy between Ernst’s and Hamilton’s presentation of the mate as a central figure in Australian family life, and the argument of Stivens, Edgar and my own
(echoed for England by Allan) to the contrary. The discrepancy, I propose, is the product of a confusion of two kinds of analysis. While the mate is an essential aspect in Australian mythology, it is not an essential aspect of Australian social practice. This occurs when analysis of the content of national mythology, such as Ernst’s and Hamilton’s, are presented or read as social practice.

**CONCLUSIONS AND ELABORATION**

Family, then, operates as a realised category. As both a cognitive structure and a social structure it has the following characteristics:

1. To a considerable extent the individual person, structured by the container image schema, is metaphorically extended to construct the family.

2. The nuclear family is metonymically extended to household and home. This is because the unity of family with household and home are part of the gestalt of the nuclear family. Thereby the image schema which originates in the person and is applied to the family comes to structure the home and the household, as well as property in general which in capitalist ideology/culture is linked to the person of the social atom, the individual.

3. The organisation of the family by the container schema leads to structural tensions relating to reproduction, when members of family households leave their family household of origin to form a new and separate family household. I discussed the way the tension manifests itself, and how it is resolved.

4. While the container schema is salient in organising the nuclear family and is metaphorically extended spatially (home) and temporally (e.g. weekend), the core–periphery schema does play a limited role in conceptualising extended kin. The latter may be graded by degrees of kin proximity.

5. For different reasons neither mateship nor extended kin networks conflict with the analysis of the family as a clearly bounded entity. The former was not as significant in practice among my informants as some analyses might have suggested. The latter not only does not violate the structural principles of the realised category of the family—it, in fact, adheres to them and reinforces them.

The nuclear family as a realised category forms a gestalt which incorporates many individual cognitive models. Such models include the division of labour within the family, the convergence of social and biological parenthood, dependency of children on parents and so forth. ‘Unpacking’ this
gestalt into its constitutive parts would yield components which are cognitively less basic than the whole gestalt. For example, the gestalt includes a mother which is the genetic mother, the birth mother and the social mother. These more specific maternal models when taken on their own are not basic-level models, though (for a full discussion of levels of categorisation see Rosch 1978). In other words, the gestalt as a whole is cognitively efficient, or practically ‘grammaticised’. Grammaticised concepts are distinguishable from ungrammaticised concepts in that the former are used rather than pondered; automatic rather than controlled; non-conscious rather than conscious; effortless rather than effortful; fixed rather than novel; and conventional rather than personal (Lakoff 1987, 320; cf. Keesing 1990).

In this chapter I focused on the doxa and the orthodoxy of the family in order to paint a preliminary image of the family. In the next chapter I will refine and elaborate the analysis by adopting a different angle, and focussing on heterodoxies.
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Doxa, Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy

To the extent that agents' dispositions match the prevailing patterns and regularities of practice, so would they experience the world as self-explanatory and self-evident. In other words, when habitus and social structures match, the arbitrary social order is perceived as natural, as an integral part of the mundane order of things—simply, the way things are. This mode of justification bypasses logic and reasoning, ideological contemplation, or any kind of explicit consideration. Things are simply the way they are and could not possibly be otherwise for the simple reason that this is the nature of things. Such taken-for-granted things are what Bourdieu calls doxa (Bourdieu 1977, 164 ff.).

Orthodoxy is the term Bourdieu uses for all those practices—of judgement, of physical action, of thought, and so forth—for which alternatives are conceivable from an agent's perspective, but which are still the dominant practices. Heterodoxy denotes alternative practices which are not the dominant ones (Bourdieu 1977, 164 ff.).

Heterodox Challenges

The complex which is the realised category of the family is made up of both doxic and orthodox elements. The core of the family remains doxic. The visible margins are orthodox. In this chapter
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I initially focus on the anatomy, as it were, of a few heterodox challenges. Subsequently I broaden the analysis to a discussion of heterodox challenges in general, and make some suggestions about how to interpret the relative resilience of the realised category of the family.

**HOMOSEXUAL FAMILIES**

In both personal interviews and focus groups, homosexual families were among the first examples to be cited by informants to demonstrate that the Australian family is in a profound process of change. It was viewed by my informants as a novel, significant and radical alternative to the prototypical family. This view of the homosexual family as a radical alternative was shared across the spectrum of attitudes towards homosexuality and the homosexual family.

Significantly, homosexual lifestyles which were not familial were not seen as subversive. It was those homosexuals who strove to be recognised as a family, with full parenting rights, whom my informants cited as challenging the social order. Neither the stereotype of the promiscuous, sexually active homosexual, nor that of the celibate homosexual living alone, seemed to hold such a challenge to possibly the most central of social institutions in the eyes of my informants. Nor was homosexual sex as such conceived of as particularly challenging. At most they were seen as an alternative lifestyle, an eccentricity, by some even an abomination, but not more.

The challenge is not homosexuality as such, but rather the demand for recognition of homosexual unions as marriages which entitle the homosexual couple to the same status as heterosexual conjugal couples. That this should be seen as a major challenge to the nuclear family is remarkable precisely because of the great similarity between the notion of homosexual families and the nuclear family. Homosexual families, or more specifically, homosexual marriages of the kind that my informants felt to be radical, were those which involved exclusive monogamy and which would incorporate children in a position that is commensurate with the mainstream nuclear family.

The logic which has homosexual families—but not unfamilial homosexuality—as a challenge has its equivalent in heterosexual practices. Part of the ideology of the nuclear family includes a separation between moral/outward/stated behaviour and the possibility of contravening it in practice. Thus, adultery does not in any way challenge the notions of the nuclear family. Adultery might have detrimental ramifications for a particular family, but not for the nuclear family as a
realised category. It would be adultery which refused to be seen as such, an open relationship that is symbolically and publicly asserted between a practically married person and a sexual partner other than that person’s spouse, which would challenge the nuclear family. By the same token, homosexuality does not challenge the standard nuclear family so long as it does not seek to advance official/public/legitimate alternatives to any of the nuclear family’s constitutive parts.

I should stress that the official/public/legitimate domain here is not that which is confined to lawyers, politicians, and the like. It is the level at which things can be said freely without worrying about who knows what, the level at which knowledge is explicit and for universal consumption, the level which is ‘for the record’ as it were. It is the level at which one can choose to operate if one wants to ignore what really happens and focus on what should be happening. This is in contrast with knowledge for exclusive circulation or consumption, which in its broadest sense is the ‘public secret’,\(^1\) the instance in which the entire public moves, as it were, to an ‘in-camera’ sitting of the ‘committee of the whole’.

What the homosexual family specifically challenges when it demands recognition is the identity of the procreative union with the family, and the biological reproductive basis for parenthood (Weston 1995). Challenged is the nuclear family’s inclusion of the two sexual partners who produce the children involved. To be prototypical parents, a couple needs to be a complementary union of both sexes. This is contravened in the homosexual couple.

By posing as an alternative, this heterodoxy accomplishes three things. What elements it shares with the realised category of the nuclear family, it further reinforces by glossing over them at the very moment of taking them for granted. The association of the family with the main tasks of rearing children, the association of the family with an enduring, sexually exclusive union of two adults, the identification of the nuclear family with the household, the exclusion of non-nuclear family members from the nuclear family, are all reinforced by the homosexual family, and are further secured as doxic by this very challenge. The second accomplishment of the homosexual family challenge is to put forward some alternative practices to current ones, namely, the heterosexual aspect of the nuptial arrangement. Derived from this accomplishment is the third accomplishment which is not unique to the homosexual family—namely elevating the gendered character of the spousal relationship from the security of doxic ubiquity and invisibility, to the

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\(^1\) The concept of the public secret was developed mostly by Taussig (Taussig 1999), and is used here rather loosely.
focused position of orthodoxy. This gendered character of the family becomes a clearly and explicitly defined set of practices to be defended, attacked, measured, evaluated and reformulated.

The logic of the homosexual family is an extreme expression of the logic of seriality in the family, a logic which is expressed in the rhetoric of the marital dyad as partners, and which is closely associated with the struggle for emancipation of women and the transformation of the gendered division of labour. Seriality refers to a logic which constitutes positions as fully interchangeable. Thus, rather than highlighting a gendered division of labour among spouses, serial logic would constitute these positions as equivalent, and therefore interchangeable (cf. Sartre 1976–1991; and see the adaptation of Sartre’s ideas in Metcalfe 1988). The serial aesthetic is closely associated with the individualism of the dominated fractions of the dominant class as well as with the tenets of economic rationalism, the motivating ideology of the dominant fractions of the dominant class, whose interests in the individualistic view of society and bourgeois rights and freedoms are, of course, material as well as symbolic.

SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES

I have come across several single-parent families in the field. All but one were mother-headed, a fact consistent with the figures across Australia (see figures in chapter two). Although some such families resulted from unplanned pregnancies or the death of a parent, single parenthood in my field was primarily the result of divorce or separation. All single parents I interviewed indicated that they would rather be partnered, but not at all costs. Single parenthood might be preferable to some relationships, but was not an ideal in its own right. Single parents reported they did seek romantic liaisons with other people in the hope of repartnering. The expressed reasons ranged from loneliness, a desire to be “normal” and give children a “normal” life, the desire to share the pressures of parenthood, and the economic burden of single parenthood. (On the association of single parenthood with poverty see chapter two.) Thus, single-parent families remain an unstable unit because of the explicit possibility, even hope, of forming a two-parent nuclear family. The prototypical family remains the stable and preferred unit.

To better understand the historic conjuncture of the emergence of the homosexual family as a heterodox challenge it should be recognised that the doxic aspect it destabilises, namely the gendered aspect of the nuclear family, is a stake in a broader political struggle and is rooted in the dominated fractions of the dominant class—especially dominant-class feminisms. Since the 1970s, gender concerns and gender politics have become a major interest of academic (cf. Curthoys 2000) and bureaucratic discourses of family, inequality and sociality.
Other than in the mere number of parents involved, single-parent families seemed to differ in several ways from double-parent families. The fence of exclusion around the single-parent family is more permeable, in two ways. One is the sexual access of adults outside the family to the single parent. The other is the greater access of relatives, especially female, who take over some of the care responsibilities and assist the single parent. This applied both to the mother-headed families, and to the one father-headed family for which I have some information. A common complaint of single mothers was that their relatives tended to interfere in their affairs in a way which they would never have done when they were married. (They did also admit, though, that they also relied on these relatives to a greater extent.)

For example, Phyllis, a mother of an eight-year-old girl, had one married sister. Phyllis was in daily contact with her mother, and relied on her mother for a great deal of support, both with finances and with childcare. She did not always appreciate her mother’s presence and greater involvement in her life. At times she needed to resist her mother’s interference in her life. Her married sister, too, was a source of support. The married sister was employed full-time, and at times relied on Phyllis for childcare or chores around the house, an arrangement which served both the sister’s need for help and helped Phyllis financially. Also in her relationship with her sister, Phyllis felt a measure of weakness. At times she felt that her sister was also trying to dominate the way she was conducting her affairs. The economic power differential was an element in that power differential. She needed the financial support from her sister, but she felt that that support was the basis for her sister overstepping the mark and meddling in her affairs. By contrast, the married sister experienced greater autonomy in her relationship with the mother and other relatives. This was partly the result of her economic position, and partly a recognition of the fact that she shares her life with her husband, and is therefore not as open to her relatives’ intervention.

Phyllis, like all other single parents I interviewed, did not originally intend to become a single mother when she fell pregnant. In her case it was an unplanned pregnancy which happened when she had a boyfriend. When she became pregnant her boyfriend proposed to marry her, but she told me she turned him down because she knew he only proposed because she was pregnant. In the period that followed, as a result of her refusal, they were drawn apart, and eventually he left town. Phyllis had not seen him for years, and did not know where he lived.
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The fact that fathers can function as single parents may itself be experienced as a heterodox stance in that it challenges the gendered division of labour. Still, father-headed families, including the one I came across during my formal fieldwork, had a heavy involvement of female relatives of either living or dead spouses, as well as unusually greater responsibilities borne by adolescent daughters. In essence, then, the gendered division of familial labour is not greatly violated by father-headed, single-parent families. What single-father families do reinforce is the supremacy of the biological, parental links which tie parents to children in bonds of responsibility.

As is the case with homosexual families, single parents’ challenge to the nuclear family is limited. None of the single parents I interviewed or spoke with ended up as single parents intentionally. It was rather that something went wrong on the way towards the nuclear family. Even if by default they remained pretty stable, single-parent families were always experienced as a temporary arrangement because of the possibility and hope of repartnering on the part of the single parent.

By struggling to survive and balance the requirements of paid work with the demands of caring, single parenthood further amplifies the doxic aspects of parenthood, which place the responsibility for the welfare of the child on the shoulders of those who bore them. These doxic aspects are experienced as love, and are accompanied by an orthodox ideology of social responsibility which is predicated on the presumed intentionality of the act of parenting—because the parents produced the child, they should deal with the consequences. This ideology is reproduced in cases of adoption, when the adopted parents undertake to look after the children, an undertaking which is implicit for the ‘natural’ parents in the act of parenting. When parents do the ‘wrong thing’, they might be criminalised or medicalised.

The single-parent family has been normalised as a family type in Australia. This is expressed in various ways. ABS and AIFS have defined this arrangement as the lone-parent family and have proceeded to measure its manifestation. State agencies and academic knowledge producers have increasingly turned this type to the object of contemplation, consideration and action. Finally, in

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3 Lone-parent family is defined as “A person aged 15 years or over who does not have a usually resident spouse (i.e. married or de facto partner) but has at least one usually resident child (natural, step, adopted, fostered or otherwise related) with no spouse or child of his/her own” (de Vaus & Wolcott 1997, 136).
cultural production for mass consumption there is an increased representation of the single-parent family as a strategy in its own right, rather than the result of a prematurely terminated marriage.  

While not necessarily wishing to deviate from the orthodoxy of the nuclear family, the cumulative effect of single-parent families, and its normalisation as a type, have contributed to its establishment as a heterodox practice, which nonetheless shares most of its elements with its orthodox counterparts.  

Again here, to understand why such practices emerge as an established heterodoxy, it is important to bear in mind the interests of particular fractions among the dominant class in redefining gender roles, in the emancipation of women and the incorporation of working-class women into the workforce, as well as the redefinition of the legal rights which are involved in marriages. It is through the exercise of the symbolic power of these fractions that the single-parent family, particularly the single-mother family, emerges as an established and recognised heterodox challenge.

DE FACTO MARRIAGES

On the whole, de facto marital arrangements that I encountered followed the pattern of de jure families except the spouses were not formally married and did not share the same surname. I should note here that while “de facto” is a universally recognised term, its counterpart, de jure, which is used here to refer to the nuptial partnership, is not in daily use. Unless explicitly designated as “de facto”, nuptial arrangement are taken to be de jure. In other words, the de facto tag still designates it as heterodox, while the lack of an equivalent tag for the de jure couples underscore their orthodox, unmarked nature.

De facto marriages are flexible arrangements which lend themselves to manipulation in presentation quite easily. Existing de facto marriages were described to me by informants as families which exist to the same extent that nuptial families do, the only difference being “the piece of paper”.

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4 For example, shortly after I returned from the field in 1996 ABC TV aired a locally produced prime-time miniseries entitled Simone de Beauvoir’s Daughters, in which stereotypical “yuppie” women set out to get pregnant and become single mothers.

5 Furthermore, as I argued in chapter two, single-parent families today are not unprecedentedly abundant in a historical perspective.
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This presentation is not completely accurate as often the level of commitment involved in de facto marriages is less than in de jure arrangements. For example, my informants agreed that dissolving a de facto arrangement was easier than de jure arrangements, primarily because of the relative freedom from judicial formality. Moreover, whereas previous de jure marital arrangements always need to be remembered and recounted in one’s biography, de facto relationships can be easily glossed over, and relegated to the lesser commitment of a boyfriend–girlfriend relationship. This was most apparent when collating biographical data from different informants. In a few cases the number of previous relationships they reported for themselves and their spouses did not tally, and when I further investigated the matter it normally transpired that some did not count de facto relationships while others did. Unfortunately, I did not pursue this issue of creative accounting of past liaisons while in the field. It strikes me in hindsight that the more intimate the atmosphere of the interview, the more the discourse of the interview was that of familiarity, the more were previous de facto relationships or livings together likely to be mentioned. Significantly, married women were more likely to downplay and overlook previous de facto relationships than were their husbands.

I encountered mainly two kinds of de facto relationships. One was of a couple living together as a prelude to formal marriage. This would normally last from several months to a few years and culminate in a wedding. It was a way for a couple to have a trial run, as it were, without raising the stakes by undergoing the expensive nuptial arrangements and the social obligations which are involved in a wedding, and the greater difficulties in dissolving the union should the need arise. To many it was a way of reducing the stakes, emotional as well as material, until such time as procreation begins, the stage by which arrangements need to be formalised to match the new stakes which are involved. Sometimes boyfriends and girlfriends “move in together” as a way for the couple to reduce the costs of living away from the parental home, although group living which did not involve romantic attachments was also common.6

A different type of de facto relationship I encountered was that in which the adults involved, or at least the wife, were past their first marriage. Part of the rationale for this arrangement was the reduced urgency for the wedding. The first wedding seems to function as a rite of passage, especially to the woman, which signifies full adulthood, and is no longer critical for subsequent

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6 Group living was normally on an ad hoc basis, and very volatile when involving people in their late teens and early to mid-twenties. Residents in such households might move out at very short notice for any number of reasons (e.g. running
familial arrangements, especially if there were children involved in the first marriage. Family names are also less of a concern in such situations. It is common for the woman to revert to her maiden surname, and for the children to maintain their genitor’s surname. One woman I interviewed retained her surname from her first marriage because she thought it was too much of a hassle to do anything about it. Another reason cited by once-married people for de facto arrangements is that having gone through the travails of separation and divorce once, and being painfully aware of the risks of marital break-down, individuals are seeking to lower the stakes in their relationships.

In all these instances of de-facto arrangements, then, the extent to which the full complex of the prototypical family is, in fact, challenged is very limited indeed.

NON-TYPES

There are also heterodox challenges which appear as mere ad hoc arrangements and are therefore not recognised as alternative types by social agents. One example is probably the greatest departure from the realised category of nuclear family which I encountered in the field. It is a concrete set of relationships which had evolved over time as a set of ad hoc arrangements.

This arrangement involved two un-partnered adult women living in separate homes—a good twenty minutes drive away from one another—and their daughter. Ruth presented eight-year-old Michelle as her quarter daughter. Quarter, she said, because half of what a person is passes on through the genes, and half through the environment. Michelle was not her biological daughter, so she only considered herself responsible for half of the environment which is half of what makes a person, hence, a quarter. Margaret, Michelle’s genetrix, was credited by Ruth with half the child (half the genes and half the environment), and Michelle’s pater, who had only seen his daughter three times in the eight years since she was born, was credited with a quarter of the child by virtue of his contribution of half her genes. Indeed, Ruth is a mathematician—she was employed at the time as a consultant in a chemical industrial complex in Newcastle. But the quantification of parenthood carries more significance than might at first seem. I will return to this point shortly.

out of money, getting a job elsewhere, moving in with a romantic partner). This would leave the remaining residents with increased rent and the task of finding a new resident who would be acceptable to all current residents.
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Ruth, Margaret and Michelle’s arrangement emerged gradually. Margaret had been born and raised at the Blue Mountains near Sydney. When she moved as a young woman to Newcastle she did not have relatives nearby. This is significant because both women acknowledged that had Margaret had relatives around, especially women of the same generation, their arrangement would probably have never emerged, because it would have been those women who would have had “a better initial claim”, as Ruth put it, over Michelle and over the responsibility to assist Margaret when she unexpectedly fell pregnant.

When Margaret fell pregnant, she turned to Ruth, her close friend, for support. During the pregnancy, at a stage too late for an abortion, medical complications arose which required surgical intervention. Ruth provided physical as well as mental support to Margaret. Ruth also accompanied Margaret to pre-natal classes.

Following the birth of Michelle, Margaret was ill, and further relied on Ruth’s assistance. Shortly after returning home, a severe storm struck Newcastle, and Margaret was left without running hot water. (The versions of the story differed here. Ruth claimed Margaret had never had hot water in her apartment and following the storm had no running water whatsoever. Margaret insisted that she had had hot water before the storm, and only lost it during the storm). Michelle was ten weeks old at the time. Immediately following the storm, Ruth kept Michelle as Margaret moved between Ruth’s place and her own putting some order into her own home. Mother and daughter would come over to Ruth’s for a shower on a regular basis.

Margaret resumed paid employment very quickly. Her work included contract work at times, and there was a period in which she did night shifts. Ruth minded the baby, at first at Margaret’s place, and progressively at her own place. This developed into a more normal arrangement as time passed. When Michelle was three the two women formalised the relationship legally, and Ruth was granted guardianship over Michelle. At least part of the consideration was the concern Margaret had over what would happen in case she died. An earlier brush with cancer had made her aware of her own mortality. (Even though this was not told to me, I would speculate that the relaxed attitude towards the child, and the nights she was not encumbered with the care of Michelle, also fitted in with Margaret’s artistic bohemian lifestyle.) This also allowed Ruth to play a greater role in Michelle’s life as now she was empowered to sign various school forms and other documents which require the approval of a legal guardian.
Margaret thought her own childhood experience might have facilitated the emergence of this arrangement. She explained that she and her brothers were the only children in their extended family (i.e. parents, uncles and aunts and grandparents). She remembered spending a lot of time with her two favourite aunts and her grandmother, all of whom "mothered" her. This might have prepared the grounds for the arrangement that later emerged with Ruth.

At the time of my fieldwork a stable arrangement had been in place for quite some time. Michelle had her own room in both homes, and would normally spend the first half of the week at Margaret’s, and the second two to three days at Ruth’s. Holidays, weekends and so forth were determined on an ad hoc basis, although Margaret had Michelle more often on such occasions.

This arrangement is heterodox in many ways. The two adults are not romantically or sexually involved with one another, nor have they ever been. They live apart, and are not related to one another. Both lay claim to Michelle as a daughter. The women consider their relationship with one another that of friendship, not family, but their relationship with Michelle as familial.

However, inevitably, this heterodoxy overlies a profound doxic and orthodox basis. This is evident in Margaret and Ruth’s use of doxic notions of parenthood and familism. It is important for both that their families of origin did, eventually, accept their arrangement. Ruth’s parents had once attended a function for grandparents at Michelle’s school. Margaret’s parents had also accepted Ruth’s parental role. The importance placed on the acceptance of the other partner by both women’s families of origin, and the sense of relief that this arrangement was, in fact, accepted, and that Michelle was accepted by Ruth’s family, all resemble the family politics surrounding the formation of a blended family.

More profoundly, the societal experience of maternity, and the construction of maternity are being strongly reinforced within this heterodox arrangement. I mentioned above that Ruth considers Michelle a quarter her offspring, and half Margaret’s. This is more than a mathematical manifestation of pop developmental psychology. While Ruth is a joint guardian, Margaret has exclusive care and control rights (which are legally deemed to have been delegated to Ruth when she has Michelle), as well as exclusive custody. Both women acknowledge that if somebody would need to give up her career to look after Michelle if she were to become severely ill or incapacitated, it would be Margaret who would do so. Margaret is the ultimate adult responsible for Michelle. Also, if one of the adults should want to move from town, it is quite clear that Michelle would stay
with Margaret. (Indeed, Ruth’s family of origin were at first concerned at such possible outcomes and the hurt it might cause to Ruth, but they became more confident as time passed by.) Also in the division of time between the two homes, Michelle spends more time at Margaret’s home. Although Ruth attends school events and P&C events if they interest her at the time, Margaret is the one normally mostly involved in these affairs. In other words, Ruth’s rights in Michelle do not in any way reduce Margaret’s supreme rights and responsibilities which are grounded in her being the natural mother.

Once identified as parents in whatever quantifiable capacity, the implications are again articulated in doxic ways. Ruth, for example, insisted that “if you’re going to have a child, if you produce a child, you have a responsibility you cannot ignore. If you choose to get involved [as she did] you acquire a responsibility you cannot ignore.” The responsibility towards the child is especially important in the period before it can look after itself. An important aspect in the acceptance of Ruth and Margaret’s arrangement was the legitimation of Ruth’s discharge of parental obligations, such as attending with Michelle school birthday parties and similar events which are designed for children and their parents. Here, again, the heterodoxy of Ruth carrying out parental roles is only enabled by reinforcing the doxic relationship of responsibility that parents, as carers, have towards children.

In fact, Ruth compared their arrangement to the situation which prevails with divorced families in which children have two homes between which they rotate, only in this case the parents had never been married and never split up. As such, maternity and parenthood are confirmed. The ultimate responsibility of the producers of children for the welfare of the children is upheld. Also, the desire of the unpartnered Ruth to partake in the parental experience further conforms to a (highly gendered) experience of adulthood which stresses the joys of parenting, the satisfaction derived from caring for a helpless and dependant young person. Another set of doxic relations which are reinforced in this double-familial situation is the overlap between the family boundary and coresidence. Michelle’s belonging to two families, as it were, is manifested in her permanent residence in two households.

Although this arrangement evolved over almost eight years, it was still tenuous in many ways. For one, the power relations between the adults are such that Margaret can unilaterally terminate Ruth’s

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relationship with Michelle at any time. Possible partners, especially of Margaret who was more prone to form romantic attachments, always threatened to throw the arrangement out of balance. Margaret was very sensitive to this situation and took great care to introduce male friends to Ruth and try to eliminate possible complications. But this did not change the tenuous position of Ruth.

REFINEMENT OF CONCEPTUAL DIVISION BETWEEN HETERO DOXY TO ORTHODOXY

The relationship between heterodoxy, orthodoxy and doxa is dynamic. Alternative practices emerge to constitute heterodoxy, forcing their analogous dominant practices from doxa to orthodoxy. In the unfolding of the historical process, practices move between heterodoxy and orthodoxy as their alternatives move in opposing directions on the same orthodoxy–heterodoxy scale. Some practices disappear altogether, while in an associated process other practices become established or re-established as doxic thereby falling out of sight too. The historical sketch in chapter two describes a few features of the family which were once doxa or orthodoxy, and have since disappeared (baby-farming being a case in point).

At this stage I propose to use the metaphor of scale to identify the ranges of doxa, orthodoxy and heterodoxy. Perhaps a point of reference could be incest regulation, one of the traditional concerns of the anthropology of kinship. When discussing incest, my informants imagined primarily sexual relations between a father and his young daughter, and saw it as an abominable aberration. Incest is an instance of a heterodox practice. When I expanded the discussions of incest, my informants would express similar, and even more extreme, disapproval of father–son incest, which to them meant the rape of a young boy by his father. Compared with attitudes towards this heterodox practice, the opinions on mother–son and mother–daughter incest are remarkable. Although my informants would admit to its theoretical possibility, they could not sense it as a real possibility. They could not empathise with such a mother. So if the avoidance of incest involving the father was orthodoxy, to my informants the avoidance of maternally initiated incest was doxa. The differences between the apprehension of maternal and paternal incest are part of the broader configuration of gender which will be discussed later in this thesis. For the purpose of the current discussion it might be possible to posit the existence of a threshold of heterodoxy around maternal

8 I am using the word here in its original sense, and not as a synonym for sympathise.
incest. To my informants it is not a part of reality, although maternal incest does occur in Australia, and is slowly coming to the attention of some fractions of the dominant class (e.g. Crisp 1991). Therefore, if we believe my informants who deny knowledge of the incidence of such events and who find it inconceivable, then we can say that in their social space the avoidance of maternal incest is doxic. If we disbelieve my informants’ denial of knowledge of the practice, and assume that some of them could or have engaged in the practice, then maternal incest must be one of the most extremely heterodox practices in that it would rarely occur, its possibility is not normally raised publicly, and its existence is flatly denied to anthropologists. In this instance maternal incest is extremely heterodox, and its avoidance a powerful orthodoxy.9

Maternal incest, and its avoidance, can be envisaged as two extreme poles of a continuum, or scale, which leads from heterodoxy to orthodoxy. On the margin of heterodoxy one could locate practices experienced as repugnant which betray a “sick” mind. Very often the practitioners of such extreme heterodoxy share the orthodox judgement of their own practices, as, for example, do sex offenders who actively seek medical help in the form of hormonal treatment. From the margin in which practices are barely comprehensible one might move further on the scale to practices which are comprehensible but are generally judged to be downright wrong. This for the purposes of kinship studies might include extra-marital rape and paternal incest. Moving further along the way one might find spousal rape.10

Moving further from such practices we might find practices which are considered idiosyncratic or bizarre outcomes of unusual circumstances, but which are still seen by social agents as ad hoc arrangements, not quite a type of practice. Ruth, Michelle and Margaret’s family arrangement could probably come under this category.

Further towards the orthodox pole would be practices which are constituted as types and are perceived as legitimate by their practitioners. Homosexual practices are of this kind. If we were to

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9 Incidentally, masculine domination as such is no explanation for the different statuses of maternal and paternal incest. In Japan, some studies have indicated that maternal incest is more commonly reported than paternal incest (Minami 1984; Kawana 1980). Whether this is a reflection of the rate of incidence of incest, or rather of a bias in reporting due to the different tendencies of men and women to report incest, is a moot point (Uhlmann 1992). But, given the attitudes of my informants, it is a significant contrast that maternal incest is, in fact, a conceivable reality to the commonsense of a considerable number of Japanese.

10 I raised this issue in general terms with a few informants, both male and female, and all seemed to consider forced sex within marriage as rape or sexual violence and abuse. These were, however, rather abstract conversations, which may not correlate well with practice. I was not aware of any existing marriage in the field which included spousal rape. In any event, whether practiced among some of my informants or not, some Australian judges still view spousal rape more favourably than my informants did.
bracket off a certain area of social space, these practices would appear to be orthodox—a legitimate exercise by members of a sexual minority of their rights. Their conflict with orthodox views is very much a reflection of a symbolic conflict between different social segments in which these practices are heterodox, and the areas in which these practices are orthodox. As part of the broader struggle, the extent to which these particular practices are indeed heterodox becomes a great stake in the struggle. The defenders of homophobic orthodoxy try to up the ante by presenting homosexual marriages as subversive alternatives to heterosexual marital practices. Proponents of the homosexual family downplay the challenge and present it as the alternative to homosexuals not being married (for a focussed discussion of gay kinship, and its political and cultural ties to mainstream families see Weston 1995; Weston 1991). It is by minimising the scope of their challenge that heterodoxies can establish themselves most easily, more as a correction to orthodoxy than its replacement. In other words, regardless of superficial appearances, the extent of the challenge to orthodoxy is limited the more practices move away from the heterodox pole and towards the orthodox pole. It is for this reason that my informants perceived homosexual families as a greater challenge than non-familial homosexuality, even though the extent of the former’s deviation from the normal familial arrangement is limited compared with the latter.

So far the picture appears to be rather static. It is important to remember that positions on the scale from orthodoxy to heterodoxy are dynamic. The rise of homosexual families is a recent phenomenon, linked to movements in social space and changes in the political economy. But practices may move from orthodoxy to heterodoxy, too. The ‘traditional’ division of labour is but one example. The family which is composed of the husband as breadwinner and wife as homemaker is still a current phenomenon, however its position as the yardstick is obsolescent. The adjective which is often affixed to this practice—traditional—is an indication of it being outmoded. The perspective from which this adjective is attached is, of course, that of the rising fractions of the dominant class at the time, who are imbued with an ethos of individualism. It is those fractions who are on their way down, whose future is behind them, as it were, who cling as hard as they can to the way things used to be in the “good old days”.

It is possible to continue the typology of practices along the heterodoxy–orthodoxy scale ad infinitum, or at least ad nauseam. This, however, would be carrying the metaphor of the scale too far, establishing it as an object of study apart from its manifestation in ‘real’ life. That level of abstraction, in which orthodoxy and heterodoxy are set apart from their concrete manifestations—the level in which the dynamics of their interactions can be debated as such—is a kind of
abstractionist fetishism which is best avoided. The notions of heterodoxy and orthodoxy are best considered mere heuristic devices, and not facts of nature, nor a proposition concerning the actual reflection of the workings of human society. In other words, these heuristic terms will probably yield their most profit when applied concretely to particular practices and particular circumstances, rather than when distilled from the concrete world of social practice.

**THE SYMBOLIC POLITICS OF THE HETERODOX CHALLENGE AND ITS SOCIAL STRUCTURE**

While the metaphor of the scale can help conceptualise the ranges of practice which are doxa, orthodoxy and heterodoxy, it is too restrictive to help make sense of the dynamics of the relationship between them. Different heterodoxies differ from the realised category of the family in different ways. A better graphical approximation of the universe of familial practices would be the radial one, which places the prototypical family in the centre, and then places the various alternative practices around it (cf. Lakoff & Johnson 1980; Lakoff 1987, especially 91 ff.). It is some form of resemblance to the realised category of the family which constitutes a practice as a family practice. Different heterodox practices might well resemble the prototype in different ways, and may have little in common themselves. A practice which lacks any similarity to the realised category of the family would simply not enter the cognitive universe of family practices. (This similarity is, of course, from the perspective of practising social agents, as no two human practices are completely objectively dissimilar.) The irony is that in order to qualify as a challenge to the orthodox form of family, a heterodoxy must share some substantial aspects with the prototypical family. Formally speaking, that necessary similarity is the doxa of the family.

In this section I will explore some of the dynamics of heterodox challenges in the field of kinship and family. As before, the conceptual framework I am developing here is heuristic. Above I have already made the point that heterodoxy reinforces doxa in the very heterodox stance it takes. The more powerful the challenge of a heterodox practice, the more it would share with the orthodoxy of the prototypical family. In what follows I will develop the irony of heterodoxy further. When viewed in context, it emerges that different heterodoxies challenge different aspects of the prototypical family, and reinforce the aspects challenged by other heterodoxies. In other words,
often the different heterodoxies cancel the effect of one another, and have a conservative influence on the field of practice.

Further, not all heterodoxies are created equal. Some are borne by more powerful fractions of society, and are therefore more likely to become established. Nevertheless, the relationship between the social basis of heterodoxies and the emergent developments in the structure of the category of family should not be seen as deterministic. Less powerful fractions may give rise to heterodoxies which do get established. Still, as an expression of its symbolic dominance, dominant-class fractions are more likely to see their heterodoxies established.

I will further develop the analysis of social structure of heterodoxy by focussing on several particular powers which structure the very arena in which heterodoxies challenge orthodoxy. One is the power to define the public agenda, and constitute a specific vision of social division as universal. Another is the power to define types, a power which is not equally distributed across society. In order to enter the field of possible alternatives, a practice must be named and made to exist. Possibly the most powerful way a heterodox practice can be contained is by not being nominated as a practice. Related to this containment is another form of containment, the tagging of practices as alien or foreign, in other words, as belonging to a different arena, and therefore excluded from the familiar universe of practices.

All these dynamics might go some way towards explaining the limited extent to which the status quo which is the prototypical family has changed. I am, of course, only suggesting some directions for an analysis of the reproduction of family in recent metropolitan and settler European history. I do not, in any way, wish to preempt the close empirical scrutiny of specific historical conjunctures.

DIFFERENT HETERODOXIES PULL IN DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS

The dilemma of the feminist opposition to the division of labour between men and women is an example of orthodox elements which are challenged from different heterodox quarters, but seem to survive by virtue of the conflicting positions of the heterodox challenges. The reality of the ‘traditional family’ which feminist critics seek to destabilise is that in which men are the main breadwinners and have the main or exclusive access to economic capital. Women’s activity is centred around the home, and devalued by the structure of capitalist production.
This state of affairs is being criticised from two conflicting angles. One is that which sees the division of labour between men and women as the root of women’s oppression in advanced capitalist society. People who follow this line of reasoning argue that housework is stupid, boring, unsatisfying and oppressive (e.g. Bittman & Pixley 1997; Baxter 1993; Dempsey 1997b). This line of argumentation seeks liberation for women through labour, in which women participate in the paid labour process and the home chores are shared equally. This position shares with the ‘traditional’ political economy of family the devaluation of the tasks performed by women at home. The possibility that those tasks might require a measure of expertise which women might have acquired through a different mode of socialisation is denied a priori.

This position is, typically, class-specific and common in those segments of society where work is associated with notions of a career and self-actualisation. By contrast, to large segments of the working class, work is an unpleasant experience, engaged in out of necessity, with very little in the way of self-fulfilment (Donaldson 1991, chapter 1). Furthermore, the practice of some classes to relegate household chores to members of other classes, most often women, who sell their labour as maids, child carers and so forth, largely escapes the critical gaze of the ‘liberation through labour’ camp (but see Bittman et al. 1999). If doing domestic chores is degraded, one is left wondering about the justification of economic relations and enterprises through which some persons have to perform those tasks, this time, though, as wage labourers or contractors.

An alternative view, more common among my informants, was one that accepted the broad outline of the gendered division of labour and did not see it as oppressive in itself. It was the differential value of women’s work vs. men’s work which was seen as the source of oppression which needed to be destabilised. This ideology reinforces the gender stereotyping of work, and thereby contributes to the maintenance of gender stereotypes in the broader division of labour. This view is expressed, among others, in a preference (both articulated and enacted) of women for a limited involvement in the labour market (e.g. Baxter 2000; Baxter & Western 1998; and see chapter two). These two opposing strategies are, to a point, mutually antagonistic in the practice they engender. The latter seeks to support women in their domestic roles, the former seeks to extricate women from these roles. The difference in the class location from which these different perspectives are espoused no doubt aggravates the contradiction.
The different strategies women adopt—integration into the labour market vs. specialisation in homemaking—are opposed more than merely in theory. The women who pursue the one, in fact, interfere with the strategy of those who pursue the other. For an example of how the antagonism of these two strategies manifests itself in practice one may reformulate the argument of P. England and B.S. Kilbourne who tried to model marital relationships in economistic terms. They argue, among the rest, that men and women tend to make different types of investment in marriage. Men invest in their career and education. These investments are easily transferable to other marriages. Women, in focussing on children and relationships within the family (e.g. with in-laws) at the expense of promoting their careers, make relationship-specific investments which are not easily transferred to other marriages. As a result, a woman’s value on the marriage market is reduced compared with that of her male partner, placing her in the dependent and weaker bargaining position in the family, and him at a position of great advantage (England & Kilbourne 1990; cited by Bittman & Pixley 1997). As it stands, this argument is flawed, but may be made useful after some modifications. Given the virtually exclusively-heterosexual nature of the marriage market, women do not compete with their ex-partners for mates. Rather, women compete with other women, and men with other men. Therefore, to understand how investments of spouses affect their position in the marriage market, spouses should not be compared with one another. Rather, a woman’s investment should be compared with the investment made by other women, and the man’s investment with that made by other men. It is quite possible for a man to invest exclusively in his career, but still see the value of his assets on the marriage market drop because of the more efficient investments of other males, while at the same time his wife might invest moderately, and still improve her position by keeping ahead of the average investments of women on the market. In other words, the marriage market pits primarily men against men, and women against women.

It follows, then, if we accept English and Kilbourne’s method, that men who under-invest in their careers will suffer a great set-back in their relative ranking in the male hierarchy. This might help explain the behaviour of some men in the labour market. More significantly for the issue at hand, though, women who make extensive investments in their own career and other transferable assets devalue the transferable assets of all other women on the marriage market as the latter are pushed further down the female hierarchy by the former. The stakes here are even higher than intra-gender

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11 In chapters eight and nine I develop a critique of the application of rational choice theory and similar approaches to the study of family practices.

12 Furthermore, the assumptions of English and Kilbourne’s model imply that when there are children involved it is the man rather than the woman who is hampered most in subsequent transactions on the marriage market owing to maintenance payments and a loss of a large share of the joint assets to his ex-wife and kids.
competition on the marriage market. The increased earnings involved in double income family arrangements allows double-income families to invest more economic capital in their children, that is, in social reproduction. In other words, the higher the earnings of some women, the more devalued would be the assets of the offspring of other women. The same holds true for men, of course. Needless to say, career-investment opportunities for either males or females are not equally distributed across society, but rather favour the dominant classes and ensure a diminished return to working-class women for participation in the paid workforce, to the point where the financial costs of participation in the labour market outweigh the possible gains. In essence, then, some women’s strategy of full employment pits them against other women, so that feminist strategies of the dominant class may hurt the interests of dominated-class women.

It is probably in light of this challenge that among my informants some women who had no careers felt threatened and challenged by bourgeois feminists, and by career women. When I left for ‘the field’, I had just read Janeen Baxter’s 1993 book, Work at Home: The Domestic Division of Labour, (Baxter 1993). To my surprise, I found myself embroiled in a symbolic class struggle when during a conversation with an informant I quoted a passage from this book and raised with her the prospects of her oppression. Perceiving (more so than I did at the time) the symbolic class aggression in the implicit criticism of her lifestyle, she responded to my provocation quite angrily. The friendly tones transformed somewhat as my interlocutor embarked on a tirade against “the feminists”, calling into question their integrity, their sexual orientation and their species. She followed by stating that she thought that if a woman chose to have a career, she should have the same opportunities as men, but if a woman chooses to stay home and look after the children, she should have the right to do so. (At the time my interviewee was home after having her second child. She resisted her partner’s pressure to go back to work, and intended to stay out of the labour market for a few years yet, dedicating herself to her children.) The point should therefore be made that this woman had the opportunity to return to paid employment. Her decision not to was not forced upon her by external coercion, and her statements were not an attempt to rationalise an inferior position which was externally forced upon her. I believe the best way to interpret this reaction is as a conflict of values surrounding the different experiences of femininity in different classes. Significantly, quite a few women I spoke with felt the need to defend their right to stay home against a perceived attack. Even though few if any prominent feminists seek to reduce the choices available to women, some of my women interlocutors felt their position was being progressively undermined, and that they were being pushed against their will into the labour market.
In individual interviews, in discussions, and in focus groups, women seemed to prefer a pragmatic approach combining the right to be homemaker with equal employment opportunities. Like the interviewee just cited, they said they thought that a woman should be allowed to choose if she wanted to participate in the workforce. If she chooses to participate in the paid workforce, she should be treated in the same way as men. If she prefers to stay at home with the kids, though, she should not be disadvantaged either. In practice they gravitated towards the latter. Most said they liked their jobs, but preferred to be the main carers for children and be those who stayed at home. In general, the women who worked full-time accounted for their full-time employment in terms of economic necessity, very much like the men, and not in terms of personal fulfilment. When they socialised they tended to discuss matters relating to children, the family, or the home, rather than matters relating to their work. This is in contradistinction to the men whose conversations seemed to revolve more around the job than the family, compared with the women. Further, while full-time employed women (and a few others) did insist on greater involvement of men in chores (like nappy changing, putting children to sleep, dishes etc.), they retained the main responsibility for these tasks, a fact which complements their stated preference for being the main parental carer. Self-fulfilment, or liberation, through labour was a contradiction in terms in blue-collar, and most of white-collar Newcastle. While the call for greater participation in the workforce might be taken up by women in other areas of social space, women among my informants still assume the responsibility for homemaking, and their labour is still greatly devalued by the social relations of production (as members of the working class) and by the political economy of the family (through the privatisation of homemaking) in Australian capitalism.

This class-based conflict of the feminist critique of the division of labour and its consequences has the effect of fragmenting potential challenges to the status quo, and playing the challenging forces against one another. Tax incentives for women to join the workforce were experienced as unfair by those who did not wish to take up the ‘opportunities’ the political economy was ‘offering’ them. Incentives for women to stay at home earn the ire of full-time female employees and supporters of labour-market integration for women. The power differential between the social fractions which give rise to these alternative experiences will probably determine (in fact, already has) which variant acquires ascendancy compared with the other.13

13 The way the power of the status quo is described here is opposed to Foucault’s argument to the effect that the most effective challenge to power and domination is local, at the margin. Contradictory local contestations of power might
Chapter Four

The lack of unity has not helped in mobilisation against 'patriarchal' government policies: by challenging the status quo from two opposing perspectives, the effect of such heterodoxies is greatly diminished. To a large extent, the same can be said about the other heterodoxies which I discussed above. Homosexual families' challenge to the equation of biological and social parenthood reinforces monogamy and two-parent family household structures. Single-parent families do precisely the opposite. But this situation in which heterodoxies pull in different directions and ultimately fix orthodoxy is only part of the secret of the longevity of the status quo.

THE POWER TO DEFINE AGENDAS, TYPES AND NON-TYPES

A critical manifestation of the domination of the dominant class is its ability to impose its interests, agendas, and concerns by making them appear as the general concerns and interests across society. My informants believed that the Australian family was undergoing a profound process of change, and that new forms of family were emerging in Australia. In this they reflected the concerns of large segments of the dominated fractions of the dominant class, including politicians, academics, bureaucrats, and journalists. It was, and still is, one of the major preoccupations of the mass media.

My informants immediately identified homosexual families and single-parent families as the main new forms of family, again, in line with the public agenda as set by the media. This is interesting because very few, if any, of my informants knew homosexual families firsthand. (In fact, the incidence of such arrangements is very low—see chapter two). At the time the media were preoccupied with the homosexual family, and more generally with the status of homosexuals and homosexuality (e.g. Horin 1995).

Also the concern with single-parent families should not be taken at face value. My informants could not point to a significant increase in the phenomenon of single-parent families in their familiar social environment. In fact, the few informants over sixty years old that I spoke with said that they did not really think there was a great deal of change in single-parent families, and that

well, in themselves, contribute to the perpetuation of the status quo. In other words, systemic domination should probably be confronted with a systemic challenge, or with a challenge to the existence of the system as such.

Zaretzky makes a similar structural point about the disunity between the feminist and labour movements' challenges to the capitalist family. Summarising the roles of the labour and the feminist movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, he concludes: "A common historical process shaped the acquiescence of feminists in the domination of capital at the workplace and the acquiescence of labor in the domination of men within the home, but neither of these was an inevitable outcome" (Zaretzky 1982, 217–218).
such families were quite common in their childhood, no less than in the 1990s. The fact that this family type was identified as being unprecedented in magnitude or significance was a clear echo of the mass media. The mass media themselves were not simply reacting to a palpable social phenomenon, but rather reflecting a change in interest among the fractions from which journalists are recruited and for which journalists produce. Beyond the question of imposing a particular view about single-parent families, the ideological power of the mass media is clearly reflected in their capacity to constitute the single-parent family as an arena for the symbolic struggle. Thus the perceived challenge to the prototypical family, and its transformation, are greatly biased by the symbolic power of fractions of the dominant class.

While arrangements like homosexual couples and single-parent families have been constituted as family types, not all heterodoxies enjoy this status. Ruth and Margaret's arrangement is indeed a radical one which would challenge many of the basic doxic tenets of the realised category of the nuclear family. This potential challenge is contained in a very elementary way, though. Other informants who were familiar with this arrangement invariably saw it as unique, as something which attests to the idiosyncrasy of the persons involved as well as to the uniqueness of their situation at the time. So long as it remained experienced as an ad hoc situation, and is not elevated to the state of a 'type', its heterodox efficacy would remain negligible. By not being recognised as a 'kind' of 'family', but remaining a sort of special arrangement, the potential relevance of this arrangement to the question of what is a family would remain obscured.

The marginalisation of this specific arrangement was helped by the fact that both adults occupy an unusual position within the Novocastrian social space. Margaret being an artist, and somewhat bohemian, she might be expected to be a bit different. Ruth had been living in Newcastle since infancy, but her father being a scientist with BHP, she had always been consciously different from the people around her. When asked about class differences she denied they existed as such, but added quickly that her family was different from other families around in their philosophy and style. For one, they were staunchly atheistic. At school she was therefore exempt from attending Scripture classes. Her family also stressed education and sciences. Both her parents were professionals in full-time paid employment, her mother being a psychologist with the local hospital. Ruth remembers eating out a lot, another difference from most of her peers around her. Ruth had wanted to be a scientist since she was very young, which was the reason she chose to study mathematics. But these differences amount precisely to class differences in style, although significantly it was experienced as individual idiosyncrasy by Ruth herself. The fact that both
women could easily be classed as different helped their own arrangement to be perceived as part of their own idiosyncrasies, rather than an alteration of the normal scheme of things. Remarkably, those of my informants who were acquainted with this arrangement, and not with specific homosexual families, still recognise homosexual families as an alternative form of family arrangement, but not Margaret’s and Ruth’s arrangement.

It is the political power to recognise individual arrangements as a type, or as a phenomenon, which can transform ad hoc arrangements into heterodox challenges. This power, though, is concentrated very much in the hands of segments of the dominant class (e.g. ABS, AIFS, DSS, media, academia) who are entrusted with the power and authority to identify social phenomena, and judge them. The most powerful strategy these elements can adopt is not to condemn, but to ignore. It is not a matter of numerical disparities between, say, homosexual families and arrangements like Ruth and Margaret’s. For a numerical distribution of a phenomenon to be measured it has to be recognised first. So long as it remains unrecognised, the nuclear family would be safe from Ruth and Margaret’s challenge, even in the two women’s own eyes. Their arrangement would remain just that, their arrangement. Unnamed, invisible and non-existent. A still-born heterodox challenge.

TAGGING HETERODOXIES

There are other means by which heterodox challenges are contained. Some alternative arrangements are contained by becoming stigmatised by association with marginalised social categories, turning an attachment to normalcy as an expression or embodiment of social identity. At a certain stage I asked Clifford about three-generational households. He and his wife, Hildred, were both in full-time paid employment. At the time they were expecting their second child. The cost of childcare was a major concern with them, and one way they would cut on incidental childcare costs was by relying on Hildred’s mother or Hildred’s single sister. Clifford himself, by his own admission, was getting on very well with his mother-in-law. This was independently reiterated by his wife. Why, then, I asked him, not have a three-generational household, thereby enabling both parents to participate in the workforce and alleviating child-care concerns? Clifford’s response was glib: “The ‘Europeans’ have large families like that. We don’t.” He proceeded to

15 DSS—Department of Social Security. (It has subsequently been reorganised and renamed.)
describe the difficulties involved in the relationship between adults and their parents, stemming from the incommensurability of relationships between adults on the one hand and those between parents and offspring on the other.

Here I would like to focus on the laconic comment regarding the “Europeans” in response to my question. It was probably biased by our conversation, in which we had also discussed the way things are done in other parts of the world, although we did not focus specifically on “Europeans”. Still, it was the kind of statement in which the obvious gets mentioned, is put on the record, and requires no further elaboration in its own right. They do it. We do not. That is the way things are. Now all that remains is to either explain why, or work out the advantages or disadvantages of both ways. To the extent that he needed a moment’s pause for thought before this matter-of-fact statement, it was to determine how best to describe the groups to which he referred as “European”, a euphemism for “wog” or “dago” which in this context would denote people from southern Europe, the Balkans and the Middle East. What was remarkable was the fact that by being tagged with being “European”, this specific mode of doing things no longer needed to be considered as a viable alternative to the way things were done. We—that is Anglo-Celtic Australians/’True-Blue’ Aussies—just don’t do it that way. And there was nothing more to it. That one sentence summed it all up.\footnote{In a recent book Ghassan Hage (Hage 1998) prefers the term White to Anglo-Celtic. The rationale is that people who look or who are European find it easy to assimilate into the dominant category, and that the essential distinction which Australian fantasies of a White nation draw are between Third-World looking persons, and White-looking persons. Still, I chose to highlight in this context the Anglo-Celtic aspect because Anglo-Celts are very much the prototypical White Australians.}

Similarly, another person I spoke with said she wished she could have had a “wog wedding”, with all the many distant relatives dancing and having fun, rather than the kind of wedding she had in fact had in which formally dressed guests were seated around dinner tables in a well organised fashion and speeches were made in a very sedate and respectable manner. But her wish for a wog wedding was not the kind of wish for something she wanted to happen to her. It was more along the lines of ‘there is something more authentic about the way they do things, alas I am not they, and we do things differently’. At no time during the process of preparing her wedding (which had taken place a few years before my fieldwork), was the possibility of a “wog wedding” ever brought up. They were not wogs. Therefore, they did not have a wog wedding.
These examples underscore the way practice is implicitly constructed by identity at the same time that it constructs it. Things are done a certain way, and not another, because of who we are, but who and what we are is as much determined by what we do. ‘We’ have ‘respectable’ and ‘composed’ weddings, and stick to nuclear family household arrangements because ‘we’ are ‘True-Blue Aussies’. At one and the same time such actions show that ‘True-Blue Aussies’ are composed and civilised people, and have certain loyalties and relationships.

It is in light of this that wishes, like my informant’s for a “wog wedding” should be interpreted, as should other statements made by various informants concerning the superior family relations in ‘other cultures’: the superior child-rearing practices in the kibbutz, the greater authenticity of past generations, and so forth. The speakers were making observations about what made them, as part of an imagined group, different from other such groups. This was often done in the spirit of respect and multi-culturalism, a spirit which is as much a product of the specific situation of the ethnographic interview conducted by an ‘ethnic’ anthropologist, as it was a reflection of the current mood. Still, whatever respect for others such statements might imply, or whatever genuine or otherwise self-deprecation might be involved, these statements do not reflect an intention to do things differently. Rather, they are statements about the nature of groups and the character of their members. As such they provide a rationalisation, rooted in pop-psychology and experiences of ‘cultural’ difference, for the arbitrary distribution of social practices among groups, or at least for the perceived distribution of social practices among groups. But it does not challenge those patterns of distribution. 17

To some extent, a similar process of tagging, or stigmatising, may be taking place with single-parent families. The single-parent family is closely associated with poverty. This is, at least partly, because the single parent, being main carer for children, has very little time to heavily participate in the paid workforce as well. High marriage breakdown rates at the dominated fractions of the dominated class might also contribute to the relatively high poverty rates of single-parent households (for a review of various studies of the effect of poverty on divorce see Morgan 1996,

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17 This paradigm of experience, action, and identity is most explicitly shown in the inculcation of table manners in children, a major task of parents. The edicts of “eat with your mouth closed”, “don’t speak with your mouth full”, “don’t pick your nose” and so forth are one of the greatest legacies that the ‘True-Blue’ mother might leave to her offspring. The rationale is almost explicit. We don’t do those things because they are barbaric and we are civilised. But at one and the same time, when individuals follow these rules of etiquette they are thought of as well-brought-up and civilised because they do not do those things. The two elements, the rationale of the action (we don’t do these things because of who/what we are) and its signification (we are who/what we are because we do not do these things), do not precede one another either logically or temporally. The deeply embodied nature of these elements, though, is what accounts for the persistence
chapter 2). The cost of commercial childcare makes low-paying jobs unaffordable. Even many well-paying jobs only pay well because of the opportunity they provide for extra-hour work, an option which does not exist for a single parent. This greater likelihood of poverty and dependence further marginalises the practice of single-parenthood at the very instance that it economically marginalises single parents. Single parenthood becomes stigmatised socio-economically, and is associated with the poor and the underclass. It often combines marital ‘failure’ with socio-economic ‘failure’. To this some conservative voices add a moralistic condemnation of single mothers. The obvious price to be paid by the practice makes it an unattractive option.

Be that as it may, the identification of particular practices with specific groups can serve to reduce the power of the heterodoxies which become associated with such groups; and at one and the same time serve to marginalise the groups which are defined by their adherence to heterodoxy.

**SUMMARY**

This chapter has focussed on various alternative practices to the prototypical nuclear family, in order to further understand the stability of the nuclear-family household form. The prototypical family, by virtue of its status as realised category, embodies criteria by which practices must be defined in order to qualify as heterodoxies. That which all heterodoxies share with the prototypical family is the doxic basis of family practice. Furthermore, heterodox practices, even as they bring to the fore various aspects of the prototypical practice, and turn much doxa into heterodoxy, do not necessarily destabilise the dominant practice. Various dynamics, such as the contradictory pulls of different heterodoxies, may in fact serve so as to further entrench dominant practice.

In the previous chapter I described a few characteristics of the family as both a cognitive structure and a social structure. At this stage I would like to add the following:

1. The nuclear family is the basic-level family, the most cognitively simple gestalt, the unmarked construct, the default notion of the family.

2. Different familial arrangements combine to form a graded, scalar category. Gradation, or extent of centrality, is the goodness-of-example test whereby some variants would rank higher as a

of these elements of behaviour. Violation of these codes of behaviour is disgusting to my informants, to the extent that its mere contemplation can, at times, put a hungry person off his or her food by eliciting a strong psycho-somatic reaction.
better example of a family. The nuclear family—as a realised category—would rank highest. This is the prototype effect.

3. The different family arrangements form a category with a radial structure. The variants are not produced by a substantive generative principle. They cannot be predicted from the prototype, nor do they have any substantive characteristic in common throughout the universe of family structures. Rather, they are motivated by the prototype, that is, they are constructed in reference to the prototype.

The family is predicated upon naturalised notions of kinship and relatedness. The next chapter seeks to delve deeper into practice by exploring and analysing these notions.
Chapter Five

Structural Aspects of Kinship

The core of my informants' kinship system was the family. From kinship terminology, through residential practices, to emotional attachment, the distinctions between familial relations and non-familial relations, and the categories of family, were essential. However, the anthropological concern with kinship extends beyond the family, as does the native construction of relatedness.

The previous chapters elaborated on the nuclear family's functioning as the prototypical family—the core of the system of kinship and family among my informants. This chapter and the next will explore some of the underlying structures of my informants' 'kinship system'.

Filiation and Kindred, the Basics of My Informants' Kinship

When considering the substantive issues normally studied as kinship, the consideration should be broadened to include the systems of kinship terminology, the world view embodied in a kinship system, and the principles of practice it involves.

The Novocastrian example offers some greatly frustrating classificatory problems to the comparative sociologist of kinship. As with other current Northern and Western European kinship
systems, descent does not appear to be a meaningful principle of ordering the world. Rather, filiation is the essence of relatedness.¹ This chapter argues the rationale for the relatedness of extended kin is their common consanguineal relationship to common ancestors or intermediate collaterals. Moreover, siblings are prototypically related by virtue of their descent from a common parent or parents; and spouses become securely related—a family in the full sense of the word—by virtue of their common consanguineal link to their offspring. Consequently, effective kinship relationships which transcend the boundaries of the nuclear family are mediated through a succession of filial links. Of course, close contacts between relatives, such as grandchildren and grandparents, cousins and so forth, may create personal relationships beyond the kinship basis of these relationships.

The logic of relatedness within the family was discussed in previous chapters. Here I focus on relatives outside the nuclear family. The clearest indication of the ideological construction of extended kin through filiation, came in a half-serious conversation with a young man. When discussing what it was that made family related, he reduced the role of mother and father to their reproductive roles—saying something to the effect that one’s mother carried and bore one, and one’s father engaged in sexual intercourse with one’s mother, and impregnated her. This is not surprising given that kinship is predicated upon folk theories of reproduction, at least in societies like my informants’. The interesting construction which is relevant here extends to the more distant kin. One’s grandfather was said to be related to one as one’s father’s or mother’s father; grandmother as one’s father’s or mother’s mother; aunt as one’s mother’s or father’s sister; and uncle as one’s mother’s or father’s brother. The latter two are interesting, because they trace relationship through the shortest genealogical route—as parents’ sibling rather than grandparents’ offspring. The same speaker also explained that one is related to one’s brother or sister because one has the same parents. At first this appeared to me as a contradiction—when discussing uncles and aunts (in line with relative-product analysis) my informant highlighted sibling relationships, but when discussing siblings the common parenthood was stressed. In fact, the question my informant was dealing with was different in the two instances. When discussing uncles and aunts he was considering the question of genealogical link, the path that connects uncles/aunts and nephews/nieces. In this context, connecting relatives who mediate the actual contact between uncles/aunts and nephews/nieces became important. But when discussing siblings my informant

¹ Roger Keesing defined descent as “A relationship defined by connection to an ancestor (or ancestress) through a culturally recognized sequence of parent-child links (from father to son to son’s son = patrilineal descent, from mother to
was considering the question of what it was that made siblings related. This is the shared common ancestor. Had my informant been invited to explain what it was that made a person and his/her PG related, the common ancestor of P and PG would have been invoked. Unfortunately, I did not pursue this matter at the time. The conversation itself was partly tongue-in-cheek, and revolved more around ridiculing (in a friendly manner) anthropologists for the futility and triviality of their pursuits. Nonetheless, that, and the taken-for-grantedness of the instances I discussed above in which relationships between distant relatives were mediated by intermediate relatives, highlights the weakness of descent as an organising principle of relatedness, and the significance of filiation.

The initiation and maintenance of links among extended kin seems to conform to this paradigm. Thus, once Alfred left Lucy, and renounced his relationship with their son, Max, Alfred’s parents sought to maintain their relationship with Max, who was their only grandchild at the time. The maintenance of this relationship, though, was not the natural, default procedure. Rather, they took great care to maintain their relationship with Lucy and Max, letting them both stay at their place in the period following the break-up, and striving to maintain contact with Lucy ever since in order to ensure their contact with Max. The point I would like to stress here is that once the father renounced his relationship with his son, the maintenance of relationships between grandparents and grandchild was not automatic, and needed to be negotiated. In other instances, the father’s desertion of the family effectively meant the severance of contact with grandparents. Thus, Michelle, the young daughter of Margaret and Ruth, had no contact with her father’s parents. Nor did Phyllis’s daughter, Camilla, who also had no contact with her father.

More generally, in focus groups women pointed out that once they had children, their position of power vis-à-vis their mothers and mothers-in-law improved because they became the link between grandparents and grandchildren. They act as gate keepers.

Similarly, extended kin networks which might get together on events such as Christmas during the life of the apical ancestors very often cease this practice once the connecting ancestors are dead. This marks the bifurcation of one extended family into two families once the connecting filial link is effectively terminated.

daughter to daughter’s daughter = matrilineal descent”, and filiation as “Relationship to or through one’s father and one’s mother, or the basing of rights on this relationship” (Keesing 1975, 148).
In a different situation, an informant who sought a place to stay for a short while in another city where he had relatives, asked his mother to get in touch with her brother (his uncle) to see if he could stay with them. The rationale was that the uncle and nephew were not very close, but the mother, the uncle’s sibling, was closer and could more comfortably ask for favours. That informant had a right to expect hospitality by virtue of the mere fact of being the son of the uncle’s sister. There were other instances too when intervening relatives were mobilised to facilitate interaction between relatives, most commonly parents between grandchildren and grandparents.

In all of these instances the rationale according to which the intermediate genealogical link mediates the relationship between extended kin was taken for granted. Not a single informant saw it necessary to explain why this should be so. I would suggest that these practices reflect an ideological construction of relatedness.

In short, the initiation and creation of effective kin relationships are based on filiation, which is the ideological rationale for inclusion of persons in the extended family. Kinship is kindred based, that is, it is egocentric—relatives are included in one’s list of kin because of their relationship to ego rather than because of their descent from some ancestor (cf. Rosenberg & Anspach 1973, 14 ff.). This was graphically illustrated when people were charting their family trees: they would normally start with their generation or their parents, and move up and out from there through a series of filial links. In a sense that notion of a family tree does produce a figure of a tree, seeing that one starts with ego and branches out upwards.

Kindred, however, functioned as a social category, not as a social group with a clear internal organisation and common goals (cf. Freeman 1961, 202 ff.). While membership in kindred formed a basis for cooperation and collaboration between people on an ad hoc basis, the only enduring, effective kin-based social group remained the family. The range of kindreds among my informants was typical of British and other Northern and Western European metropolitan and settler societies (Freeman 1961, 207), where people could identify, and normally had some contact with first cousins, many of them with second cousins, and hardly any with third cousins. As a matter of preference, kindreds were normally exogamous (cf. Freeman 1961, 207–209). I came across only

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2 Kindred was defined by Keesing as “A social group or category consisting of an individual’s circle of relatives, or that range of a person’s relatives accorded special cultural recognition” (Keesing 1975, 150).
one married couple of first cousins in the field. In general, it was considered undesirable to marry one’s cousins, and unacceptable (indeed illegal) to marry one’s nieces, nephews, uncles, aunts and closer relatives.

**Genealogies and Models of Relatedness**

When interviewing my informants about their genealogies I usually used the terms “relatives”, “extended family” or “family tree” to describe what I was interested in. It was through the use of these terms that I found it easiest to convey to my informants my notion of genealogy. Among my informants, such information was clearly gendered cultural capital. It was invariably the domain of women. Men could answer most of the questions on relatives, but would refer to women for confirmation of their statements, as well as for details regarding the distant relationships which were not in practical use. Women were the acknowledged experts on these matters, and the ultimate repository of kinship knowledge. Women were generally more interested in such matters than men. They were the ones who seemed to keep track of relatives and hold the information regarding distant relatives. This is part of a much broader total division of labour between the genders, which assigns social skills and social authority to women.

The one exception was a long-divorced man in his seventies who had been keeping an alleged family tree going back to Tory Island. His fantastic stories, including those of a young female cousin he had on Tory who was destined to marry him, and various others, did not inspire confidence in the veracity of his information. At any rate, he was abnormal, and was perceived and categorised as such by the people who knew him. Otherwise, in my experience, relatedness and kinship knowledge were overwhelmingly feminine.

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3 I “stumbled” over this instance by accident when interviewing Rodney, a youth organiser, about issues facing young people in Newcastle. When I presented my research topic, we briefly discussed his family. He described his extended family as being “very close,” and then added, “Well, I’m actually married to my cousin, so the extended family, we are very close, on both sides of the family.” “There are places where it’s actually a common practice to marry your cousin,” I commented. “That’s right,” he replied, “and in other places it’s against the law. Yeah.” “It does make it hard to say nasty things about your in-laws to your parents,” I said. “Yeah,” he laughed. He said that where this caused some difficulty was with his kids. “It does bring up all sorts of things, and also I’ve been in trouble with the school because they [his kids] have only got three sets of grandparents and everybody else has four sets of grandparents, so you know, they say your family tree is wrong. It shouldn’t be like that.” In light of queries from readers of an early draft of this chapter I should stress that Rodney and his cousin wife are not members of an ethnic minority, but rather Australian-born, Anglo-Celts (of mostly Celtic ancestry) from the dominant fraction of the dominated class. They did not participate in my research as informants, and I am unable to relate their story in further detail.
Chapter Five

My interviews regarding genealogies were, of course, contrived and unusual situations. The knowledge which I aimed to tap in these interviews was used in normal daily life for various purposes. One was to trace the relationship between the living individuals who comprise the extended kin. This information was used in very specific situations in which decisions regarding the extended kin needed to be made. Typically, these included Christmas-card lists, invitations to special events (e.g. annual events for people who trace their descent to a common extant ancestor—Christmas day gatherings; or irregular events like weddings which might require a broader distribution of invitations).

Since the 1970s, with a wave of patriotism and Australian nationalism, it has become fashionable among Anglo-Celts to find convict ancestors or to trace back ancestry to a specific location in the British Isles. However, my informants had never themselves engaged in a prolonged and systematic search for their ancestry, and most of the information they gave me was based on their own first-hand knowledge and on family traditions, usually passed down the generations from woman to woman, typically from mother/mother-in-law to daughter/daughter-in-law. It is quite possible that systematic searches for one's ancestry are more common in other social environs such as the dominant class.

Questioning my informants about their genealogy—"family tree" or "extended family"—I had little trouble getting across what information I wanted. More than Evans Pritchard and his Nuer informants, both my informants and I shared the notions of what a family tree was, and what it should look like. The great agreement of doxic experiences of kinship and family made these interviews more likely to elicit the data requested, and less likely to illuminate the nature of these data. When the anthropologist's models are very much his informants' models too, neither would expose the taken-for-granted assumption in the other. It is therefore left to the anthropologist to force the issue later, in the safety of his office.

An interesting inversion is already implicit in the contradiction between a family tree—the concept—and the graphical presentation of families. Trees are rooted in the ground and grow upward. Still, when showing the movement along generations the temporal progression is downwards, the earlier relations being placed at the top of the page, their direct descendants having been placed immediately below them, and collateral relatives to their side. (This can be contrasted,

4 Tory Island has been studied by Fox (Fox 1978).
for example, with the Rotinese practice of reading genealogical trees upwards rather than downwards—see Fox 1988.) As the terms themselves suggest, this two-dimensional spatial arrangement of relatives tallies with the anthropological common sense (for a description of the emergence of the family tree as an organising principle in Europe, see Fox 1988; and Bouquet 1996).

Family trees among my informants were constructed upwards, but read downwards. This demonstrates a two-phased operation of kinship reckoning—one is tracing relatedness, a process beginning with ego and connecting people through the shortest possible genealogical link. The other is accounting for relatedness, which is prototypically based on common ancestry (and, of course, extendable as necessary by circumstances e.g. to adopted relatives). I have highlighted this two-phased operation when accounting for the different explanation of sibling and avuncular relationships above (see above page 112).

Thus, even though once constructed, one’s roots (a term used, among the rest, to refer to ancestry) are at the top of the page, the process of constructing the family tree on the page proceeds very much in line with the metaphor of tree from bottom to top, normally starting from ego, and then moving to ascendants and collaterals they link to. In fact, the stress on lineality at the expense of collateral relations (which is in line with the significance of reproduction and procreation as the idiom which organises kinship) will produce a tree-like diagram, in which ego resembles a trunk, which combines the branches above the ground and the roots below the ground surface.

Normally the extension backwards is pretty shallow. Rarely did my informants trace family trees further back than the relatives who were part of the living memory of their own parents, with the exception of particular relatives who needed to be remembered for particular purposes. Such ancient ancestors might still be remembered if they were those who had immigrated to Australia, in which case they would locate the family ancestry in a particular British Isle or European country thus anchoring it in a particular ethnic group; if the ancestor was a convict; or if the ancestor was a member of a royal family (I encountered one such claim) or of the nobility. In fact, often the ancestors would not be remembered by name, only the specific details about them would be recalled and the grandparent on whose side that distant famous relative was.

An interesting aspect of the genealogical memory is genealogical amnesia, or repression. The only category of relations which I found to be actively forgotten, as it were, were potential indigenous
Australian ancestors. Once I was told by an informant that she thought that they might have had Aboriginal ancestors, but that the old female ascendant who knew the details refused to talk about it. Even though this is the only instance of such memory loss within the confines of my official fieldwork, it was not unique in my total experience in Australia. It is instructive that she, as well as other informants, felt it was obvious why her family members were reluctant to keep such information on the record or make it public. She mentioned this genealogical repression which she did not condone, and did not think there was any need to state the obvious and explain why her older relatives were not forthcoming about the Aboriginal aspect of her genealogy.

The presentation of lineal relations along the vertical axis, and the collaterals along the horizontal axis is significant. The graphic presentation by which one moves “down” the generation from “ascendants” to “descendants” (although my informants did not use these two terms spontaneously) is quite clearly embedded in the language and imagery used to imagine, and experience, kinship. It is probably related to the fact that informants tend to think of their own immediate families and tend to extend their presentation from there to include ever more distant relatives. Within the circle of immediate kin, categories like older, bigger, higher ranking and authoritative all seem to be related to the up:down dichotomy on the “up” side, while their counterparts younger, smaller, lower-ranking and un-authoritative tend to be equivalent to the “down” side.

The up-down idiom of constructing kinship charts is part and parcel of the ethno-science of relatedness. The shared essence of relatives, epitomised in the notion of relatedness “by blood”, flows down the generations lineally, just as fluids naturally travel when left to their own devices. Thus people “pass down their genes” to their offspring. At a deeper level, it seems that fluid is what mediates the relationships between solids, such as the bodies of the individual persons, (or, which amounts practically to almost the same thing, the person experienced as an individual body). Solids are bodies whose structure is imbued with a certain inherent permanence, and which are clearly demarcated and distinguished from other solids. The fluids establish contact between such bodies, as epitomised paradigmatically not only in blood relatedness, but also in breastfeeding, sexual intercourse and other practices which evoke it like the deep, wet kiss. In other words, the experience of the person becomes comprehensible through the image schema of a container, with the essence of the individual, transmitted as fluids, as contained within that individual.

The individual, structured through the container metaphor, is the atom of my informants’ kinship system and vision of social division. It is a unit abstracted from the various contexts in which it is
embedded, and from the flow of time in which it changes. By extension, corporate bodies like the nuclear family are construed by such a metaphor. As I mentioned above in relation to the nuclear family, the metaphor of an independent atom of society runs into difficulty when confronted with the realities of reproduction. As with the reproduction of families, the reproduction of individuals violates the notion of a discrete container. This is metaphorically resolved by viewing blood relationships as relationships of essence, as I described above.

The core idiom of kinship and family, that is, the key organising structure of kinship and family is reproduction (by which I mean the cultural construction of the physiological and social processes of reproduction, cf. Keesing 1990). The paradigmatic example of a relationship of relatedness is that of parent and offspring. It is a relationship that is natural, in its ethno-scientific construction, and engenders feelings of obligations on the part of both sides towards one another. Built into these relationships is an essential element of inequality. The senior relative, the parent, is up; the junior one, the child, is down. The parent is altruistic, the child submissive (cf. Finch 1989, 162 ff.). The central role of the model of reproduction is the basis of the parental primacy of mothers. One of my male informants admitted that he could never have the closeness to his children that his wife enjoyed. She carried them and nursed them. It is this unmediated physical connection between mother and child which lends itself to the construction of maternity as prototypical parenthood, and paternity as secondary parenthood.

Going back to the analysis of persons as solids whose relationship is mediated by fluids, one can see how at this intuitive, symbolic level the wife/mother becomes the mediator of transfers of essence between father and offspring. Sexual intercourse connects the husband to wife; while pregnancy and lactation connect mother to offspring. Hence the transfer of essence (fluid) between father and offspring is mediated through the mother/wife.

The linear, downward flow of relatedness is a paradigm, a practical metaphor, for other social practices. A person feels obliged to pass on property downwards, linearly. Children have a greater moral claim over the inheritance of their parents than do the parents’ siblings. Similarly, grandchildren have a greater claim than do nephews and nieces. In a sense, seeing the relationship of children to their parents’ property as a ‘claim’ is substituting a legalistic perspective for the experience and practice of my Novocastrian informants. The transfer of economic assets down the

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5 This construction of personhood is not inevitable, and alternative cultural constructions have been reported by anthropologists (e.g. Strathern 1988; Gell 1995).
generations normally occurs incessantly from childhood, and is not delayed till death. Rather, inheritance upon death is the final act in the long process of transfer from one generation to the next, beginning with the very transfer of life. This made intuitive sense to my informants because relations of filiation are not deemed to be a relationship between completely independent and different persons. Children and parents share an essence in common, which is unquantifiable and indivisible. ("Your child is part of you," as one informant exclaimed.) In addition to the idiom of blood relations, it can be seen in the physical similarity that people find between children and their parents. Children become the manifestation of their parents in the next generation. This sharing of essence makes them not quite a different, fully separate, person (although they are by no means the same person). Therefore, the property of the parents is, in fact, the property of the children too, and the transfer which occurs throughout life is different in nature from a market transfer between two independent and equivalent persons.

The ambiguity of difference and identity is brought together in names given to individuals. Given names are unique. The surname unites the family.  

While linear relations were deemed to be natural, and therefore obligatory, collateral relations were experienced as voluntary, freer, and involving fewer obligations. Mature siblings were the point at which lines diverge. My informants, who believed that their notions of relatedness followed scientific or natural closeness, were surprised to be told that a person is equally genetically related to his/her nephew, niece, uncle and aunt as to his/her grandchildren and grandparents. To them the latter relationships were much closer. Persons were also deemed to be more closely related to their offspring than to their siblings, again in contradistinction with the equality of the genetic coefficient of relatedness. This surprise emanated from the fact that their notions of relatedness were those of an essence passed down the generations, and not a divisible and quantifiable coefficient of relatedness.  

Interestingly, I did not come across instances of the practice of naming sons after fathers. I did encounter, albeit rarely, the practice of using names which are "in the family". This practice involved the use of the names of dead ascendants as the child’s second name. I did not investigate the issue systematically, so these observations must remain tentative and impressionistic.  

It is important to note that the cultural construction of relatedness among my Western informants is not based on the scientific construction of reproduction. Another important point is that quite obviously, an unsophisticated sociobiological account of these notions of relatedness would very soon come to grief. Especially if we add the sociobiological consideration of parental confidence which postulates that men can never be certain about the true paternity of their mate’s offspring, in contrast with the virtual certainty of maternity. This latter consideration would incline us to expect men to be closer to their siblings than to their offspring, to their sisters’ offspring than to their grandchildren, and so forth. This, however, was not the way relationships panned out among my informants.
Very much in line with the bifurcation of family in the sibling line is a phenomenon which is a by-product of my informants’ kinship terminology system. Full siblings—the prototypical siblings—share a common perspective of the ascending generations in their kinship universe. But spouses, rather than siblings, share a common view of the descending generations in their kinship universe. This seemingly trivial point reinforces the transition from family of origin to family of orientation, as well as stresses the tensions between the two.\(^8\)

My informants’ family trees included only consanguines and their spouses. Affinal relations were not otherwise included in one’s family tree. One reason is, perhaps, the graphical requirement to trace two parents for every single consanguine who is mentioned in the family tree. More significantly, though, it seems to me that spouses were included primarily because they seem to enjoy the status of a quasi-consanguine. Since both spouses were consanguines of their children they do share an indirect consanguinity of sorts. As far as my informants were concerned, affinal links were not enduring links of relatedness. Spouses become related, indeed turn from a “couple” (a potential family) into a “family”, only once they have offspring. It is only through the children—common blood relatives—that they become familially related.

**THE LOGIC OF KINSHIP TERMINOLOGY**

I am not interested in this chapter in the analysis of an abstract system of kinship terminology for its own sake.\(^9\) Rather, I will focus on kinship terminology in use, as part of social practice.\(^10\) For

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\(^8\) In other kinship systems the situation may be quite different. Full siblings among the Yolngu share a view of both ascending and descending generations (Keen 1994; Morphy 1984).

\(^9\) But see Schneider’s analysis of American kinship (Schneider 1980) for an analysis of kinship as a cultural system, and a powerful argument for the merits of such an approach (and see Schneider 1984 for a critique of this project). Further, I am not concerned with what Schneider (and others) describe as kinship theory. Hence, the questions of whether kinship is an emic cultural domain, and whether it is a discrete institutional domain, are not in themselves of much interest here.

\(^10\) The study of kinship terminology has been the mainstay of much debate in linguistic anthropology, stimulated by formal structural semantic analyses of kinship terminology systems (The following formal semantic analyses are relevant to English language kinship terminology: Goodenough 1956; Goodenough 1965; Wallace & Atkins 1960; Romney & D’Andrade 1964; Scheffler & Lounsbury 1971; Bock 1989; Read 2000). The criticism in the literature challenges, among others, the cognitive relevance of these analyses (Kronenfeld 1980). But as Keen has pointed out, much of the difference in opinion is more apparent than real, especially since the shared models of kinship (i.e. the knowledge that is shared by all agents) and the composite models (i.e. the sum total of the knowledge which individuals hold) greatly overlap. The confusion is further augmented by misconstruing the structural models of reality (i.e. descriptive models), as the very cognitive models of social agents (Keen 1985). In the course of my fieldwork I did not systematically collect the kind of data that would be necessary to enter the debate (such as data on how people compute relationships). Nonetheless, a few points are in order. The formal analyses of English language terminology tend to focus on formal terms of reference, rather than on terms of address or the informal kinship system. Formal analyses of English language systems, such as the one advocated by Bock (Bock 1989), do not predict kin-relational terms such as Nanna and Pop (see page 123). These are not part of the standard American kinship system which has been the object of these analyses. This variety of English
example, formal English reckons cousins with degrees of relatedness and removal (e.g. second cousin once removed). Although my informants are aware of the existence of this system they do not normally use it, and are not familiar with its usage. Below I will explore the significance of my informants’ deviation from this aspect of the official kinship terminology, and will otherwise exclude it from the ethnographic analysis. Such licence could not be taken, of course, if one were to study the kinship view, as it were, of the English language. Incidentally, this ‘view’ of the English language is very much a part of elements of the official domain. Mastery of this ‘correct’ way to deploy this kinship system is an instance of cultural capital which is unevenly distributed across society.

Among my informants, standard terms of reference were resorted to by people in formal occasions. Bureaucracies were liable to inquire about the details of one’s father, mother, one’s mother’s maiden name and so forth. In familiar settings the terms of reference and terms of address tended to coincide. In fact, the choice of which term to use, is one element which would constitute an interaction as either more familiar or more official. Talking about “my mother” is more official than talking about “mum”.

Terms of reference, rather than terms of address, have traditionally been the focus of anthropological kinship studies. However, terms of reference are probably the less significant to understand the ‘native point of view’. Among my informants, individuals acquired their particular kinship system does not fit the systemic model in that it differentiates between matriline and patriline, and does so not so much by affixing particular terms to either line, but ensuring that the two have different terms, based on a myriad other considerations (some of which I have discussed above). While the general principles which predispose agents towards using these terms may be studied, I doubt very much that a predictive model of the accurate use of these terms could be constructed. This might be seen as the result of the flexibility in the system which allows it to be modified in relation to other aspects of practice (as suggested by Keen 1985, 86). This, in any event, shows that the kinship terminology system may be unsystematic in its practical use, and perhaps not even strongly systemic. Furthermore, I would speculate that the formal kinship system can remain highly systematic only because the informal kinship is flexible (or, put differently, the informal system evolves in a separate line to the formal system precisely because the latter has been codified and fixed). I have further argued that the informal kinship system is probably the more cognitively basic or salient, as it is internalised earlier in the course of socialisation, and is the one which is applied to concrete relatives in concrete situations, rather than in abstract or formal situations which typify the formal English-language system. Thus, even if formal analyses were to mirror the cognitive processes involved in computing kin terminology, they most likely do not mirror the cognitive processes involved in agents’ kinship practice. (By analogy, the cognitive and neurological processes involved in formally conjugating a verb may well differ from those involved in correct usage of the verb—the two may in fact be different types of mental activity.) In any event, kinship terminology should be seen within the context of practice in general if the perspective of social agents is to be understood. In the course of my analysis here, I attempted to resituate my informants’ kinship terminology within their broader kinship practice in order to highlight some of the principles which underlie the kinship practice, such as the division by sex/gender. While I am not arguing that these descriptive principles are, in fact, the principles which are encoded in the cognitive and neurological apparatus of social agents, what I am arguing is that however the cognitive apparatus of social agents is organised, it has the effect of producing those principles in practice. In other words, the distinctions I am drawing above should be seen as descriptive (i.e. models of reality), and not as prescriptive (i.e. models for reality).
view of their kinship universe very early as children, using the familiar sets of terms of address and reference. The automatic use of the familiar system, and the fact of its ontogenetically earlier acquisition indicate that it, rather than the official system, is the cognitively basic level of kinship terminology (Rosch 1978; Lakoff & Johnson 1980; Lakoff & Kovecses 1987).

Among my informants, the familiar kinship system is the one to which children are introduced from infancy. Imbuing the newly born with the correct kinship perspective is a deliberate and collaborative effort in which all adults cooperate. It is quite common for adults to refer to and to address one another using the appropriate terminology of the youngest generation present. Thus, a married couple of parents might refer to each other as “mum” and “dad” for the explicit benefit of their children. This adoption of the new terms of reference and address for the sake of the children in itself becomes quite often a ritual which signals to the new parents and grandparents and others that they, themselves, have changed their status. Some couples might resort to their children’s or even grandchildren’s kinship perspectives even when the latter are not present; and explain it, if asked, as the force of the habit.

In the informal system parents are normally referred to as Mum and Dad. Grandparents pose a bit of a problem because usually one is faced with two sets which need to be distinguished. Normally one set of grandparents would be called Grandma and Grandpa. The other set of grandparents would often be referred to as Nanna and Pop. Another way to distinguish maternal from paternal grandparents in families in which one side springs from a non-Anglo background, is to use the foreign terms (e.g. Oma). When asking among my informants I was also told once of a family in which the grandparents were referred to by their title and given name (e.g. Grandma Diane), thereby bypassing the problem. In another instance I encountered, the grandparents were distinguished by their surnames (e.g. Grandma Goodall). But such solutions were unusual. The normal practice among my informants was to use different kin terms for the two sets of grandparents. The decision as to which set of grandparents would be called what is normally negotiated during pregnancy and before the birth of the first child. Factors which are taken into account include the question of whether a set of grandparents is already designated as Grandma/pa, or as Nanna/Pop by any other grandchildren. In general, everything else being equal, the mother’s parents would be more likely to be called Nanna and Pop, a designation which is, to my informants, less formal and more familiar.\textsuperscript{11} This makes sense because usually, MM is younger than FM. Also, the focal role that

\textsuperscript{11} One family I came across in Newcastle used a variant of Nanna—“Nain”. There are other variants of Nanna which are in use (cf. Goody 1962).
women tend to play in running and maintaining family ties would normally imply a greater access of MM to her grandchildren (see Goody 1962, for an account of the evolution and usage of the term Nanna and its variants in England). (While most of my informants concurred with the fact that there is a clear tendency to designate maternal rather than paternal grandparents as Nanna and Pop, there was one family who insisted that there was no such bias, and that either set of grandparents could be Nanna and Pop without any clear preference.) Once the terms are decided for the first-born child, his/her siblings follow and use the same terminology.

The distinction between the two sets of grandparents is an obvious deviation of the informal kinship system from the formal perspective embedded in the bureaucratic view of kinship, which distinguishes by gender, generation and degree of lineality, but which does not differentiate between the matriline and the patriline. The informal distinction between lines, though, does not indicate an ideological distinction between the two lines. Uncles, aunts, and cousins are not differentiated by lines. Rather, this distinction between the patriline and matriline is the by-product of the need to individualise all effective kin (the kin with whom one has contact). Uncles and aunts are differentiated by using epithet and given name (e.g. Uncle Ralph), and cousins are normally referred to by their given names alone. Whereas given names individualise aunts, uncles and cousins, the use of given names to address or refer to lineal ascendants is generally shunned, requiring alternative strategies, such as the use of terms like Nanna and Pop, to distinguish between the different grandparents.

“Uncle” and “aunt” are commonly used as classificatory categories which include siblings of ascendants and their spouses. The prototype, or basic-level examples are ego’s PG. Cousins are a classificatory category which applies to one’s PGC as prototype and is extended to other relatives through common descent. In more official situations, as when questioned systematically by anthropologists, distinctions might (somewhat reluctantly) be drawn among great uncles/aunts, or mother’s/father’s uncles and aunts vs. ego. More precise distinctions were very awkward and unnatural to my interviewees who tended not to be entirely sure about the ‘proper’ terminology to use for such persons. The automatic, default daily use does not distinguish among aunts, among uncles or among cousins.

This deviation from official kinship terminology is significant. Official kinship which distinguishes generational and genealogical distance from ego (eg great aunt, third cousin twice removed) is based on a quantitative core–periphery model centred around ego. My informants, though, tended
to organise their extended kin by recourse to a qualitative break between in and out, in line with the container metaphor. Uncle, aunt and cousin, in my informants’ classificatory usage means a relative, but one who is not a member of the nuclear family. This may be interpreted as an imposition of a container model on what might once have been organised by a core–periphery model; or as an embedding of the nuclear family within a broader container of the kindred—the extended family. In either event, this designation of relatives outside the nuclear family with classificatory terms ends up replicating the container model in the organisation of the kindred, in that it divides the world according to a permanent binary choice between in and out of the kindred.

In the ascending generations the distinction between lineal and collateral relatives is reinforced in several ways. The terms for collaterals (uncle, aunt) are usually applied across the board to ascendant collaterals. Kinship terminology relates all ascending lineals to one’s parents by ascribing a modified parental category to them (grandfather or grandmother). Unlike collaterals, the exact generational difference is always indicated—grandfathers were never referred to as fathers. This no doubt reflects the critical difference between the parent–child relationship and the grandparent-grandchild relationship. Similarly, great-grandfathers were never referred to as grandfathers or as fathers.

Compared with its formal counterpart, the informal kinship terminology stresses more forcefully the distinctions between grandparents and parents. The terms used for grandparents like Grandma and Grandpa are different from mum and dad or even mother and father, and the use of alternative terms like Nanna and Pop.12 The informal kinship terminology thus draws a greater distinction between parents and grandparents while distinguishing between lineals and collaterals. The informal kinship terminology system further distinguishes collateral from lineal kin terms by adding given names to laterals’ epithets (Uncle Bob, Auntie Matilda), a practice which is not normal for ascending lineals. The fact that the informal kinship system is the one to which children are exposed from early childhood on a regular basis would suggest that it is the more accurate site to examine social reproduction. Also, the greater independence of the informal kinship system from formally constituted bureaucratic definitions makes it more immediately responsive to social change than does the more formal kinship system.

12 Unlike some North American usages, “ma” and “pa” were not used among my informants to designate mother and father. Further, “Pop” never referred to father among my informants, again unlike North American usage (on the US usage of these terms, see Schneider 1980).
I have mentioned above that ascendent lineals are referred to by epithet alone, and ascendent collaterals by epithet together with a name. Where the age gap between niece/nephew and uncle/aunt was small, or when the relationship was more relaxed and egalitarian as the niece/nephew reached adulthood, the epithet might be dropped, and the uncle/aunt might be referred to by his/her given name alone. This was a mark of familiarity when used in the right context. The use of the first name without epithet was normally reserved for people of the same generation as ego, or of descending generations. This would normally include cousins, nephews/nieces, offspring, and the further generations down the track. (Normally genealogical level and relative age are closely linked due to the limited extension of families and the small number of offspring in any given family who tend to be born within a particular and limited period of time.) Even if there was a considerable age gap between them, siblings referred to each other by name alone.

Some complication is introduced into the use of kinship terminology by marital breakdowns and blended families. Standardised kinship terminology seems to be lagging behind actual practice, leaving relationships improperly classified. Here kinship terminologies were used somewhat creatively. Thus one girl would use the term “father” for her mother’s first husband who was her genitor, and the term “dad” for her mother’s second husband. In another situation a woman referred to her mother’s de facto partner by his first name, explaining that he moved in with her mother when she herself was no longer a child, and that he was never really like a father to her. Both these instances are significant in that they allow a glimpse into the creative working of habitus. The agents involved do not borrow practices from a pre-determined system of cultural units. Rather, they use familiar models to confront or structure novel situations. The girl who referred to her genitor as father and her mother’s husband as dad is an interesting example. Unfortunately, I do not know what term of address she uses for her genitor. He, however, had been absent from home since she was around two-years-old and had been living in Sydney for most of that time—spending little time with his daughter. Her mother’s current husband was the adult male who had been living in their home most of her life. (At the time of my fieldwork the girl was around twelve-years-old.) Furthermore, the man she called dad was her sister’s genitor. Thus both sisters, in line with the prototypical model, referred as dad to the same man who was living at home, was in a monogamous relationship with their mother, and was the genitor of one of the girls. In the other instance, the woman used, quite explicitly, the prototypical model of father to rule her mother’s partner out from

13 The current rates of marital breakdown and blended-family formation are not unprecedented—in the early days of British colonisation they were much higher (Grimshaw et al. 1994). However, as I argued in chapter two, since the 1950s the rates of family breakdowns and reconstitution have increased.
Structural Aspects of Kinship

this categorisation, opting then for the practice which denotes familiarity, voluntarism and egalitarianism, of using his given name. This signifies also the fact that she saw herself unbound by normal commitments of obligations which tie offspring to parents. In fact, her relationship with him was contingent upon her mother’s relationship with him.

Another area which does not have clear-cut terminological injunctions is that of in-laws. Upon marriage my informants might assume their spouses’ position when addressing their spouse’s parents, that is they would call their spouses Mum and Dad. Alternatively they might adopt the terms of address which their children are being trained to use (e.g. Nanna and Pop). More commonly, though, they would address them by their first name, or, in a few instances, by non-naming,\(^\text{14}\) that is, by avoiding the use of any term of address; and when referring to them in formal circumstance (e.g. to an interviewing anthropologist) as their spouse’s mother or father, or as their mother- or father-in-law, or simply as their in-laws.

Having discussed some aspects of my informants’ kinship terminology, I now turn to some of its intrinsic structuring distinctions, as a means of further exploring its underlying world view.

**THE DIFFERENTIATION IN THE KINSHIP TERMINOLOGY SYSTEM**

Thus, practical mastery of the rules of politeness and, in particular, the art of adjusting each of the available formulae (e.g. at the end of a letter) to the various classes of possible recipients presupposes implicit mastery, and therefore recognition, of a set of oppositions constituting the implicit axiomatics of a given political order: oppositions between men and women, between younger and older, between the personal, or private, and the impersonal (administrative or business letters), between superiors, equals and inferiors (Bourdieu 1990c, 293 endnote 4).

The sphere of kinship terminology to which my informants were exposed from birth contained a world view which was structured in specific ways and which mostly resonated with structures of other social spheres. This sphere—which was structured by the social environment in which my informants lived, and which in its turn structured that environment—distinguished between

\(^{14}\) The concept of no-naming was first suggested by Erving Goffman to Schneider. No-naming is, in Schneider’s words, “the zero form of address” (Schneider 1980, 84).
individual persons, between two sexes/genders, between lineal and lateral relations, (at times) between affinal and consanguineal relations (in-laws), (at times) between generations (ascending, co-generational and descending), in one particular context between patriline and matriline (by distinguishing the terms of reference and address of FP from MP) and between familiar and formal settings. Terminological distinctions corresponded to varying degrees to other patterns of behavioural differentiation. The genders were distinguished in many and varied contexts, as were lineal from collateral relations, as were affinal from consanguineal relations, as were the different generations. Kinship behaviour in formal settings was also distinguished from behaviour in familiar settings.

The analysis of the fit between the social structure as embodied in kinship terminology, and the social structure as it appears in social practice in general, runs the risk of assuming a coherent terminological system, and a synchronic agreement between the world and its perception, while losing sight of processes of change which might be afoot. Therefore, rather than focussing immediately on those distinctions which are embedded in the kinship terminology which correspond to the real world, as it were, I would rather begin with an instance of obsolescent—or what in future hindsight might prove to have been obsolescent—aspects of kinship terminology, namely the surname and its implications of patrilineal descent. I will then discuss the doxic match between kinship terminology and social reproduction.

Implicit in my analysis is the assumption that schemes of naming and categorisation normally lag behind practice, as part of the general lag of incorporated structures behind current ‘objective’ structures (cf. Bourdieu 1981). This may be expressed in different ways. For example, ad hoc terms invented for ad hoc arrangements might acquire some generality once such ad hoc arrangements become a type. On the other hand, terms which might have reflected real types might be taking a while to make an exit, for once established they would need to be made completely unnecessary to disappear altogether. These processes operate on the margins of what is doxa, the fit between the modes of perception and appreciation of the world, and the constitution of the social world. I should stress that I am not arguing that all historical changes proceed in this way, that is, from practice to terminology. Especially within stratified societies and at the crossroads of global systems, impositions from alien centres of power can bring about change in a more abrupt manner, which will move from the structured view of society to its structure of daily practice. The elimination of sibling marriages in Roman Egypt by the imposition of the Roman civil code is an example of a radical social transformation in the structure of the world—siblings ceased to be
marriageable—as a result of an imposition of a different world view, namely the world view encoded in the Roman civil code (Hopkins 1980). Foucault advanced a similar argument for the process of the imposition of bourgeois sexuality on the dominated classes of society in Victorian times (Foucault 1980). But other than instances of imposition from external sources of power, the general trend is for practice to change first, and only then for explicit linguistic and cultural encoding of practice to follow.

But first—obsolescent aspects of terminology. Surnames and their transmission were perceived by my informants as containing strong patrilineal and patriarchal elements. It is the father’s surname which was still normally assumed by the wife upon marriage, and subsequently by the progeny of the union. This was seen by my informants as a legacy of times in which the man was the clear head of the family and women were confined to housewifery. The historical accuracy of this account is less important than the general sensation that this practice is a relic of past practices. My informants did not seem much concerned about this issue in their daily life. Surnames were normally used only in bureaucratic contexts. A few had given some consideration to the issue upon marriage, or when they needed to determine the surname of their first child for the birth certificate. Otherwise, surnames were seen as rather inconsequential.

This experience of surnaming practices as obsolescent probably reflects the influence of the feminist movement. Generally negative attitudes towards the patrilineal nature of surnaming and its patriarchal implications seemed to me to be more common among my younger interlocutors (people in their thirties as opposed to those in their fifties, for example). It seemed to me to be closely correlated with more general gender-egalitarian attitudes, at least as they were verbally expressed in public.

Interestingly, most informants who saw this surnaming practice as obsolescent still conformed to the practice upon first marriage. Of the others, it was common for the woman to retain her maiden name as well as take on her husband’s name, but the husband would not assume the wife’s name, and the children would assume the father’s name. The complete ‘double-barreling’ of surnames whereby both spouses and their offspring would bear both surnames was more typical of the dominated fractions of the dominant class. The latter, being imbued with the ideology of the bureaucracy of which they are an integral part, take the symbolic implications of bureaucratic practices very seriously indeed. Furthermore, the imperative to improve society in general and engage in symbolic protestation is part of the logic of the dominant, those who take a magisterial,
sovereign perspective of society, who are interested in the way society as a whole operates and the abstract principles which govern that operation. The burden of social responsibility towards the rest of society is one of the postures which emerge from this position. Such considerations loom much smaller among members of the dominated classes to whom the social distribution of political consciousness leaves a concern with their immediate interests. Rather than identify with the State and Society, they face the State, Bureaucracy and Society as an ‘other’ of sorts.

An unusual set of circumstances that exemplifies this logic which prevailed among my informants was that of Lucy. She had been married prior to my fieldwork. Upon marriage she adopted the surname of her husband. The marriage did not last long, and finally broke up shortly after her first son was born. The break up was rather acrimonious. The ex-husband severed all ties with his son and with Lucy. He was only mentioned in response to my questions or in conversations which revolved around my research, and then he was referred to in rather abusive terms. Different accounts of the marriage depict him as a horrible, selfish, disloyal character. Since the breakdown of the marriage Lucy formed a de facto relationship with Meyer, with whom she had one daughter during my fieldwork, and another one shortly after. Lucy still used her first husband’s surname. When I asked her why, she said that at a certain stage shortly after the divorce, she was going to change her surname and revert to her maiden name. She looked into it, and quickly decided it was not worth the trouble, given that so many agencies, like banks and so forth, would need to be notified, and the whole process would entail much dreaded paperwork. This combination of reluctance to deal with red tape, and a lower urgency to deal with officiadom, was rather common among the people I had contact with in Newcastle, and seemed to be itself inversely correlated with a particular agent’s position within social space.

In any event, the important point is that surnaming practices were perceived by my informants to reflect practices which were obsolete. There has been a growing deviation in surnaming practices from older conventions, although my informants would be first to admit that they are not leading the way.

It is on the margins that the structures embedded in kinship terminology and in genealogy do not conform to the structures of habitus, that is to the mode of being of social agents. For the most part, internalised dispositions and social structure mirror one another to the point that they are indistinguishable. I now turn to those areas of the universe of kinship and family in which the structure of official terminology and the structure of practical action do meet. It is important to
structures of kinship stress that the terminology under consideration here is the ‘universal’ default one. It is ‘universal’ in the sense that it is assumed to be clearly understood by other members of society with whom one interacts, that is, by other members of one’s imagined community, including those individuals with whom one is not acquainted. In the ad hoc use of kinship terms social agents are able to adapt the official terminology to their own needs, to correspond with their social structure. But even at the practical level one cannot accord total analytical supremacy to the realm of ad hoc behaviour in the face of terminology. Terminology and the structures it implies are taken as the default basis of interaction. When no ad hoc modification to this official world-view occurs, its structure materialises. This default standard is part of the mechanisms which privilege the status quo. So much so, that unless there is a large-scale, systematic practical variation from the standards it implies, the default terminology and its structure would act as the collective conceptual meeting place for social agents. It also creates, to a large extent, that very collective by its function of determining the meeting place. Those who do not arrive at the meeting place, those whose default terminologies are different, would be conspicuously excluded from the collective. In other words, the use of the default terminology defines the group members because it is the ‘universal’ terminology which is used by all members of the group. Such tautologies are essential aspects of the operation of practical logic.

The universal terminology contains a specific world view. The distinction along gender lines holds across the kinship universe. Except for cousins, kinship terms are never gender-neutral. There are gender neutral terms for different roles which are associated with particular positions, terms like parent, sibling or offspring. Because of their gender neutrality, these terms found some currency as kinship terms in the State bureaucracy and in those areas of social space where seriality is valued. These terms class together persons of the different gender who otherwise share a similar position for the purpose of emphasising this very position. However, my informants’ basic level categories were invariably gendered. For example, the terms father and mother, brother and sister, son and daughter. These distinctions were mirrored in the terms of address, e.g. mum and dad, which conformed to the same structure as the terms of reference. Even when addressing or referring to cousins, their gender would become explicit because when identifying a specific cousin the name of the cousin is normally attached to the term, thus indicating the cousin’s gender through the genderedness of the cousin’s given name. (Gender-ambiguous given names were uncommon among my informants. Mismatching gendered names, i.e. calling a boy by a girl’s name and vice
versa, never happened.) In other words, the structure which produces, and which is produced by, the kinship terminology, includes a vision of social division which incorporates the gender division at a basic level.

Generations are distinguished in the relative usage of kinship terms. This applies to both lineal as well as collateral relatives. Among the latter the exact genealogical level (e.g. +1 as opposed to +2) is not important in itself. Rather, it is the relative position to ego as ascendant co-generational or descendant. Etiquette requires that one should refer to, and address one’s ascendants by epithet—the epithet alone in the case of lineals (e.g. Grandma) or with a given name in the case of collaterals (e.g. Uncle Ralph)—and to relatives of the same generation or descendants by name alone. This means that when one addresses a member of a descending generation one will use the given name only, but would be addressed in return by epithet, thereby underscoring the inequality in social position. This generational distinction is somewhat contingent upon age differences. Where collateral relatives who are members of adjacent generations are very close in age they might well resort to the use of given names alone. By the same token, the use of given names could be a way of signaling a certain egalitarian familiarity between such relatives which transcends the generational difference.

Traditionally, anthropologists have isolated the words, the terms, for special analysis, a fact that reflects technical and theoretical characteristics of the ethnographic project (e.g. Schneider 1980). It would be beneficial, though, to include those ritualised conventions which are part of the kinship terminology system. The distinctions which my informants’ kinship terminology established were accompanied by a whole set of ritualised behaviours. Regarding gender, for example, when family members met and greeted one another, regardless of their genealogical or geographical distance, females would normally embrace and kiss females, females and males would also embrace and kiss, but males would shake hands with other males. Similarly, relationships among co-generationals are modeled most closely after friendship relationships in that they are freer of obligations and include people who are structurally equivalent, that is, who have no authority over one another. This is reflected in the choice of subject matter for conversation and in the manner of interaction. It is

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15 Perhaps one might cite as an exception some nicknames of girls, constructed by the shortening of female names to male sounding names, such as “Sam” for Sumantha. This was not very common among my informants either, and in any event, the full name was still gender specific. Still, for reasons I will explore below in chapter six, just like with unisex clothes, when names were appropriated across gender lines by shortening or by nick-naming it was always females who adopted male-tagged names and not vice versa.
through such rituals that the distinctions of the kinship system are reiterated and reinforced in daily practice to the point of becoming part of the nature of things.

Not all divisions which are organised by the web of kin and family relations are equally fundamental. The most fundamental aspect of kinship designation is the individual as designated by name and specific parentage. The person is a holistic unit, an atom of society, with an essence which endures through time, and is embodied in one’s body, in one’s memory and in others’ memories of oneself. Probably other than the designation of the human organism as an individual, gender is experienced as the most immutable and fundamental aspect of a social agent’s being. Among my informants, current medical technology notwithstanding, everybody was assigned a sex at birth—either male or female—a condition which was significant and permanent. In fact, the separation of gender and individuality is completely artificial, as there is no neuter individuality among my informants. In other words, the basic level categories for individual persons, categories which structure my informants’ world, are all gendered. Thus, for example, nothing reflects the individuality of a person more than his/her name. However, names are usually gendered, and are not given to a child before his/her gender is known.16 The first bit of information people sought about a newborn baby was its gender. (The question was normally “is it a boy or a girl?”, rather than “what sex/gender is it?” reflecting the highly gendered nature of basic level categories of personhood.) The gender of the baby has profound immediate practical implications ranging from the proper pronoun to apply to it (it being a de-humanising pronoun generally reserved for non-human objects and living things), to the type of gift that should be bought for it and its mother.

Age was a bit less fundamental. It combined consideration of both biological age—a socially significant trait—and the relative position a person occupies within a genealogy. The practical correlation between the two means, for example, that a person’s uncles and aunts will be clustered in age around that person’s parents’ age, and would infrequently be closer in age to that person him/herself than to that person’s parents. The paucity of instances in which genealogical generation and biological age conflict is due to the limited number of children per family, to the close spacing of births into a couple of years of one another, and to a limited extension of effective genealogy. Biological age is important in two ways. The first is in enabling some and eliminating other types

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16 When I originally produced written reports I tried to avoid using names for informants, and introduced letter codes instead. The codes did not include any gender tagging, a fact which made it hard for readers to relate to the information and process it. Adding the (f) and (m) sign proved to be very helpful to readers of earlier drafts, both colleagues and informants. (This still proved an annoyance to several readers, which is why the codes were eventually replaced with pseudonyms.)
of relationships between any two or more persons. An adult and a child would form different kinds of relationships from a couple of adults or a couple of children. Age is also important in that it correlates in the practical scheme of things with life stage. Child bearing, for example, is not randomly distributed across the fertile years of women. The usual period to have a first child is late twenties. Having a first child at fifteen or at fifty is extremely uncommon, and may well invite the intervention of State agencies or other individuals and agencies in ways which would not be appropriate if that particular event, childbearing, had occurred at the ‘normal’ age of maternity.

Having outlined the fundamental distinctions embedded in the kinship system, I will proceed to explore some of them more closely. Specifically I will focus on age distinctions and gender distinctions. These two distinctions are rooted in family life and the kinship structure. In fact, the relationship between offspring and parent—the epitome of generational difference—is the prototype for symbolic domination par excellence. I will argue that this relationship acts as a practical metaphor for gender relations in the family. The familial experience of maternity and wife-hood or paternity and husband-hood are, in their turn, the prototype for gender distinctions throughout society. When my informants accounted for the structural distinctions between generations and between genders, they invariably resorted to generalisations from familial structure to social structure, and from the particular gendered/aged familial functions, to social structure in general. The two structural distinctions, of age and of gender, are thus intimately linked.

The issue of age is considered in the remainder of the chapter. The following chapter takes up gender, and argues for the essential link between the gender order and kinship and family. This greater focus on gender rather than age, is largely the outcome of my own personal interests, and the focus of anthropological writing in general, both of which reflect specific class interests and preoccupations. There is nothing, though, in the way things are which necessitates a greater interest in the gender order than in the age order.

**AGE DISTINCTIONS AND THE DIFFERENCES IN AGE-GRADE EXPERIENCES OF FAMILY**

My informants had an overview of the progression of human life which involves passage through various stages in three trajectories. The content of these trajectories is essentially linked to the
transition through stages in the idealised trajectory of the nuclear family, and to sexual and reproductive functions.

The first trajectory is that from infancy, through to toddler-ness, childhood, adolescence, to young adulthood. This trajectory is closely associated with chronological age and based on anatomical and physiological markers of developmental age. Then a second trajectory takes over, a trajectory which is more closely linked to the family: living at home, moving out as an ‘un-attached’ single, employment, becoming part of a couple, “having a family” (parenthood), then moving back from nuclear family to a couple as the children move to their families of procreation, followed by retirement. At this point the third trajectory—growing old—is in full swing, leading eventually to senility, death/widowhood, death. The second trajectory does, in fact, overlap with the first and third ones, although it characterises that plateau period in which the social significance of physiological development is experienced as attenuated or frozen. That period of adulthood is the one which characterises most of my informants’ paid-labour and/or homemaking life in which the process of becoming is finished, the individual is who s/he is, but the process of decline (during which a person becomes a “has been”—that is, a person is who s/he used to be) has not yet set in.

The prime position in this age structure is that of the young adult, who is in the middle, between childhood and old age. This stands in stark contrast with other social arrangements in which old age implies higher status and the process of maturing is a unidirectional, continuous trajectory (e.g. among Bedouins, see Abou-Zeid 1991). Unlike this latter instance, which is experienced as a unidirectional progression, the schema which organises adulthood among my informants resembles a stereotypical mountain. Adulthood is the peak, or summit of one’s life trajectory. It is also the middle-of-the-road position, the position which shuns the extreme, which is superior to either extremes. A person who is growing old is, thus, “over the hill”. The physical progress from adulthood to senility seems to reverse the processes of adulthood. A common complaint among the elderly is that they are treated like children. Very often, the social life trajectory was discussed by my informants as if it were an ascent from dependency (childhood) to independence (adulthood) culminating in a relapse into dependency (old age).

The first and third trajectories use the metaphor of development applied to some physical markers. The second trajectory is static, and therefore does not rely on physiological markers of change. The very physiological markers which produce—at the same time that they are produced by—the
processes of growing up and growing old, are similarly implicated in gender differentiation, an issue to which I will return below.

The most important idiom for the process of moving from infancy to adulthood is increasing in size and moving upwards. Babies “grow up” and ultimately become adults. They are “little” when they are young (the word little was often used interchangeably with young, especially when conversing with children), and they grow “bigger” as they grow older (big was used also to designate age seniority in child speak). Once an adult, a person stops growing up or becoming “big”. Instead a person starts growing old, and the shift in stature is subsequently reversed as a person is said to shrink with age. It is common knowledge among my informants that younger adults are taller than the elderly. The stereotypical old person is shrunken and hunched over.

There are specific physical markers which punctuate the process of growing up. The appearance of bodily and facial hair, puberty and sexual maturation, the deepening of voice in men, as well as being better able to control one’s emotions, bodily processes and so forth. These are all reversed in the process of growing old, which is associated with weakening, loss of hair, loss of sexual stamina and of fertility (when menopause is the reversal of menarche), shrinkage of stature and so forth.

Furthermore, it is as if the process of moving from sexlessness to sexedness which is attributed to the progress from childhood to adulthood is also reversed. The physical markers which are used to distinguished male from female among young adults are attenuated in older people. Older people among my informants also seemed to be spending less time in nurturing those markers and accentuating the differences between the genders. In fact, the very sexual nature of the person becomes less significant in old age. Various gestures which would be totally unacceptable if made by a young adult male to a woman would be seen as “cute” and “tongue-in-cheek” when made by an elderly man to a young woman. An elderly man is no longer deemed “dangerous”. “Dirty-old-man” can be used tongue in cheek to convey a positive image of an older person as a vivacious character.

Ultimately, just as the process of ageing becomes the undoing of the process of growth, a retreat from adulthood, so does death become linked, in a mirror image, to birth.
SUMMARY

In this chapter I discussed the kinship system and kinship terminology of my informants. I argued that reproduction is the idiom which organises kinship and relatedness among my informants; and that filiation played an important role in the kinship system, while descent did not. The ego-centred kindred forms a category which may be mobilised on ad hoc bases, but does not operate as a corporate body. This is in contrast with the nuclear family which may well operate as a corporate unit (see chapter three and four).

Kinship terminology and related etiquette embody a world view which structures the world in particular ways. In this thesis I am most interested in the division into individual persons, divisions by age, and by gender, all of which are intimately linked to one another and are predicated upon the conception of reproduction which was at the core of my informants’ kinship system. Having discussed the individual and age distinctions, I turn to gender distinctions which, I argue, are an essential aspect of individuality (i.e. there is no immediate sense in which agents are un-gendered) and are metaphorically structured by the juxtaposition of adult to infant, and other aspects of maturation and ageing.
Chapter Six

Internalised Gender Structures

Traditionally in anthropology gender and kinship have been treated as distinct topics of investigation. But among my informants at least, that which anthropology separates, practice and consciousness unite. As has been pointed out by numerous anthropologists (e.g. Yanagisako & Collier 1987; Yeatman 1983), the two domains are intimately linked in that they are both predicated on the folk models of procreation and reproduction, the very same models that structure the process of ageing too. The previous chapter followed in this line of thought, and argued that family, ageing and gender, while analytically separable, are in effect cognitively and culturally integrated.

But the common structuring principles of the domains of family, ageing and gender do not exhaust the link between them. This chapter argues that genderedness derives its meaning from the familial roles played by men and women; and furthermore, that the content of gender and the gender order are themselves structured by the socially constructed process of maturation and ageing—an integral aspect of kinship and family.
Chapter Six

MASCULINE DOMINATION AS “SYMBOLIC VIOLENCE”

Gender is a relational category. It makes little sense to analyse masculinity or femininity as independent categories, because in societies like my informants', those two categories are both mutually constitutive and mutually exclusive. In order to avoid an essentialist analysis of either masculinity or femininity, I will use Bourdieu’s relational analysis of masculine domination as the organising theory for the discussion that follows in this chapter. I also hope to use this to emphasise both my modification to his theoretical approach, and the differences between my substantive findings and his.

In a series of recent publications (Bourdieu 1990b; Bourdieu 1994; Bourdieu 1996–1997; Bourdieu 1998), Bourdieu has developed his analysis of masculine domination as an instance of symbolic domination par excellence. It is rooted in doxa, giving the social order of genderedness the quality of self-evidence, that is, the appearance of the natural order of things. More specifically, the social agent comes to incorporate the structures of male domination through a dual process. One is the internalisation of the male point of view by both men and women, constituting the male as a subject, and the female as an object. The second process is the acquisition of gender-specific bodily hexes and (psycho-somatic) dispositions (tastes, modes of action and so forth) which result in women adopting feminine styles, and men masculine styles. These two processes naturalise the gendered differences in style, and their consequences. At an immediate level, these differences appear to derive from peculiar life choices of particular individuals. At a systemic level, the cumulative gendered patterning of practice—the gender order—is experienced as the outcome of spontaneous, innate and pre-social tendencies which distinguish females from males.

In other words, there is a circular process at work here. The gendered quality of the practices of social agents is embedded in their tastes, preferences, commonsense and the like. Therefore, women seem to spontaneously act as women, and men to spontaneously act as men. These internalised generative structures—habitus—conform to the ideological structures of masculine domination. This conformity, in turn, serves to justify this very ideology, in that the differences between the genders appear natural and self-evident, inscribed as they are into the very being of human beings. As a result, the consequences of these gender differences are naturalised: they appear to derive from peculiar life choices of particular individuals. The nature of things, in its turn, imposes itself on agents and structures their agency (i.e. their habitus).
Below, I describe several examples to render concrete the general domination of the male point of view. I demonstrate the domination of the masculine perspective in the habitus of both men and women. In the course of the analysis I demonstrate that the internalised gender order is more complex than simply a universal manifestation of masculine domination. I present one major exception to the domination of the masculine perspective, namely the domain of reproduction and parenthood, where the feminine perspective predominates.

The discussion will show that among my informants the feminisation of the domestic domain, and masculinisation of the marketplace, are incorporated into both male and female habituses. This incorporation supports the material basis of masculine domination—the distinction between the marketplace and the domestic domain, and the domination of the latter by the former. Further, prototypical conjugal relations form a cognitive anchor for gender relations at large, including masculine domination. Masculine domination itself is incorporated into the habitus of my informants in a specific way—femininity is juxtaposed with masculinity in a homologous way to the juxtaposition of infancy to adulthood.

Methodologically, I have departed from Bourdieu's mode of structural decomposition. For the purposes of elaborating the structures of habitus, I have borrowed and adapted the structural method of analysis as developed by Lakoff and Johnson in their exploration of the cognitive basis of meaning (Lakoff 1987; Johnson 1987; Lakoff & Johnson 1980). There were several reasons for this analytical shift. My informants' worldview was too fractured, contradictory and unsystematic to be summarised in a neat, overarching chart like that which Bourdieu used for Kabyle cosmology (e.g. Bourdieu 1977, 157, Fig. 9). Furthermore, I found somewhat restrictive that traditional formalistic mode of structuralist analysis. This formalism disregards the way the world—as lived by social agents—is in fact structured by human cognition. It fails, for a start, to account for the fact that some complex structures are cognitively more basic than their constituent parts. For example, the realised category of the family is a complex which includes many constitutive elements. This complex—the prototypical nuclear family—is cognitively more basic than its constituent parts. When my informants lived, thought, felt and discussed family, it was this family which immediately sprang to their minds. By contrast, familial structures like single-parent families may appear structurally more basic than the complex nuclear family which includes two parents, but in my informants' practice it constituted a specific variation on, or modification to, the standard which was that of the nuclear family. The nuclear family forms, in fact, a gestalt in which the constitutive
parts meld and through which they acquire their significance. Breaking the nuclear family progressively into binary oppositions would conceal this basicness of the cognitive gestalt which is the nuclear family.¹

Traditional structuralist analysis further fails to establish other aspects of the very structure of the social world, especially as they relate to the relationships between sets of binary oppositions, and the actual structure of such oppositions. For instance, by ignoring the way categories operate in cognitive practice, especially the prototype effect (see Rosch 1978), structuralist and post-structuralist analysts mistake their formal structural presentation—a mere approximation of cognition—for the actual structure of cognition (I will return to this point below when juxtaposing femininity with masculinity). Moreover, in the formalist mode of structuralist presentation it is impossible to conceptualise the practical structural relations between dichotomies. However, in the lived functioning of human cognition A (be it a dichotomy or not) may be homologous with B, and structure it without being structured by it. This peculiarity of practical logic is not altogether arbitrary. There are general reasons why there is cognitive movement from A to B, but not from B to A. Often the ‘source’—A in my example—is concrete and the ‘target’—B—abstract, making A a good cognitive basis to structure B, but B a poor basis to structure A (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, 107–110).

Later I will argue that infant:adult and female:male dichotomies are not just homologous, but that the former dichotomy is more basic than the latter, and that in fact, the former motivates the latter. By motivation I mean a relationship which is not fully causal, but is more than arbitrary. Specifically, I will argue that the structure of the adult:infant dichotomy provides a paradigm which habitus subsequently applies to structure the dichotomy of man:woman. Because the relationship is not deterministic, one cannot predict from the infant–adult relationship what the gender relationship will look like. But, due to the motivation, it is possible to relate aspects of the construction of gender back to the structure of the adult:infant dichotomy. I follow in this the argument developed by Lakoff and Johnson. This principle of motivation—a central phenomenon in cognition (Lakoff 1987, 96, 346)—is the basis of what Bourdieu has identified as the economy of practical logic, whereby the structure of experience in one context may be transferred to a new context, and structure it (Bourdieu 1977).

¹ In fact, Bourdieu’s own conclusions in his 1996 article are in line with the analysis of the nuclear family as gestalt (cf. Bourdieu 1996).
THE PROTOTYPICAL FAMILY AS COGNITIVE PARADIGM FOR GENDER PRACTICE

The prototypical family provides a concrete experiential paradigm for genderedness, a paradigm that helps organise behaviour in other contexts too. Specifically, it is the prototypical reproductive and productive functioning of women and men within the prototypical domestic sphere which becomes the concrete anchor for conceptualising gendered behaviour, and accounting for the gendered nature of social action in other spheres. Among my informants, then, prototypical conjugal relationships serve so as to structure gender relations more generally. Or, put differently, within the universe of gendered practice, the conjugal division of reproductive, emotional and domestic labour, as a prototype, stands in a synecdochic relation to other instances of gendered relations. Femininity and masculinity are structured by the functions of the two in the domestic domain—the rest of the gender construction may be thought of as an epiphenomenon of the gendered structure of reproduction (cf. Errington 1990). In this my informants resembled other European metropolitan and settler societies (e.g. Yanagisako & Collier 1987).

Consequently, among my informants, the substantive content of the two gender categories was made concrete by the domestic division of labour, rather than the substantive content of the conjugal role being derived from generalised notions of masculinity and femininity. This was most apparent when my informants were called upon to explain the differences between the roles played by men and women in different social contexts. The rationale they used to account for these differences was almost always brought back to the gendered division of familial labour, especially emotional labour and reproduction. Most often, the differences between men and women were naturalised and attributed to some maternal instinct or similar predisposition of females and males to fulfil their usual reproductive and familial roles. Typical career choices made by women, such as secretarial or receptionist work, nursing and teaching, were explained in focus groups by women’s natural proclivity to communicate with others and their greater communication skills, the very reason they are “better with children” and in “running the family”. Such deterministic explanations

2 Synecdoche is very common in the cognitive organisation of the world, when a concrete and well structured aspect of something serves to cognitively organise the whole thing (Lakoff 1987, 77). Johnson and Lakoff class synecdoche with metonymy (Lakoff & Johnson 1980). Metonymy represents the use of one entity to refer to another that is related to it, and thereby includes synecdoche. Metonymic concepts are opposed to metaphoric concepts which stand for the other (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, 35–44).
complemented voluntaristic ones proffered by my informants, such as the preference of women for jobs which are part-time or which conflict least with their family responsibilities.

Significantly, while women’s interrupted participation in the labour market was explained by the more significant role women played in the domestic domain, never did my informants account for women’s greater involvement in the domestic domain by reference to women’s limited opportunities in the workforce. This generalisation holds both for general observations my informants made, and to their explanation of their own life choices. In short, when my informants thought about gender differences, they very often envisaged males and females in their prototypical reproductive, emotional and domestic roles. These roles were immediately accessible, and mediated the way gender in other contexts, and gender in general, was experienced and discussed.

Interestingly, while the prototypical family at the heart of gender construction appears rather uniform, the actual configuration of relations between spouses among my informants was much more fluid. For example, in two of the families with young children I came to know, the woman acted as main breadwinner. In several others, both spouses were engaged in full-time employment in the labour market. This, however, did not indicate that conceptions of gender are different among those who organise the division of labour along non-‘traditional’ lines. Rather, people experienced their peculiar arrangements as idiosyncratic, or as variations on a well-structured prototypical theme. This is yet another manifestation of the functioning of the nuclear family as a realised category.

Quite a few of the non-‘traditional’ divisions of labour resulted from the shrinking local labour market (see chapter one; for a preliminary qualitative sociological engagement with couples composed of male carers, and female breadwinners see Grbich 1997; Grbich 1994). In the two families where the wife was the main breadwinner, the wives had a substantially better earning capacity than their husbands. In one instance the wife, Catherine, was an occupational therapist. Her husband, Raymond, had been retrenched several years before, and was working casually as a taxi driver. In another instance the wife, Esther, was employed at middle level HRD in the public service, while her husband, Jack, who had worked in a series of dead-end blue-collar and service jobs, was at the time working on weekends as a sales assistant in a hardware store.

^3 HRD—human resource development.
Remarkably, in both instances the discrepancy between the common practice and the standard division of labour was explained to me by the economic rationality of the choice made. Neither instance was explained as simply the outcome of the desires of the couple—a typical explanation for prototypical arrangements. Both women tended to discuss their full-time paid work as a compulsion, and lamented the lack of time to spend with their children. Further, in their personal relationships neither couple broke with the common gendered division of disposition and responsibilities. While their practice might have been heterodox, the internalised dispositions of the members of such heterodox couples led them to adopt strategies which reproduced the dominant forms of gender, organised as they are around a prototypical division of productive, reproductive and social labour.

In fact, both women took great care to continue breastfeeding their children as long as possible, much longer than most other breastfeeding mothers I encountered. For example, Catherine regularly met Raymond for lunch at a coffee shop near her office so that she could breastfeed their toddler. It was their third child. She said she would breastfeed him for as long as she could. She breastfed each of her previous two children for about three years. Esther extended her maternity leave for as long as she could and returned to full-time paid employment but continued to breastfeed after she returned to work. She would express milk in the evening so that the baby could be bottle-fed with her milk during the day. Gradually the baby started being fed solids and other foods during the day, but was still breastfed at night. Strategically, breastfeeding reinforced the primacy of maternity over paternity in access to the child. The women cherished the experience which enabled them to bond with their children in a very unique way, and men acknowledged that part of the interaction with the child made the maternal bond with the child that much stronger and exclusive. For my informants it was a kind of relationship that could not be shared with or communicated to men, a kind of primordial, elementary and unmediated contact which is direct and unbreakable. This is very much in line with the construction of relatedness and reproduction that was explored in chapter five. It is the unmediated contact between mother and child in the (culturally constructed) process of reproduction which structures the supremacy of maternity over paternity.

Breastfeeding is thus not only a physiological necessity for the wellbeing of the child, but at one and the same time, among my informants, an assertion of the primacy of maternity over paternity. It was on the basis of their primary roles as mothers that my women informants exercised greater authority in matters pertaining to childcare. When, in my presence, the full-time working mothers
would meet their partners for lunch or after a day’s work, the husbands would report on how the baby behaved, and receive further instructions if necessary. Never was there any doubt as to who was the final authority in making decisions such as whether the child should be allowed to have sweets or not, when the child would be put to bed and so forth. This was squarely the maternal domain of authority, which may or may not be delegated to the father, but was ultimately the mother’s sphere. Thus, in one instance, Jack sheepishly reported that the child was out of order and he smacked him. This annoyed Esther who was opposed to corporeal punishment. She reproached him, clarified to him that this was unacceptable, and that they would discuss it later. Never was her final authority in relation to the child questioned.

Not only among these non-‘traditional’ couples, but also in general, feminine strategies led to a maximisation of women’s social capital in the domestic domain, while men among my informants spent more effort strengthening their access to economic capital. First and foremost, when it came to decisions regarding major expenditure, men tended to be dominant, making the major decisions, even, it seems, where the wife was the main breadwinner. Further, in the two cases in which the males were not in full-time employment, they still sought part-time or casual paid employment. They participated on a casual basis in the labour market in what one of them described as a “shit job”. Both hoped to find a better job, neither considered dropping out of the labour force altogether, and neither was committed to remaining secondary breadwinner. During my stay in Newcastle, I did not encounter, nor heard of a full-time househusband. Never did the men who were primary caregivers get involved in social networks like those of full-time women caregivers, who visited each other during the day for a “cuppa”, a chat, and an exchange of information. This is probably mostly the result of the paucity of other full-time, male homemakers, and the inappropriateness of men exchanging regular visits with women while their husbands are at work.

The internalised dispositions which link women to the domestic domain, and men to the marketplace, are expressed more clearly in families where the man is employed on a full-time basis. When both partners were involved in full-time paid work it was the man who was the main breadwinner. The salary differential between men and women would be maintained by the men working extra-hours. Further, following childbirth, the men’s increase in hours of work was seen by both men and women as the former’s equivalent familial contribution to the latter’s decreased participation in the labour market and greater expenditure of time at home.

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4 Cuppa—a cup of tea.
Faced with the apparent complicity of women in the reproduction of the gender order, some class-sensitive research on gender has sought to resurrect the rationality of the choices made by working-class women by pointing out that involvement in the labour market is not necessarily liberating or empowering at the lower ranks of the socioeconomic order, and that gravitating towards the domestic domain may not be a strategy of disempowerment (e.g. Bryson 1985; Donaldson 1991). As Barbara Ehrenreich and Deidre English put it, “From a permanent position on the assembly line or in a typing pool, it does not look so terribly degraded to bake cookies for spoiled children or to fake orgasms for an uninspiring husband. At home you can be ‘yourself,’ a person with intimate significance for others. In the Market you are abstractly interchangeable with any other quantum of human energy which can be had for the same price” (Ehrenreich & English 1979, 286–287).

While the poor alternatives to specialisation in caregiving might reward women’s attachment to the domestic domain, it does not account for the actual process which leads women to the domestic domain and men to the marketplace. Ehrenreich and English’s typification of some labour market experiences applies no less to male participants, and therefore cannot explain the gender differences in preference and propensity to engage in paid labour. Moreover, my women informants’ attachment to the domestic domain was not immediately motivated by a rational appraisal of alternatives offered by the labour market, but by dispositions strongly incorporated into their habitus. Such dispositions include, for example, difference in standards of cleanliness and orderliness which predispose women to deal with household chores. 5

In one couple with a ‘traditional’ division of labour, the wife worked on a casual basis in social services. She loved her job, but said she preferred to stay home with the children even though she could spend more time at work. Her husband worked as a quality inspector in industry, and hated his job. He said that had he not had a family, he would have left a long time ago, and that every Sunday he perused the job advertisements in the newspaper. I got the impression that the question of whether he should be the main breadwinner, and she the main caregiver, never came up spontaneously. When I raised it, I was told that she preferred to stay home with the kids, and that at any rate, he was probably able to earn more money at his job than she at hers. They had two children, a son of hers from a previous marriage, and a baby daughter. The wife was the one who

5 The difference in standards is confirmed by figures provided by Bittman and Pixley, who flatly deny that there is a gender difference in standards. I discuss this point in chapter nine when discussing their work. Chapter six explores in more detail the question of the logic of feminine and masculine strategies.
Chapter Six

had wanted the second child. The deal the couple had struck before their daughter was born was that they would have a child, the mother would take a break from paid employment, and then when the child was old enough she would go back to work so that her husband could leave his job or move to part-time employment, and retrain in a different field. Only then would they have another child. However, she unexpectedly fell pregnant again very shortly before she was supposed to resume her paid labour, and decided to stay home and go ahead with the pregnancy. Informed sources doubted the accidental nature of the pregnancy. As one of her close friends told me, she wanted another child, she liked being home with the kids—it was a very convenient accident on her part.\textsuperscript{6} The child was born in the year after I left Newcastle. In this domestic drama, the two main protagonists followed rather common gender strategies. Had there been a close adjustment of gender strategies to choices of labour market, we might expect a different division of labour. She, who liked her job, might be the main breadwinner, and he the main caregiver.

It appears, then, that the default attachment of women to the domestic domain, and men to the marketplace, is doxic, and is not challenged even in families with heterodox family arrangements. This doxa is part of a broad gestalt—the prototypical nuclear family. This gestalt serves as a practical paradigm that habitus employs to organise the world in many different contexts.\textsuperscript{7} This division of productive, reproductive, and social labour is organised around the ideology of reproduction which forms the very basis of the cognitive structuring of gender. It is experienced as life choices of individuals, and is expressed in dispositions, preferences and an aesthetic which spontaneously reproduces the dominant structures, those very structures which had impressed these very dispositions, preferences and aesthetics into my informants’ habitus.

The remainder of this chapter explores the way genderedness is embodied among my informants. This is done by taking up the two main themes Bourdieu has identified for masculine domination, namely the internalisation of the male point of view, and the internalisation of gender-specific dispositions. But unlike Bourdieu, by analysing concrete practices in various areas of practice, I

\textsuperscript{6} In her interviews in Melbourne in 1976, Richards, too, encountered a couple of instances in which women who wanted to get pregnant suffered a suspiciously fortunate contraceptive failure (Richards 1985, 74). I return to Richards’ work in the next chapter.

\textsuperscript{7} The basic schema I outlined above functions as a general default for gender relations. It is a central subcategory, a prototype, in a radially structured category (cf. Lakoff 1987, 83–84). It does not exhaust all possible constructions of genderedness. Based on this basic model several variants can be identified which introduce some modifications into this basic schema (e.g. complementary, hierarchical or serial—I discuss these in chapter eight below). Different gendered relationships might be constituted somewhat differently. More significantly, any two individuals might structure their relationships using different variants of the basic models in different contexts. Moreover, any two individuals might also relegate the gendered aspects of their relationship to the background in favour of other aspects of the relationship, collegial relationships being a case in point.
argue that in some contexts femininity predominates. The logic of which contexts are masculine
dominated, and which are feminine dominated, goes back to the prototypical productive and
reproductive functions, which organise the experience of gender among my informants.

**THE INTERNALISATION OF THE MASCULINE PERSPECTIVE**

The attachment of femininity to the domestic domain, and its subordination to masculinity in
general contexts, is internalised into the very habitus of both male and female agents. Bourdieu
argues that a fundamental aspect of the persistence of male domination is the ubiquitous domination
of the masculine perspective. This was so among my informants. For example, when in focus
groups my female informants discussed the gendered structure of the labor market, even those
advocating equal opportunity for women were reinforcing the dominant view of gender. The
discussion revolved invariably around whether women could operate equally to men in prized
positions in the labor market. They failed to question the legitimacy or necessity of such
masculinist standards as emotional stability, cool-headedness, primary commitment to the job over
and above familial duties, and the accompanying a priori presumption that men do live up to these
standards. The whole scope for debate and action was limited to whether and how women can live
up to such demands, and whether women who could, should or should not be treated equally with
men. In other words, the association of sources of economic capital—high-powered economic
positions for instance—with characteristics that are normally identified with masculine style, was
fully accepted without question. The scope for debate was the extent to which women can adapt to
that style.

This is an instructive instance of internalised symbolic domination. The a priori adoption of
masculinist standards necessarily excludes those agents whose habitus conforms to feminine style.
The presumption that males fulfil these standards exempts males from needing to demonstrate their
fulfillment of such standards, and gives males an added advantage even when there are no objective
differences between the genders. Further, the desirability of such standards is never in itself
questioned.

In its turn, the presumption of male conformity to these standards, coupled with the open question
of female conformity to them, probably affects the socialisation of agents in an unequal way. The
taken-for-grantedness of male conformity leaves little scope if any for alternative masculinities. Masculinity is defined and measured by such standards. Those agents who embark on a lifelong project of being male are left little choice but to incorporate these standards to varying degrees of success, because there are very few other ways to be male. On the other hand, the explicit question surrounding female conformity means that those social agents who embark on the project of becoming female may or may not find themselves conforming to such standards. Alternative ways of being female are legitimately available. In other words, the presumption of male conformity to masculine standards acts as a self-fulfilling prophecy by supporting the very differentiation of styles that it implies, and by reproducing it.

Perhaps a more fundamental demonstration of the domination of the masculine perspective is the fact that gender forms a crucial aspect of accounting for women’s behavior, whereas the genderedness of men comes to the fore only when compared with women. For example, when I raised with my informants the issues of gender, they used notions of gender to account for why women were not involved in the labor market to the same extent that men were, and why women were overly involved in homemaking. The explanation focused on that which is special about women. The parallel phenomena, namely men’s relative under-involvement in homemaking, and over-involvement in the labor market, were not directly accounted for by gender. Nor, for that matter, did normal accounts of gendered behaviors focus on the peculiarities of masculinities, unless I brought it up myself. It is as if gender (normally referred to as sex by my informants) was a concept interchangeable with femininity, which functioned so as to account for a feminine handicap. At the risk of overstating my case, I would say that among my informants, to talk about gender is to talk about female-ness. This is akin to the observation which has emerged in feminist research, according to which masculinity is the unmarked category, and femininity the marked one.

These instances of the domination of the masculine perspective are still at the level of explicit discussion in rather artificial contexts—mostly ethnographic interviews. In what follows I will try to go deeper, as it were. I will first discuss non-conscious speech practices which clearly demonstrate the internalisation, by both men and women, of the domination of the masculine

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8 As a youth worker pointed out: “Women in a lot of ways have more options, at some level, ‘cos it’s quite acceptable for females to take on leadership roles; it’s socially admirable for them to be working. You know, I don’t think that has happened for men, in childcare, in being a houseparent”. A different counselor lamented the lack of alternative role models for men, and added “I feel really concerned for what it means to be male in this society . . . This really, I mean, they have nothing to draw on . . . Their fathers were like this, and their fathers’ fathers were like this, ‘I get up in the morning, I go to work, and I come home and I don’t need to go out and socialise, I might go to the pub’.”

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perspective. I will then consider some non-discursive practices which demonstrate how the domination of the masculine perspective is incorporated into the different orientations men and women develop towards their own bodies.

**HABITUATED SPEECH PRACTICES**

The domination of the male point of view inheres in some non-conscious, habitual speech practices common among my informants. I will explore now one such example. Where English syntax does not impose a particular order among words, some words seem to be ordered in a rather fixed manner. William E. Cooper and John Robert Ross (Cooper & Ross 1975) set out to analyze what determines the order of such conjuncts as the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Usual</th>
<th>Unusual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>up and down</td>
<td>down and up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>front and back</td>
<td>back and front</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>active and passive</td>
<td>passive and active</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>good and bad</td>
<td>bad and good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>here and there</td>
<td>there and here</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>now and then</td>
<td>then and now</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cooper and Ross identified both phonological and semantic factors involved in ordering these words. The semantic factors are relevant to the current discussion. The researchers developed an essentially cognitive explanation of the semantic constraint on conjunct ordering: “First conjuncts refer to those factors which describe the prototypical speaker (whom we sometimes refer to as ‘me’)” (Cooper & Ross 1975, 67).

Keeping in mind Cooper and Ross’s findings, here is a small list of some habitual word orders among my informants and in Australian English usage more generally.\(^{11}\)

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\(^9\) I would suggest that the situation is not vastly different in the corridors of the faculties of social sciences, where the concepts of gender studies and women’s studies are themselves still largely interchangeable.

\(^{10}\) There are two particular exceptions to this “me first” principle, namely, Divine (e.g. God and man) and Plant (e.g. flora and fauna), but these are of little consequence for the current discussion (Cooper & Ross 1975, 67). Also worth mentioning is the fact that these findings do not seem to hold in other languages (Cooper & Ross 1975, 100).

\(^{11}\) I derived these conjuncts from recorded interviews in the field. Not being a native speaker of English myself, I did not want to rely on my intuition, and proceeded to consult a few of my informants about these conjuncts. They confirmed to...
Chapter Six

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Usual</th>
<th>Unusual</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>male and female</td>
<td>female and male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>man and woman</td>
<td>woman and man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>men and women</td>
<td>women and men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>boys and girls</td>
<td>girls and boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brothers and sisters</td>
<td>sisters and brothers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>husband and wife</td>
<td>wife and husband</td>
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<tr>
<td>husbands and wives</td>
<td>wives and husbands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>father and son</td>
<td>son and father</td>
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<tr>
<td>mother and son</td>
<td>son and mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>father and daughter</td>
<td>daughter and father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mother and daughter</td>
<td>daughter and mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>women and children</td>
<td>children and women</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This list, which accords with Cooper and Ross’s US data (cf. Cooper & Ross 1975, 65), suggests that men are more prototypical than women, and women more so than children. This seems to be a general pattern across many different contexts of speech acts. The agreement between Cooper and Ross’s findings on the one hand, and mine on the other, supports their claim that the emergent linguistic picture they discovered is typical of the English language, and its native speakers, as a whole. (This universality should never be taken for granted, for it cannot be ruled out that there are pockets of alternative linguistic practices, or that a process of transformation might be afoot in far-flung corners of the English-speaking world.)

However, Cooper and Ross’s findings need some conceptual refinement. The existence of a concrete, rich image, which is more a man than a woman and more a woman than a child is impossible in a universe, like my informants’, where man and woman are qualitatively different and mutually exclusive categories. Since Cooper and Ross published their paper, the theory of cognitive prototypes has developed in a way that makes it possible to resolve this difficulty and incorporate their findings into the general framework I am developing here. Prototypes are no

me that the order I nominated as usual is, in fact, the usual way they would utter those words. I subsequently presented this analysis at a conference of the Australian Anthropological Society in 1998, and later at a departmental seminar at the Australian National University. In both these instances the listeners accepted the patterns of conjunct ordering I am describing here. Moreover, various staff and students at the Anthropology program at ANU have also read this analysis in

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longer thought to be concrete, rich images, but rather abstract concepts or scales of sorts: a prototype effect which describes the product of cognitive processes rather than their actual structure (Rosch 1978; Lakoff 1987, 136 ff.). In the matter at hand one can say that men rank higher than women, and women rank higher than children on a scale of prototypicality, even though the physical way this scale is embedded in agents’ consciousness or cognitive apparatus is unclear.

Rather than relating the scale to a prototypical person, or speaker, I will refer to a prototypical perspective. This would be a more accurate appraisal of the cognitive processes at work. Women use the same habitual word orders as men do, but do not usually have a sense of themselves, as a speaker, which is male in any meaningful way. They do, nonetheless, adopt a specific perspective on things, including themselves, which is reflected in these habitual word orders. This perspective incorporates the scale of prototypicality in which men rank higher than women, and implies the domination of the male point of view over its female counterpart, in line with Bourdieu’s argument, and the domination of the adult point of view over the infant point of view.

There are exceptions to this, though, which, unless accounted for, threaten to undermine the entire analysis. The following instances are derived from my informants’ discourse:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Usual</th>
<th>Unusual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mum and dad</td>
<td>dad and mum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mother and father</td>
<td>father and mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mothers and fathers</td>
<td>fathers and mothers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grandma and grandpa</td>
<td>grandpa and grandma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nanna and pop</td>
<td>pop and nanna</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contrary to the previously quoted examples, normal speech places female ahead of male in these couplets. This does not disprove the practical logic which Cooper and Ross uncovered, but rather complicates it. This series of conjuncts—all of which highlight the parental functions of the persons denoted—is a sociologically meaningful expression of structural relations. There is a division between areas of the domination of the masculine perspective, and areas of a domination of the feminine perspective. When thinking about people as parents, the centrality of the feminine seems to be asserted in habitual speech practices, just as the domination of the male point of view...
seems to be reflected in more general contexts. Women, in other words, rank higher as prototypical parents than men do—a structural situation which is reflected in these linguistic patterns. (Cooper and Ross themselves were aware of the fact that there are a few conjuncts in which there was a clear bias towards placing the feminine ahead of the masculine. However, they failed to explore the extent of the phenomenon and its systemic logic.)

Incidentally, I found no clear gender bias in conjunct ordering in one related context, namely that of aunts–uncles or uncles–aunts. This probably reflects the ambiguity of these collateral relatives. On the one hand, they can be conceived of as essentially equivalent to parents. On the other hand, their main cause for inclusion in the family is their being siblings of ascendants.

Apart from this ambiguity, the embodied, non-conscious speech constructions of my informants delineate clearly the gendering of dominance in different contexts. The male perspective is dominant in general, non-familial contexts, while the female perspective is dominant in the contexts of parenthood and reproduction. These patterns of linguistic practice conform to the general configurations of the division of power and the genderedness of social practice.

I must stress that I am not arguing, based solely on linguistic practices, that there is a division of perspectives which conforms to a division of labor. Linguistic practices cannot be taken in and of themselves to reflect current social structure. That the division of labor and authority is based on the feminisation of the domestic sphere, and the masculinisation of the public sphere is something that emerged in the course of my concrete ethnographic observation of behavior, and conforms to the common picture that pervades the sociology of gender relations in Australia today (see chapter two above, and Matthews 1984).

What I am arguing is that based on two independent observations—my ethnographic observation of the division of labor and authority along with other sociological work on the one hand, and my observation of linguistic practices on the other—there emerges a correlation between social structure on the one hand and regularities in linguistic practice on the other. I am further arguing that this correlation is a manifestation of the doxic relationships, that is, the fit between, on the one hand, the internalised structures (expressed, among other things, in speech practices), and on the other hand, social structure (as emerges from sociological surveys, field notes and other social-scientific products). I will now move to adduce more evidence from non-discursive practice to further demonstrate and substantiate this doxic fit.
Internalised Gender Structures

ORIENTATION TO THE BODY

Echoing two decades of feminist work, Bourdieu observes that one of the crucial aspects which make up the domination of the masculine perspective is a profound difference in the orientations of males and females towards their own bodies. Women's bodies are experienced as objects, while men's are experienced as subjects. As Bourdieu points out, there are exceptions to this. For example, female athletes learn in the process of their training to become more attuned to their bodies' needs, and experience their bodies as subjects rather than as objects (Bourdieu 1994, 103–104; cf. Young 1990c, footnote 10). In order to account for my informants' experience I will elaborate upon the process of the objectification of bodies both male and female. The overall picture that emerges supports Bourdieu's analysis of masculine domination, although here, too, parenthood forms a sociologically significant context which reverses these relations of domination.

The analysis of concrete bodily comportment and motility, and their relation to the gender order has been carried out before. Most significant is Iris Marion Young's discussion of the embodiment of gender, especially the act of throwing (Young 1990c). Young uses the typical way girls throw as a basis for the analysis of the embodiment of femininity in comportment and motility. She links this feminine style of motion to the embodiment of restrictions which are placed on the female body in modern societies. Briefly, she sees in the distinct feminine throwing style an expression of a distinct tripartite modality of feminine motility. Feminine motility exhibits, in her words, ambiguous transcendence, an inhibited intentionality, and a discontinuous unity with its surroundings (Young 1990c, 147). Ambiguous transcendence means that women's bodies do not give women the same capacity to negotiate the world that men's bodies give men, but rather limit and inhibit their scope of action. Thus a woman typically refrains from throwing her whole body into a motion, and rather concentrates motion in one part of the body alone. Inhibited intentionality reflects the fact that women do not perceive their environment as potentialities for their action, but rather as potentialities for action which someone, but not they, can carry out. Discontinuous unity reflects again the concentration of motion in one isolated part of the body, which thereby becomes discontinuous with the rest of the body, which remains immobile. All three elements are self-contradictory, reflecting the fact that woman experiences her body not only as subject, but also as
Chapter Six

object. It is the latter, the product of the sexist social regime, which posits woman’s social existence as the object of the gaze of others (Young 1990c). 12

Young draws her inspiration from the work of Simone de Beauvoir and Maurice Merleau-Ponty (specifically de Beauvoir 1972; and Merleau-Ponty 1962), to create a blend of existential phenomenology which she brings to bear on the subject of her analysis. I am taking a more sociological approach here, which leads me to a somewhat different interpretation of findings like Young’s. I will return to Young’s conclusions shortly.

Among my informants, male bodies were no less objectified than were female bodies. There were definite images of what male bodies should be like. Over-developed breasts in boys or high-pitched voices in late-teenagers might be a source of great anxiety and social difficulty. Still, there was a qualitative difference in the types of standards which were used to objectify male and female bodies, in line with Bourdieu’s analysis. Among my informants, who are not unique in this way, the criteria used to objectify and judge male bodies had to do with action and an active orientation towards the world, indicators of strength and power being the most obvious. On the other hand, the criteria used to evaluate the female body stressed passive attraction: they focused on the aesthetic value of the female body and suppressed its functioning. Thus, the odour of sweat might be conceived of as masculine and, up to a point, attractive on a male body, but would normally be experienced as unacceptably repellent on a female body. My female informants were much more likely to buy and use scented shampoos, perfumes, anti-perspirants and deodorants, than their male counterparts. 13

This gender differentiation is part of a broader gender differentiation in the construction of desire in modern consumerist society. Ann Game and Rosemary Pringle observe that desire is articulated

12 Focussing more narrowly on the experience of women in interaction with institutionalised medicine, Emily Martin (Martin 1987) describes the body image of women in similar terms to Young’s, although Young goes much further in bringing non-discursive practice such as motility into the analysis. Furthermore, Martin’s general description of the significance of birthing seems different from mine, in that she construes birthing as alienating to the mothers. This difference is due mostly to her focus on women’s interaction with institutionalised medicine (as opposed to the focus here on women within their regular social environments), and to her focus on labour and childbirth (as opposed to the focus in this thesis on pregnancy).

13 The passivity associated with femininity is also often implicated in sexually related violence. Thus, several years before I came to Newcastle the city was shocked by a birthday party of high schoolers that developed into a rape-murder, when many of the boys at the party sexually and physically assaulted, and ultimately murdered, a fellow sixteen-year-old female student. Kerry Carrington and Andrew Johnson examined the events of that evening and much of the evidence that was collected by the police or came up in the trial (Carrington & Johnson 1994). They conclude that “Implicit in the conduct described by these young males are constructions of adolescent female sexuality in which girls are objectified as orifices
differently for men and women, and that "masculinity builds on aggressiveness, activity, a desire to control; while femininity builds on passivity, narcissism, and receptiveness" (Game & Pringle 1983, 94). This is more than a description of the construction of gender in mass media. Woman's objectification as object, and man's objectification as subject, are both internalised. Thus a woman who had cosmetic surgery to her breasts explained to me that she did not do it for men, but so that she could feel good about herself, and that following the surgery she did. Other women gave a similar rationale to various other behaviors which on the face of it might appear as conformity to an externally imposed regime of objectification. Sexy attire, provocative make-up, and various other elements of their appearance were explained to me neither as an attempt to attract men, nor as an attempt to please men. Being attractive was first and foremost about "feeling good about yourself".

Among my informants, then, both male and female bodies were objectified, males as subjects and females as objects. The intensity of such differences between males and females was age-related. (In this, too, my informants are not unique.) These differences were most pronounced in adolescents and in young adults who were actively involved in the 'trade' on the 'first-marriage market'. Older informants seem to have undergone an attenuation in the urgency of these differences in orientation towards the body. Once settled in a long-lasting conjugal relationship, both men and women tended to spend less effort on managing their physical appearance. This seems to be part and parcel of the general process of ageing, in which the relative value of physical capital diminishes. Mike Donaldson pointed out that as blue-collar workers grow older, their skills and experience become more important than their diminishing physical strength (Donaldson 1991). Among my informants, the physiological marks of ageing detracted from the physical attraction of women. One woman I spoke with expressed concern about breastfeeding because she feared it might make her breasts sag earlier than would otherwise happen, and she was anxious to keep them as firm as possible for as long as possible.

Significantly, among my informants there were contexts in which it was the female body which was objectified as subject. A major change in bodily orientation among women—equivalent to the shift that occurs in women athletes under the influence of training and competition (e.g. Bourdieu 1994, 103–104)—occurred during pregnancy and childbirth. It is at these times that the needs of the

of sexual desire and conquest" (Carrington & Johnson 1994, 13). From the quotes they provide and their description of the unfolding of that night’s events it appears that these constructions were internalised by both boys and girls.

14 Interestingly, the attenuation of the intensity of gender differences with age is not unique to societies like my informants'. Among the Bedouin of Sinai, for example, older women who are past their childbearing age might assume some political roles which are prototypically masculine (Abou-Zeid 1991).
female body would come to the fore. Cravings in particular and “capricious” behavior in general were pandered to and acceptable among pregnant women, and were often attributed by my informants to the pregnancy. In interviews and conversations women construed pregnancies as times when they could take leave from normal requirements of societal bodily control—they could eat what they liked when they liked. (These informants are not unique in experiencing in pregnancy a sense of power, cf. Young 1990b, especially 166–167.) Many, in fact, experienced pregnancy as the demise of the waistline and liberation from many bodily restrictions. In focus groups, some took delight in recounting how they “terrorised” (as one woman facetiously put it) their male partners, for example by repeatedly sending them at ungodly hours to buy some peculiar, craved-after foods (e.g. mustard and pickles), or by being physically and emotionally very demanding and volatile. The functions of the female body would remain in the fore following the birth, too, breastfeeding and its constraints being a case in point. Whereas normally women would be reluctant to expose their breasts in public, women I spoke with felt no shame or embarrassment about breastfeeding in public. Rather, breastfeeding was sought after by the mothers among my informants as personally rewarding. In fact, to my female informants breastfeeding in public constituted an essential right, an all-but-won political battle against those who consider it inappropriate.

The politics involved in the presentation of breasts in everyday life were considered by Young (Young 1990a). Young argues that breasts—a critical physical manifestation of the self—are a scandal in modern patriarchal society. They combine two aspects which should not be combined, that of maternity and that of sexuality. The former, she argues, requires selfless giving. The latter involves selfish demands. The two are therefore incompatible (Young 1990a, 198–199). Among my informants, though, the scandalous elements are inverted. The domain of maternity is that in which woman is dominant, that is, she is a subject. The domain of sexuality is that in which she is objectified. Reconstituting Young’s argument this way makes sense of the very intricacies of the two different modalities of the presentation of breasts, both among my informants, and in Young’s own analysis.

Young points out that there are very clear norms governing the presentation of non-lactating (and hence sexual) breasts. They should be firm, round, upright, and the presence of the nipples should be repressed (Young 1990a, 190–192). This mode of presentation seems to hold among my informants, too. I mentioned earlier the woman who was concerned that breastfeeding might make her breasts sag. The counter argument that women put forward to such a position was that
breastfeeding was important. Women who did or intended to breastfeed did not dispute the disadvantage of sagging breasts. Rather, they constituted it as a worthwhile sacrifice, part of the act of giving which defines maternity. Whatever their position on breastfeeding, though, women informants concurred that sagging breasts were less attractive than firm breasts. Young interprets this mode of presentation as an objectification of the breasts, an interpretation which agrees with my argument regarding the suppression of the functioning of the woman’s body when she is treated as object. “To be understood as sexual, the feeding function of the breasts must be suppressed, and when the breasts are nursing they are desexualized” (Young 1990a, 199).

There are no equivalent specific norms to govern the presentation of lactating breasts. In other words, by Young’s own account, sexual breasts are objectified the same way the sexualised feminine body is—as an object. Once the functions of the female body parts are highlighted, they cease to be sexual objects. My informants, too, did not regard the exposed breast of a breastfeeding woman as sexual. Breastfeeding altogether was generally construed as non-sexual. In the very least, breastfeeding was construed as an illegitimate source of sexual titillation to the observer. In one instance when discussing some objection to breastfeeding in public, a group of women expressed disgust at “sick” men who might be turned on by such practices. While women among my informants were quite open about breastfeeding being rewarding, they stopped short of elaborating on the physically gratifying erotic aspect of breastfeeding (cf. Young 1990a, 199–200). This may be, at least in part, a result of my being a male, and a reluctance on the part of my female informants to acknowledge erotic sensations in an activity which is construed as non-sexual, “pure” and maternal. Another factor which may be involved in de-sexualising breastfeeding is the incest taboo—construing breastfeeding as an erotic act on the mother’s part might challenge one of the most fundamental aspects of familial relationships. 15

In short, contrary to her own conclusions, I would interpret both Young’s description of breasted experience and the double modality of the presentation of breasts among my informants in line with

15 An example of the possible strength of the anxiety over the erotic aspect of breastfeeding can be gleaned from some recent court cases in the USA. In the early 1990s a panicking woman phoned a local hotline in Syracuse to report she had sensed some arousal while lactating her baby daughter. She was immediately located and apprehended by the police, interrogated, and briefly locked up. In mid-2000 a babysitter reported to authorities that a five-year-old boy she looked after said that he was still being breastfed, and wanted to be weaned, but that his mother wanted it to continue. The mother admitted to still breastfeeding the child, and said she intended to wean him whenever he wanted to stop, and that he had not expressed such a wish. A judge had the child immediately removed from his mother because extended breastfeeding had “enormous potential for emotional harm” to the child (obviously greater than an immediate separation from his mother). Seven months later, custody over the child was returned to the mother on the proviso that she should take counseling and parenting classes. The anxiety even afflicts some who support mothers’ breastfeeding rights who feel compelled to stress that the arousal caused by breastfeeding is qualitatively different from erotic arousal (Lewin 2001).
the division between, on the one hand, spheres of bodily orientation which objectify the female body as a subject—maternity in this instance—and, on the other hand, spheres in which the female body is objectified as an object, as in the instance of the sexual objectification of women’s breasts.

This is not to say that in the course of everyday symbolic struggle, women do not construe their maternal efforts as selfless giving. At least among my informants, they often did. But adopting such a position must be seen within its strategic context in the symbolic struggle of everyday life—being the martyr carries with it a high symbolic premium. Women are not unique in this regard. Quite often men construed their own involvement in the labor market as selfless giving to the family, in a similar symbolic strategy. While both men and women may genuinely experience their contributions as selfless, it would be wrong to mistake these constructions for expressions of direct structural subordination of women to men in maternity, and of men to women in labor-market involvement.

The domination of the feminine point of view in reproduction is further underscored by the fact that the policing and disciplining of women’s behavior in this area, and the domestic domain more generally, is itself primarily a domain of women’s action (with the notable exception of the professional-intellectual elites, such as medical practitioners). Generally, my female informants reported that when they felt external pressure to conform to standards of maternal and domestic behavior, it was not normally from men but rather from women. Bones of contention could range from the levels of cleanliness inside the home (major pressures coming from mothers and mothers-in-law), through the way they handle their babies in public, down to their very bodily techniques and appearance. Many of my women informants cited other women, rather than men, as the major obstacles to their breastfeeding in public. Of particular notoriety was a woman who owned a cinema in town who banned breastfeeding in her theatre. The fact that the protagonists in these clashes were primarily women reflects the gender segregation of issues relating to breastfeeding. Men did not express strong opinions one way or the other on the issue of breastfeeding in public. It was women’s business. All this further demonstrates the assertion, by women, of their exclusive authority in feminine spheres.

I would like to return now briefly to Young’s modality of self-contradictory feminine motility (see above, page 155). It seems to me that she indeed describes a specific modality of motility, but that feminine is the wrong term for it. Rather, it should be considered subordinate motility to distinguish it from dominant motility. This motility is typified by a measure of self-consciousness
and lack of confidence, and typically occurs when agents operate in spheres where they are not dominant, that is, when people are “out of their depth” or are like “fish out of water”. In fact, this modality appears to be feminine because of Young’s focus on the act of throwing. Throwing a ball is an activity which is quintessentially masculine in the prevailing gender order both in the USA and in Australia. Indeed, in distinctly masculine spheres women’s bodily orientation may well exhibit the quality of self-awareness and lack of confidence. However, were Young to write a sequel to her paper along the lines of “holding a baby like a man”, “changing nappies like a man” or “feeding a doll like a boy” she might have been able to reverse her analyses of masculine and feminine modalities of motility.16

This, at least, was the situation among my informants. When it came to balancing a baby on a hip, when it came to changing nappies, when it came to holding a baby and bottle-feeding it, there seemed to be a difference in the approach of both men and women to the task. This difference is general, and a great variation occurs within the groups of men and women. Still, gendered patterns did emerge among my informants. It was women who took to such tasks with great ease, naturalness and expertise—using all their bodies in an integrated, unreflective fashion to perform the task—while men tended to perform such tasks in a clumsy, cumbersome and stilted manner. Ironically, by choosing a masculine sphere to focus on women’s action, and by problematising women’s motility only, Young falls into the trap of gendering feminine practice while naturalising masculine practice, thereby reproducing the general doxic domination of the masculine perspective, just as my informants regularly did.

It emerges from the foregoing that Young’s findings can be incorporated into a broader framework. The different orientations to the body are distributed across society in a clearly gendered pattern. Part and parcel of the gender order is a general situation in which male bodies are objectified as subjects, while female bodies are objectified as objects. This is reversed in the context of parenthood. This fundamental aspect of the internalised structures of habitus parallels the total division of labor and authority which accords women primacy in the domestic domain, and men in the more general spheres of social practice. Agents’ gendered orientation to their own bodies, as well as their speech practices which I analyzed above, assume a masculine perspective as the

16 Incidentally, if my analysis is correct, and Young has identified a subordinate rather than a strictly feminine modality of motility, her analysis might be generalised and extended to other contexts of social domination. For example, in bourgeois contexts we might expect working-class agents to exhibit a subordinate modality of motility, and similarly in working-class contexts we might expect bourgeois agents to exhibit such a modality.
prototypical perspective in general spheres of practice, while the feminine perspective becomes dominant in the restricted context of parenthood.

**THE METAPHORIC ORGANISATION OF INTERNALISED MASCULINE DOMINATION**

As I pointed out above, the material structure of masculine domination—the subordination of the domestic domain to the marketplace—is paralleled by internalised structures of masculine domination. Here I will argue that it is the adult–infant juxtaposition which acts as a practical metaphor for male domination and plays a role in structuring that domination. I will begin by demonstrating that some of the very markers which constitute the feminine in contrast with the masculine are, in fact, those which constitute infancy in opposition to adulthood.

The homology between male–female differentiation and adult–infant differentiation is not wholly unconscious. The tradition of identifying femininity with childhood is well entrenched. For instance, ‘patriarchal’ notions of war, politics and economics place both women and children in a dependent status, dependency thus typifying both femininity and infancy, and juxtaposing both with masculinity and adulthood. Further, the cognitive models my informants invoked in assessing the physique of women and young children tended to converge. “Cute” and “beautiful” were adjectives they normally applied to women and babies, not men. These adjectives, when applied to men, carried with them a diminutive and effeminate connotation. In fact, the very co-occurrence of diminution and effeminacy—a normal conceptual event—itself obeys and reinforces the logic which equates femininity with infancy. Also, the standards my informants used to appreciate and evaluate techniques of the body incorporated an isomorphism between the infantile and the feminine. For example, when a young boy would cry, he might be told to stop because he was no longer a baby, or he might be told not to cry like a girl. In this instance, through their identification with crying, the underlying homology between femininity and infancy was expressed and reinforced.

The same isomorphism prevails in the socio-somatic construction of my informants’ gender. What distinguishes a man from a woman is, in fact, the very thing which distinguishes adults from
infants. To demonstrate this I will approximate the structure of my informants’ world by using dichotomies and postulating a cognitive relationship between them.

I should stress that unlike some structuralist and post-structuralist analyses, these dichotomies are intended as approximations—that is as a projection from the realm of practice to the realm of formal logic and presentation. I am not arguing that these dichotomies are the way my informants’ world is structured. Gender constructions (and adult–infant constructions) can be approximated by the use of dichotomies because among my informants, those gender constructions are largely organised as discrete, mutually exclusive, and mutually constitutive. The existence of borderline situations, like transvestites, does not disturb this practical dual categorisation. This is so because practical logic is fuzzy, and because the categories of male and female, like those of adult and infant, are themselves internally structured around prototypes. So, for example, my informants would conceive of transvestites as males, although not prototypical ones by any stretch of the imagination. In other words, the prototype metonymically signifies all other non-prototypical practices. Cases which are more borderline are perceived as precisely such—borderline cases—which do not in themselves undermine the existence of a borderline between masculinity and femininity. The dichotomies I use to approximate my informants’ internalised gender structures tend to reify the prototype and downplay the variation within the categories. This should be borne in mind when considering these dichotomies. Still, for the current purposes I think the following dichotomies usefully approximate the organisation of my informants’ world. (This was confirmed to me by informants with whom I discussed my observations.)

**man:woman::hirsute:smooth skin::adult:infant.** Male bodies are hairier. Women’s skin is smooth. Smoothness of skin also marks the infant body in opposition to its adult counterpart (cf. Fergie 1988).17

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17 Deane Fergie has reached a similar conclusion in her analysis of visage management in Australia. She analysed the logic of the public presentation of face in Australia in the early 1980s, and the underlying logic of beauty in its masculine and feminine forms. When femininity was accentuated—e.g. by making the eyes and mouth appear bigger—the underlying logic of feminine beautification turned out to be a negation of mature sexuality, and the pursuit of baby-like features. Fergie concludes that: “Femininity is a determined denial of the evidence of signs of maturity (for example, pimples) in women and fear of the signs of ageing (for example, wrinkles). It is, however, made more forceful by recognizing that those aspects of the face which this analysis has identified as the nexus of femininity have critical parallels with the faces of pre-pubescent children and particularly of babies. The faces of infants are dominated by their eyes and mouth and set in contoured but untextured context [. . .] By their construction of conventional femininity in their faces, women produce themselves on the one hand as visually more child-like than they would otherwise be. They reinforce visually their political and personal dependency, powerlessness and lack of responsibility. They reproduce the message that they require a ‘strong’ other to protect and care for them. But at the same time they must also overcome the apparent contradiction between this child-like appearance and their sexual availability to those ‘strong’ others. They do so by being the active constructors of their faces” (Fergie 1988, 43-45).
**man:woman::muscle:flesh::adult:infant.** Men are more muscular. This very same distinction also differentiates the infant body from the adult body.

**man:woman::strength:flexibility::adult:infant.** Men are stronger than women while women are more flexible than men. This statement describes primarily physical reality, but also extends to my informants’ ethno-psychology. Infants, too, are flexible and weak when compared with adults.

**man:woman::hard:soft::adult:infant.** This dichotomy, too, could describe the perceived differences in the physique of men and women, as well as that between adults and infants. This distinction of hard and soft further corresponds to the division of social and emotional labour along gender lines. For example, when one of the women I interviewed argued that gender relations were changing, she commented that women were doing many things that men had used to do. She said she thought that things were “starting to change for men, too” and that they were now “taking soft options”. These “soft options” included spending more time in the education system, studying humanities and arts at university, and spending more time with children.

In some of the families I studied, the division of disciplinary labour followed this very paradigm: the mother, more compassionate and understanding, would mete out lesser punishments for ordinary violations, but would refer the children at times of exceptional misconduct to their father for exceptional, harsh punishment. For example, one of the families I studied had a rather common division of parental labour. The mother, Kathleen, ran the home and dealt with the children on a regular basis. At times, however, the father, Victor, would make his forays into the mundane familial arena. Kathleen did not normally like Victor’s intervention. She described him as lacking subtlety when dealing with the children. For him there was right and wrong, and when a child misbehaved, punishment followed hard and fast. This, she said, created great tension between the father and children. Often she found herself acting as the go-between, trying to massage egos and keep relationships going. If one of her children got in trouble at school, she might advise the child on how to bring up the topic with Victor to avoid excessive conflict. On the other hand, when she felt like her children needed a particularly stern reproach she would enlist Victor to punish them and “do the dirty work”. We can see here two styles at work: the masculine, direct, “no-nonsense” approach; and the calculated, socially aware feminine approach. The structure of interaction between the family members resembles a star, or a wheel with spokes, in which the mother is at the hub, and controls the flow of information and interaction between other members of the nuclear
family. By various practices, like leaving the “dirty work” of harsh discipline to her husband, she helps maintain the structural tensions in the relationships between other members of the family, father and sons for example, tensions which strengthen her own position as the mediator and as the centre of communications. The structure of relationships in this family reflects the structuring structures—habitus—which were incorporated into the family members, and which organise both their corporeal existence, as well as their social existence, in a gendered way.

**man:woman::straight:curved::adult:infant.** While the physical postures that males adopt stress muscular control and straightness, the postures women adopt are more often curved. Genderedness is also incorporated into the way people walk and other aspects of motility. Women’s movement seems to be more ‘ornamental’ as compared with the more ‘functional’ and ‘purposeful’ mode of male movement. These are the types of values that my informants themselves used in response to my questions to assess and describe the typical gender differences in motility. Functionality, uprightness and purpose also distinguish the comportment of adults from that of infants.

There is one instance which seems, on the face of it, to counter this argument. When sitting, it was usually women who adopted a straight, controlled, sometimes even stilted, posture, whereas men were more likely to relax control, and ‘spread out’. This difference in posture was not, though, motivated by an inversion of the relations of straight:curved. Rather, it was a direct result of the different orientations of men and women to their own bodies. Women’s bodies are objectified as objects of sexual desire, and women must take great care in managing the way their bodies are presented and exposed, often treading a fine line between the limit permitted by legitimate seductiveness on the one hand, and ‘cheap’ indecency on the other (cf. Young 1990c, 151–153). Women resort to their controlled sitting so that they do not subvert the strategy of their appearance, for example by accidentally exposing the parts of their bodies which should remain hidden, or by conveying in their comportment some lack of self-control. Consequently, women were more likely to take care to keep their knees together (especially when wearing shorts or skirts), of not leaning forward too much so as not to expose their breasts (especially when wearing tops designed to expose the cleavage—which can legitimately be displayed in public as opposed to areolae and nipples—cf. Young 1990a), and so forth. Further, whereas men’s limbs could be spread quite freely over a larger space, those of women were kept closer to their bodies. All this notwithstanding, other than sitting styles, the differences in motility among my informants supported the homology man:woman::straight:curved.
This physical imagery of straight vs. curved also typifies some basic, internalised strategies of social interaction. To my informants, men were those to take the direct route to their target. They would say what they thought and what they wanted without mincing words. In one of the focus groups the women explained that men had no patience for “babble”, that you generally could not simply talk to them but had to talk to them about something, and that you could not be emotionally open with them. In an interview, another woman accounted for the fact that women speak “better” (referring to their linguistic proficiency) by the fact that women communicate better than men.

Related to this difference in communication styles was a very common complaint among the numerous counsellors and service providers I interviewed, to the effect that men might find it harder to deal with difficulties in relationships, but are much less likely to come and seek advice or help. Further, the way men access services is also different from women. One family counsellor said they tended to come at the very last moment, and seek “instrumental advice”, an approach that clashed with the preference of counsellors to raise and discuss “issues”. She added: “I believe we could get more men if we offered advice on what women really do want out of sex, for example, rather than to get men to come in for counselling”. (She did note, though, a generational shift in men in their mid-twenties to mid-forties being more likely to talk about things, and easier to get to participate effectively in counselling.) Later in the interview she referred to women’s superiority in using emotions, and added: “My experience is that men don’t often complain outright about it, but we see lots of examples where women do have the power by being more verbally articulate or emotionally articulate and I think that men are caught on the back foot”.

According to both male and female informants, women were adept at personal politics and would more readily use roundabout, manipulative tactics to have their way. As one woman explained in a focus group, “the natural makeup of the gender is that the man is more dominant, and the woman manipulative”. This reflects two basic internalised aspects of gender: one is the mode of social negotiation, the other is the type of resources which are typically available to social agents. The masculine mode of social interaction involves the deployment of power resources in a straightforward way. Intrigue and manipulation are the domain of women, whose power is often insufficient for a direct course of action (Bourdieu 1977). In focus groups both men and women assumed in their discourse that girls are more manipulative than boys. For example, when discussing discipline in the family, one woman said she had a young daughter, which made her role

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18 Counsellors who work with youth also commented on the lesser likelihood of boys, as compared with girls, coming to counselling or staying in counselling.
more complex than her interlocutors who had boys, because, being a girl, her daughter was particularly adept at “pushing buttons”, especially with her husband. She found it very hard to set ground rules, because her four-year old daughter “manipulated” (her word) her husband. She said that mothers of boys had a much easier task, in that way. None of the other participants queried that statement.

Women’s control of social capital, the dominated form of capital, was based precisely on persuasion and “manipulation” rather than straightforward coercion. Such strategies as the use of guilt and emotional blackmail were mentioned and described, primarily in interviews with women, as particularly feminine. They were said to be used in various intra-gendered conflicts, such as between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law, as well as by women in inter-gendered negotiations. Some women I spoke with said their mothers-in-law would denigrate their performance and their value as women or wives. This might take subtle forms such as passing a critical gaze on the cleanliness of the household of the daughter-in-law, questioning some of the child-rearing priorities of the younger couple and so forth. At times, the conflict might be more explicit. Power relations shift firmly towards the daughter-in-law’s side once she has children. Her children form a new stake in the political game of the family. Daughters-in-law often exercised their control of access to their own offspring to assert their position against their mothers-in-law (and in a few cases, even against their own mothers). I did not encounter firsthand cases in which a woman stopped access between her children and her in-laws. However, by being able to do so, and by actively regulating such contact, mothers came to hold a formidable amount of social capital. Commenting on her relationship with her ex-husband’s parents, Lucy admitted “his parents hate me . . . they put up with me because if they get cranky with me, get nasty with me, obviously I’m gonna say, well, you have Buckley’s19 of seeing Max [i.e. her son, their grandson] then”.

The gender differences in the mode of social negotiation and in the distribution of capital are linked. Their mastery of social capital is what constitutes women as the lynchpin of the family and of informal social networks in general. Their habitus, which predisposes women to use this capital, is what directs them towards investments in and accumulation of social capital. It is that miraculous aspect of doxa whereby women seem to spontaneously possess greater social skills, which makes women superior candidates for the role of social and familial organiser, the role which social structure has allotted to them anyway. Men’s dispositions are similarly attuned to their roles.

19 Buckley’s is short for “Buckley’s chance” and means no chance.
Chapter Six

To recapitulate briefly, by and large my informants’ practice tends to reproduce the following homologous dichotomies:


There are, however, people who do not, or better yet, who refuse to conform to these general dichotomies. The status of their practice is different. Such individuals are making ‘statements’, whether they like it or not, as for example when a woman does not shave her legs or her bikini line, or, even more so, when a man shaves his. For a man not to shave his legs or his bikini line, and for a woman to shave hers, is a different order of action—it is making no statement. It is being normal.

Furthermore, when my informants or others in their social milieu violated norms of gendered practice, it was almost always women who adopted a masculine style, and not vice versa. During my fieldwork I never encountered men who wore skirts or dresses, or who were heavily made up. Similarly, some women were comfortable in describing themselves in un-feminine terms, but men never voluntarily undermined their own masculinity in an equivalent fashion. One woman, for example, referred to herself as a “tomboy” and said that as a child she had always preferred to play with boys and do “boys’ stuff”. She also said that as an adult she tended to get on better with men than with other women. Similar sentiments were echoed by other women. By contrast, never did my male informants describe themselves as “sissies”, nor did they ever profess to having preferred to play with girls when they were young, or to do “girls’ stuff”. Further, none of my male informants confessed to getting on with women better than they did with men. Presenting oneself in such terms would have been an extreme embarrassment. The consequences to a woman’s social standing of rejecting standards of femininity in favour of masculine standards are much more benign compared with the consequences to a male of rejecting standards of masculinity in favour of feminine standards. There is some kudos to be gained by women by adopting masculine style, and only losses to be made by men by gratuitously adopting feminine style. This greater tendency of females to adopt male characteristics reflects the very domination of the masculine perspective, which privileges that which is male over that which is female.

Another manifestation of this is the area of unisex—choice of clothing and other modes of self-presentation which are said to be non-gendered. In fact, they are extremely gender specific. They rely solely on masculine standards. Unisex is licence for females to adopt masculine style. Never would unisex include the adoption by males of feminine styles.
To my informants the embodied differences between men and women appear as objective reality. However, contrary to their ethno-science, many of the markers which they use to distinguish males from females are not instances of socially independent, congenitally predetermined, physiological traits. Often, these markers are produced or, in the very least, greatly accentuated by socially specific techniques of the body. In other words, the social agents themselves reinforce the differentiation of these careers through their bodily techniques which are motivated by the structures of their habitus. A case in point is bodily hair: depilation contributes to the situation that the existence of bodily hair distinguishes adult men from women. By suppressing the markers of adulthood, such practices, in fact, deny the maturation of the female body. By the same token one may account for some of the gender differences in musculature, strength and flexibility by reference to the difference in frequency and intensity of physical activity among boys and girls.

Moreover, even though the mean musculature, hairiness and strength for women is lower than for men, there is an obvious overlap between the distribution of these traits in men and women, so that there still are many women who are more muscular, hairy and strong than many men. This overlap is negated in the cosmology of my informants, as both cultural construction and bodily techniques serve to accentuate the differences between the genders (cf. Matthews 1984, chapter 2; Connell 1987). This turns the two genders into distinct categories, separated, in this case, by physiological traits.

All these traits which distinguish men from women also serve in different contexts to distinguish adults from infants. However, this practical homology between the male:female and adult:infant dichotomies is more acutely expressed in two physical aspects of spouse selection, namely in stature and age biases.

20 While Connell reduces cultural construction to negation (Connell 1987), I prefer to discuss accentuation. The differences that lend themselves to distinguish between men and women are, more often than not, rooted in some way in that real world which is independent of social construction. Connell’s position reflects the general tendency in post-structuralist writings to reduce the discussion of body and gender to cultural constructions thereof, and view cultural constructions as closed systems which are independent of the world outside them, while that world outside becomes dependent on its own cultural construction. By shifting the analytical focus, as I do in this paper, to habitus—in effect, the structures of subjectivity—it is possible to allow for various sources of influences, and the relationship between cultural constructions and the material to which they apply becomes an object of investigation, rather than an a priori credo. While the mental image which associates hairiness with masculinity in opposition to femininity suppresses much of the physical reality it refers to, it does not in this instance negate it. Negation would imply that hairiness would have an equal chance of being associated with femaleness as it does with being associated with maleness. Such a postulation of negation would fail to account for the clear way that the material, physical, world does, in fact, motivate its own cultural construction.
man:woman::tall:short::adult:infant. My informants believed that women are naturally shorter than men. That is how they accounted for the rarity of couples in which women were taller than men. This account is wrong, though. The great overlap in stature between men and women means that if mate selection were random as far as stature is concerned, a very large minority of couples would comprise a shorter man and a taller woman. This was not so among my informants. Couples in which the woman was taller than the man were conspicuous, and rare. This is not to suggest that there were no couples in which women were taller than men. This is to suggest that such couples were rarer than would be expected if mate choice were random as far as stature is concerned; that such couples needed to overcome the stature incompatibility (whereas execution of the default gender relations requires no such overcoming); and that the peculiarity of such couples would be noticeable to native social agents.

My informants' recourse to the 'natural' stature differences between men and women in order to account for the paucity of couples in which the female is taller than the male, is, indeed, erroneous, but nevertheless socially significant. It is, in fact, an expression of an aesthetic preference that within a couple the woman should not be taller than the man. It conforms to the standards discussed above, according to which women are constituted in relation to men in a homologous way to the constitution of infants to adults. Consequently, the value of stature on my informants' 'marriage market' depended on gender. By my informants' own account, tall women and short men have a great handicap in the competitive 'marriage market', much greater than similarly tall men and short women.

man:woman::old:young::adult:infant. Couples tend to be composed of older men and younger women. This situation is even more 'scandalous' than the bias in stature, as it does not even conform to any folk-scientific observation regarding age difference. Women's mean age is higher than men's. Women enjoy a greater life expectancy. If mate selection were age neutral, we would expect a small majority of couples to be composed of younger men and older women. 21

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21 I found no quantitative studies of the stature bias in mate selection in Australia. Regarding age preferences, ABS has published a table of the relative ages of brides and grooms for the last nine decades. These show a clear and continuous bias in practice towards paring older men with younger women (Peter McDonald, personal communication; cf. Muhsam 1974). The existence of such a bias is persuasively supported by qualitative and comparative data: when raised with my informants, they agreed that such biases do indeed exist and proceeded to account for them in the ways I describe in the paper; a cross-cultural analysis revealed very few exceptions indeed to the practice of marriage between older men and younger women (Casterline et al. 1986).
When pressed in interviews, the explanation most commonly proffered by my informants was related to folk-developmental psychology, namely that women mature faster. This is an expression of the fact that women enter the ‘marriage market’ at an earlier stage than men do. However, even if the mean age of women on the ‘marriage market’ were a bit lower than men’s, we would still expect a very large proportion of couples where the woman was older than the man if ‘marital trade’ were age neutral. The paucity of such couples indicates a process similar to that which happens in relation to stature, namely that habitus incorporates structures of assessment which structure behaviour in a particular way, predisposing men to be more readily attracted to younger women, and women to be more readily attracted to older men. Here, too, a homology emerges between the socio-somatic constitution of the genders on the one hand, and the constitution of infancy as against adulthood on the other.\(^{22}\)

One objection that might be raised at this point is that the very folk-psychological tenet that women mature earlier than men contradicts my claim that the dichotomy man:woman is homologous in practice with adult:infant. This would appear to be a contradiction because the notion of women maturing faster than men would suggest, on the face of it, a prevailing association of femininity with adulthood, and the juxtaposition of both with masculinity. The solution to this seeming contradiction lies in the folk-psychological construction of the two trajectories of maturation. Feminine maturation is simple. It is, as it were, a continuous process of subtle quantitative change from infancy. Because the target of feminine maturity is placed closer to infancy, the road to its achievement is shorter and easier. Masculine maturation is more complex and fraught with difficulty and danger precisely because it entails a series of decisive, qualitative breaks with that which is infantile and feminine. Socially, it is a transition from being dominated and dependent to dominance and independence. Physically, it is the development of a set of characteristics which qualitatively break with infant style. In other words, the reason women achieve adulthood faster

\(^{22}\) The active role social agents play in reproducing objective structures, for example in their mate-selection strategies, should serve as a reminder that social structures are productive, not only constraining. Marital choices are experienced as free expressions of individual aesthetic, and not as some conformity to external ‘rules’. All too often theorists slide into the mistake of thinking of social structure as a set of constraints (e.g. Connell 1987, 92, 97). This assumes that the socialised human being is preceded by a non-socialised human being with a great many potentialities, and that social structure chips away at these potentialities to mould the human being to its role. This view is too restrictive. Social structure not only constrains—it creates. It is what produces the potentialities in the first place. It creates the subjectivity, not merely constrains it. It creates the wants, the needs, the interests (including aesthetics) and the desires of social agents. It motivates agents at the very same time as it inhibits them. It plays a no less productive role in the making of outrage and subversion, than it does in inhibiting social agents and securing the consent of the oppressed. It is equally true, of course, that social agents’ interests and strategies are the building blocks of social structure, and that the interaction of social agents is what in fact produces this structure. The opposite fallacy, of seeing culture as active, and the physical body as merely offering resistance and limits (e.g. Grosz 1994, 187–192) should also be avoided. If culture
than men, among my informants at least, is that feminine adulthood is more infantile than masculine adulthood. 23

This, of course, is not a reflection of extra-cultural reality, as it were, but of a cultural construction of biology and difference. The juxtaposition of some physiological markers of adult masculinity with their feminine/infantile counterparts is enabled by the social reworking of physiological difference. There is no inherent biological reason why menarche should be any less significant a qualitative break with infancy, than any of the markers of male adulthood, such as deep voice, facial hair, or a reluctance to cry. It is rather those incorporated structures of assessment and judgement that evaluate males and females differently, which distinguish between the significance of the physiological careers of men and women.

I would therefore interpret my informants’ gender-differentiated maturation processes as further support for my argument that my informants’ habitus incorporates a homology man:woman::adult:infant. This homology may be motivated by the structural similarity between the dependence of women on men, and the dependence of infants on adults. Moreover, the contiguity between mothers and infants would further support this identity: women and infants are concretely connected through the processes—both cultural and biological—of gestation, birth, lactation and infant care.

The adult:infant dichotomy is cognitively more basic than man:woman, and generates the image schema which is symbolic violence par excellence. 24 Image schemata are not concrete rich or mental pictures. Rather they are abstract patterns that can be manifested in rich images, perceptions and events (Johnson 1987, 2). The dependency of the human young is pre-conceptual and universal. This makes it an ideal concrete rich image to anchor the image schema of symbolic violence, and motivates its extension to gender, 25 as well as to other instances of symbolic violence,

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23 My informants are not unique in the infantilisation of female adulthood. See, for example, Nicholas Stargardt’s discussion of working-class gender in late nineteenth century Europe (Stardardt 1995), and Anne E. Gorsuch’s discussion of early Soviet gender culture (Gorsuch 1996), as well as Fergie’s discussions of Australian visage management (Fergie 1988).

24 In this I differ with Bourdieu, who considers masculine domination per se to be symbolic violence par excellence (Bourdieu 1998).

25 Interestingly, working from a different theoretical perspective, psychoanalyst Alfred Adler arrived at a similar conclusion regarding the homology of man:woman and adult:infant. He argued that femininity is associated with weakness, and that children, being weak in relation to adults, inhabit a feminine position, a situation which causes doubt among the boys that they could achieve masculinity (his position is summarised by Connell 1995, 16; based on Adler 172
like slavery, colonial relations, or class domination in the welfare state. This extension does not exclude the use of less-symbolic violence in these situations, as in the instances where women are battered or striking workers are shot. Nor does it exclude the use of non-symbolic violence in parent–child relationships as happens in some instances of child abuse.

Because of the nature of practical logic the homology between the dichotomies of adult: infant and man: woman need not be symmetrical. The former structures the latter, while the reverse need not occur. In other words, whereas the dichotomy of man: woman is homologous with that of adult: infant, and can therefore be modelled upon it, the dichotomy of adult: infant may or may not be modelled on that of man: woman. This might seem outrageous to formal logicians, but operates quite well in practical logic.

**DOMINATION INVERTED: THE DOMESTIC DOMAIN**

Interestingly, while the structural infantilisation of woman operates in many domains as part of the overall masculine domination, it is inverted in contexts in which the feminine perspective dominates—namely the domestic sphere. In these limited areas in which women exercise authority, they might relate to their male partners very much the way they would relate to children. This is an integral element of the strategies used in the symbolic struggles of everyday life.

Thus one of my informants compared men to children in relation to doing housework. She pointed out that like their children, her partner was often oblivious to mess and would take longer to recognise it and do something about it. The secret of managing men was training them well. Otherwise, she said, men might try to wiggle their way out of doing things, leaving the responsibility for getting things done to the women, at times underperforming, whingeing etc.

An example of an actual process of negotiations emerged in one of the focus groups. A woman recounted the story of how she trained her partner to perform some parental duties following the birth of their first child. She said he was finding it hard to handle nappy changing and thought he would get away with very little participation in such dirty chores. In the first few times she sent

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1928; Adler 1956; Adler 1992). It should be noted that Adler sees the feminine:masculine dichotomy as the basic one which structures the child:adult dichotomy. This is a reflection of his particular set of psychoanalytic premises.

him to change nappies, he took a long time, operating clumsily, waiting for her to step in and take over. She admitted it had taken great dedication to avoid taking over and doing the job herself. But as she explained to her fellow women participants in the group, “you just can’t let them get away with it”. If he knew he could get away without doing it, she would end up doing all the work. And so she insisted that he should do his share, and refused to interfere in his nappy work. Then she smiled at her sympathetic listeners and claimed that that was how she trained him.

This inversion of the adult-infant metaphor to construct femininity in oppositions to masculinity is motivated by the dominance of women in the domestic domain. It is, however, restricted to this domain, and is ephemeral. As my analysis of the embodiment of gender in previous sections shows, it is femininity which is generally constructed in relation to masculinity in a homologous way to infancy in relation to adulthood.

**CONCLUSION**

This chapter considers some aspects of the internalisation of masculine domination by both men and women. It argued that the internalised attachment of women to the domestic domain goes beyond considerations of economic rationalism, as does the attachment of men to the marketplace. The domination of the male point of view was demonstrated in non-conscious patterns of habitual speech practices, and in my informants’ orientations to their own bodies. There emerged, though, a sociologically meaningful and remarkably consistent exception—namely the domain of parenthood and reproduction, where the feminine perspective dominated. The prototypical family, which includes a prototypical model of reproduction, forms the cognitive basis upon which gender and its practice are constructed among my informants. It metonymically motivates the structures of gender in general. The embodiment of gender among my informants includes aspects which generally constitute the feminine to the masculine along lines homologous to the juxtaposition of infancy to adulthood. Many of the expressions of these differences are motivated by pre-conceptual differences which are culturally accentuated. In a restricted context—namely, the domestic domain, where women are dominant—masculinity might be constituted in relation to femininity in a homologous way to the constitution of infancy to adulthood. These homologies attest to the fact that the dependence of infants on adults is ‘good to construct domination with’. This is so because
the dependence of infants on adults (or, more precisely, that which is denoted by the culturally mediated notion of the dependency of infants on adults) is pre-conceptual, concrete, and universal.\textsuperscript{27}

It is an integral aspect of the gender order, that the spheres in which the female perspective dominates are subordinate to those in which the male perspective dominates. This is clearly expressed in the power relationship between the home and the marketplace, a relationship which is fundamental to capitalism. The association of women with the domestic domain is a sociological truism. That women derive power from their dominance in this circumscribed area has also been acknowledged in the literature (e.g. Bryson 1985; Rapp 1992). The overlap between these areas and the spheres in which the feminine perspective dominates, demonstrates the extent to which the division into male and female spheres, and the subordination of the latter to the former, have been incorporated into my informants’ habitus. This hierarchical division is equally internalised by both men and women, and is largely doxic—it does not depend on any conscious decision of social agents and is embedded into the nature of things both at the systemic level (in the form of the overall gendered structure of the political economy) and at the localised level (in the form of particular preferences and characteristics of particular social agents).

An interesting point that emerges from the foregoing is the conservatism of the internalised structures of gender. Gender is but one of many factors which influence the way relationships between social agents are negotiated and reproduced. Economic compulsion is another such factor, which motivates heterodox gender practices. But when people choose to highlight their genderedness, it is to present a self which is Sexed (in Shelly Errington’s terms, see Errington 1990), and as such has specific characteristics. Heterodox conjugal relationships do not necessarily reflect a radical transformation in the way gender is experienced among people like my informants. The stability of gender is intimately linked to the stability of the nuclear family as the realised category of the family, even at times when transformations in demography and the political economy force some shifts in the way family households are practically organised. This is not to say that gender will not eventually transform in a radical way under the mounting pressure of heterodoxy. This is to suggest that as embodied among my informants, the embodiment of

\textsuperscript{27} In a fundamental way, my argument here comes close to Errington’s analysis of the cultural construction of gender. Errington distinguishes between sex, Sex and gender (Errington 1990). By Sex Errington means the Western construction of the two biological categories of male and female. By sex she refers to that part of the material world to which Sex in the West refers, and which may be appropriated and constructed quite differently in other cultures. Gender is the social system which is organised around sex and its cultural understanding. In the West, Sex is at the heart of gender constructs. This scheme of things allows Errington to consider the cultural constructions of gender, and interpret Sex as a cultural
masculine domination by both men and women is doxic and exerts a conservative influence on social relationships.

construct, without sliding into a position which denies the existence or the relevance of the material world outside its cultural construction. (I discuss this issue further in Uhlmann 2000.)
Chapter Seven

The Family Field of Play: Between Fields

Chapter two began with a historical narrative of the evolution of the Australian family. This process was situated within its broader social context and within the evolving political economy of Australia. In the following chapters the field of kinship practice was approached in isolation from other fields of social action. This chapter seeks to reintegrate the field into its broader social context. The first section of this chapter will rely on the metaphor of field in order to highlight a few dynamics of social action. The second section will consider some of the less obvious interactions between the field of kinship and family on the one hand, and the class structure on the other. The third section will consider the family within the broader political economy, only this time focussing on the role of the field of kinship and family in structuring Australia’s political economy.¹

¹ It would be interesting to try to conceptualise the entire chapter in terms of fields, capital, and social space. I will not do so here as this might stretch the use of these heuristic devices past their utility. Rather, I have opted for the pragmatic solution of outlining some dynamics of social action in terms of field, and then moving to analyse the influence of the field of kinship and family on class and political economy in less than purely theoretical constructs. Nonetheless, the logic behind Bourdieu’s concept of field (cf. inter alia Bourdieu 1985; Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, 94 ff.) remains a critical orientation in the entire discussion here.
Fields are, of course, heuristic designations which are external to the natural flow of practice. To be useful, they should isolate for analysis a space of practice, as it were, which is relatively coherent and autonomous. The analysis in the preceding chapters was based upon a designation of kinship, family and gender as a relatively coherent and autonomous field of practice.

In this section I seek to situate the field of kinship and family practice within the broader context of all other fields. Separate fields are connected in various ways. One is that capital accumulated and lost in one field may be transferred and deployed in other fields. Another is that clearly patterned practice in one field is extended metaphorically to structure less concrete fields. Finally, structural homologies between fields may form the basis for cooperation between homologous positions across fields, and for the generalisation of modes of practice (what, following Foucault 1982, may be dubbed technologies of power) across different fields of practice. Here I very briefly touch upon the first two, and then elaborate on the last of these points.

**THE TRANSFER OF CAPITAL ACROSS FIELDS**

One example of the transfer of capital from other fields into the field of kinship and family is the change in power relations within the family which may accompany an increase in earning capacity which may follow from increased participation in paid work, increased training, and in some cases, from participation in the workforce. The ascription of increased divorce rates from the 1960s to married women’s greater economic independence following their greater participation in the labour market is paradigmatic. Similarly, the varying effects divorce has on the financial wellbeing of those involved is an example of how practice in the field of kinship and family (divorce) affects the accumulation of capital thereby affecting the agents’ positions in other fields of practice.

Other types of transfer—which resonate with traditional anthropological interests—would be marriage up or down social space. Ernestine was born to a family which was firmly rooted in the dominated class. Her brothers left school to take up apprenticeships between the 1950s and the 1970s. At the time of my fieldwork they were established to varying degrees in the dominant fraction of the dominated class. She herself continued her education, training as a teacher and later
pursuing further studies and becoming an academic. She subsequently married an academic. The two resided in Canada at the time of my fieldwork. In this example the accumulation of cultural capital in other fields of practice created the conditions for marrying ‘up’ with its benefits in the form of increased material and social capital. The pursuit of further academic education has provided Ernestine with access to members of the dominant class, as well as the embodied and objectified cultural capital necessary for successful interaction in such circles. Consequently Ernestine’s family of orientation enjoyed greater access to social, economic and cultural capital than her brothers’ families.

This is not to imply that there was any cynical calculation on the part of Ernestine in marrying her husband. Rather, my argument is that cultural accumulation elsewhere has increased the likelihood of her marrying a person who controls greater capital, compared with her likelihood of meeting and loving such a person had she not accumulated that capital. Furthermore, her continuous involvement with the dominant class might have also resulted in a different romantic aesthetic which is better attuned to dominant-class style—one of her Novocastrian relatives thought her husband was “a bit of a nerd, but really a good guy”.

STRUCTURAL HOMOLOGIES ACROSS FIELDS

The mutual influence of fields of practice extends beyond that which is mediated through capital accumulation and loss. Practical logic establishes structural homologies across fields which are the basis for two types of flow across fields. One occurs when schemata of experience from one field are adopted for practice in other fields. I briefly discuss such instances immediately. More generally, the economy of practice predisposes habitus to apply homologous structures to homologous situations. This homology has two main effects. One is that it sets up different positions in different fields which are homologous and might therefore collaborate across fields. The other, is that it allows techniques and modes of social practice which emerge in one field to be generalised across other fields as agents operate in similar ways in homologous situations. I turn to this issue after examining the generalisation of schemata from one field to the other.
The Extension of the Metaphor to Other Fields

Above I argued that the family is a most powerful practical metaphor. It is a fundamental, concrete, cognitively rich experience. What makes the family an effective metaphor for structuring other social relations is its largely doxic nature and its perceived universality, as well as the emotional attachment and affective commitment that family orchestrates. The idiom of the family in its urban Australian manifestation is bundled with all the emotional investment of sex, intimacy, parenthood, personal security, propriety and so forth. It is a very good idiom to experience with. This evocative power of the family makes it an essential resource in the struggle over the vision of social divisions. It is commonly symbolically mobilised to justify and naturalise (or criticise and undermine) the arbitrary and historical nature of the configuration of power within society.

Two powerful identities that prevail throughout white Anglo-Celtic Australian society are ethnicity and nation, both couched to a great effect in the familial idiom. This is expressed, for instance, in the symbols used to construe and imagine the imagined community, as in the lyrics of the national anthem, or in images used by the Australian government in a recent campaign under the slogan of “Welcome to the Family” to encourage permanent residents to naturalise.2

There are good reasons why such transfers occur across cognitive domains. The family is an elementary and concrete structure, which agents experience with a particularly high intensity. By contrast, race, country, nation and ethnicity are abstract terms which may be imagined as community (Anderson 1991), but are still very abstract in and of themselves. Agents tend to use familiar and concrete experiences to structure more abstract experiences (Lakoff & Johnson 1980; Johnson 1987; Lakoff 1987). This is not only an intellective extension, but also an emotional/affective one, which is part and parcel of the economy of practical logic.3

2 The national anthem, “Advance Australia Fair” contains strains such as “Our home is girt by sea”. (The original, gender-exclusive poem began with “Australia’s sons let us rejoice”.) There are a few anthropological treatments of the symbolism which is inherent in (White, Anglo-Celtic) Australian Nationalism (e.g. Kapferer 1996). This Australian phenomenon is part of a broader aspect of nationalism, epitomised in concepts such as mother country, motherland, homeland, nativity, natal country, patriotism and fatherland. This comes in addition to the overdetermined sexualised nature of racism and racial thinking emphasising the crucial role familial idioms have in structuring practice outside the field of kinship and family. The implication of kinship in the construction of more abstract social groupings has been discussed in the literature, especially in relation to nation, race and caste (e.g. Williams 1995; Delaney 1995; Das 1995; Heng & Devan 1992; Schneider 1969), including from a sociobiological perspective which seeks to link reproduction in a substantive manner (rather than merely symbolically) to such symbolic groupings (e.g. Van den Bergh 1987).

3 There is, of course, a limit to the extent to which the metaphor structures its target, marriageability being a case in point. The contradiction between the usual preference for exogamy of the kindred, and preference for endogamy in ethnic groups, demonstrates the limit of the extension of the metaphor of the family to ethnicity.
Collaboration between Structurally Homologous Positions

The economy of practical logic means that habitus finds homologies between distinct contexts of social practice. Structural similarities between such contexts are the basis of the identification of such a homology. Homologies play an important role in conditioning behaviour. Habitus will adopt a similar repertoire of postures in homologous situations—the practical recognition of the homology of different social structural contexts. Incorporated into the postures adopted by habitus are the modes of social action which thereby become generalised across fields. This forms the basis for the cooperation of different agents who occupy homologous positions in their respective fields.

The practical identification of homologies in the structure of everyday life does not normally happen completely un-consciously. In a previous chapter I discussed Michelle, Margaret and Ruth, and their non-typical family arrangement. When we discussed how Michelle coped with two households, Margaret and Ruth pointed out that Michelle knew that there were different sets of rules. At Margaret’s there were Margaret’s rules, at Ruth’s there were Ruth’s rules, just like at school there were “school rules”. In fact, as they tell it, from a very young age Michelle learned that there are different rules at different places. At the store there were store rules, and she knew that she should ask the shop assistant for permission to do things. The equation of different sources of authority, parents, teachers, and shop owners, is pretty explicit here. In all instances they are persons who decide the rules that Michelle, being a child, must live by. Furthermore, it was the parents, Margaret and Ruth, who reminded Michelle of the fact that there were different rules at different locations, directing her to the shop assistant, or being involved in her schooling to support the authority of her teachers. The latter, in their turn, reinforced parental authority by treating them as the ultimate authority over the child’s destiny. For example, Margaret and Ruth needed to sign forms allowing Michelle to go on trips. (The fact that the inculcation of obedience to rules as such is beneficial to the daughter, does not reduce from its significance for the rule makers in society at large.)

Such homologies express the economy of human logic, whereby the social agent experiences homologous situations in a similar way physically, emotionally, and intellectually. Social agents do not operate in a historical vacuum. The homology of particular social relations may have already been established by previous generations and encoded in language, folklore and convention. When
people wonder—as my informants on several occasions did—who the boss is at a particular home, the analogy between the workplace and class relations on the one hand, and the family on the other, is clearly drawn.

Another example was an instance of negotiations between Lucy and Meyer, and their twelve-year-old son, Max, over his pocket money rates and what they expected in return (tidying up his room on a regular basis, feeding the dog etc.). The underlying logic to the whole process—the forms of the negotiations, linking the income to work, the uneven power relations—were all modelled after industrial relations in the capitalist world. The mother’s explicit intention of disciplining her child so that he could later properly function in the labour market, was based upon the homology between parents and bosses, and exemplifies the cross-field cooperation of homologous positions.

Another instance of a structural homology is the homology between parent–child and teacher–pupil relationships. Nobody is terribly surprised when a school child ‘slips’ and calls his teacher “mum”, something which commonly happens at primary schools. Obviously the homology is clear enough to affect children’s behaviour. This homology is reinforced by the ceremonial aspects involved in the relationships. Parents and senior relatives are normally referred to by epithet with or without their name. The teacher is referred to by an epithet (Miss, Mrs, Mr etc.) and a surname, and addressed by the epithet only (normally “Miss” and “Sir”). Teachers normally address pupils by given name.

Practical homologies like that between parent–child and teacher–pupil relationships are not necessarily symmetrical. If A is homologous with B, B for its part may not be homologous with A. In cognitive categories, where B is more central than A, speakers might perceive A as resembling B, but would not similarly perceive B as resembling A. This is so in the instance of the homology between the parent–child and the pupil–teacher dyads. The parent–child dyad is the more basic dyad. Thus, while young children may slip and refer to their teachers as “mum” or “dad”, these children do not slip in the familial context, and do not refer to their mothers in the forms of address that are appropriate for addressing teachers.4

The homologies between the structural position of agents in different fields form the basis for explicit cooperation across those fields. Perhaps the clearest example, because it is least disguised,

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4 The analysis of the metaphorical link between the adult:infant and the male:female dichotomies (as developed in chapter six) can also be applied to the link between adult:infant and teacher:pupil.
The Family Field of Play: Between Fields

is the cooperation between parents and school teachers. A common complaint among school teachers I spoke with was that the parents of ‘problem’ children are all too often not available to cooperate with the teachers in the management of the ‘problem’ children’s problems.

One of the main complaints Lucy had against the government school system was that the school teachers did not pass on information to her on Max’s misbehaviour and truancy, and consequently he was able to avoid many hours of schooling, neglect his homework, and perform continuously poorly at school. Max was transferred to a Catholic school. Lucy noted with satisfaction that she gets more information about Max’s conduct from the teachers in his new school.

Quite a few other parents thought it was important to get involved in their children’s education and share information with teachers. The two major concerns were the academic performance of the child, and the child’s conduct and discipline. Both were seen as critical aspects of avoiding downward social mobility, let alone the attainment of upward social mobility. Good performance would enable the child to continue studying, avoid joining the swelling ranks of the long-term unemployed or underemployed, and possibly enter into a professional career of some sort. Bad behaviour might land the child in all sorts of trouble, such as violence, drugs, unwanted pregnancy and so forth, which might spell trouble with the law and a possible hindrance to future advancement. It must be noted that downward mobility was a very vivid danger to my informants.

In fact, my fieldwork took place during a time when the social struggle was mostly defensive, that is, geared towards the avoidance of downward mobility rather than an attempt at substantial upward mobility. The underclass was disproportionately visible in the mass media, and the potential negative influence of unwanted peers was never far from the minds of parents. The shrinkage of the labour market in Newcastle had demonstrated to many the fragility of their situation. Consequently, when discussing the education of their children parents stressed the dangers of dropping out rather than the merits of staying in.

Even parents who were not actively involved in the education of their children still tended to uphold the authority of the teacher. Many of those I spoke with lamented the fact that they could not help their children with their schooling at all as they knew little or nothing about the subjects that are

5 In a way this cooperation across fields, as it were, serves to underscore the arbitrariness of the boundaries around fields. The exclusion of teachers from the field of the family is of course an arbitrary choice. Perhaps a study of child development might identify a field of child management which includes both parents and teachers. Ultimately, the boundaries which frame a field are imposed by the analyst for the purpose of focussing the social analysis. These boundaries may, but need not, conform to institutional boundaries.
Chapter Seven

taught at school. The cultural capital that they had acquired was largely irrelevant to schooling, as was whatever social capital they hold. The only way they felt they could “make a difference” for their children was by reinforcing the authority of the teachers. In this way my informants differed from the elite. Dominant-class parents are empowered in their dealings with the educational system. They have the power (especially when dealing with private schools) and disposition to set demands on teachers and school bureaucrats (cf. Connell et al. 1982). Parents among my informants were less inclined to question the school’s authority, and focussed their involvement on trying to ensure the children’s compliance with school discipline. Indeed, the only area in which parents among my informants did openly criticise the performance of schools

This concern with the fate of children is one aspect of the broader linkage between family and class. It is a sociological truism that the social location of one’s family of origin plays a critical role in determining one’s social trajectory. In the coming section, though, I highlight less obvious links between class on the one hand, and the field of kinship and family on the other. In particular I focus on the connection between gender practice and class.

THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN THE FIELD OF KINSHIP PRACTICE AND CLASS

Gender styles are internalised structures of the field of kinship practice. The substantive content of gender styles derives its symbolic significance and cultural logic from the field of kinship practice. This section seeks to demonstrate the significance of the field of kinship practice to social structure at large by focussing on the way gender style is implicated in the embodiment of class. In what follows, I situate my informants’ embodied structures within the broader social structure, in essentially two interdependent ways. One is by identifying the social logic of specific forms of working-class masculinity and femininity; the other is by demonstrating how masculine domination is mapped onto class relations by constituting—from a working-class perspective—the ruling class as feminine, and working class as masculine.

Chapter one theorised the internal structure of the working class, and the contradictions among its fractions as they appear among my informants. Here I relate different gender styles within the working class, to the fractured structure of the working class. I argue that masculine style and class-fraction location are mutually constitutive—that the two cannot be posited in a definitive causal relation, in which one is always the cause, and the other always its effect. I also argue that feminine
style is not as diverse as masculine style, nor is the location of women within working-class fractions as definite as men’s. I conclude by suggesting that not only within the working class, but also among classes, gender style and class location are mutually constitutive. The rationale for this last point proceeds as follows: (1) aspects of the masculinity of the working class, varied though it is, can be juxtaposed to the masculinity of the ruling class as a refraction of the class structure; (2) the femininity of the working class can similarly be juxtaposed to the femininity of the ruling class as a refraction of the class structure; and, (3) the very juxtaposition of femininity to masculinity within the working class derives its symbolic content from the class structure. The juxtaposition of the style of the dominant class with that of the dominated class must remain suggestive and provisional, though, because my substantive analysis is centred primarily on the symbolic aspects of working-class gender style. 7

GENDER STYLE, AND THE INTERNAL CONFLICT IN THE DOMINATED CLASS

One thing the working class and the employing class do have in common is the domination of the masculine perspective. This basic parameter, however, is complicated by class location. Working-class genderedness is intimately linked with the genderedness of the labour market. Notwithstanding substantial exceptions, the Australian labour market has been masculinised in a process that reached its peak in the early years of the twentieth century, being institutionalised, among others, in the family wage (see chapter two). The labouring male, and his body—the manifestation of his labour power—have emerged as the essence and symbol of working class-ness to both the dominated and the dominant classes. For instance, in a study of working-class culture in Wollongong, Leanne Blackley demonstrated that the iconography of the labour movement from the

was that of the maintenance of discipline. These class differences are another example of how capital accumulation in other fields can be transferred and used in a particular field—the field of education and socialisation in this instance. 7 Karen Pyke (Pyke 1996) has made a very similar theoretical argument for the United States, although she focuses on the contradiction between the dominant and the dominated classes. Furthermore, compared with my analysis below she seems to construct a rather uniform notion of masculinity in the dominated class, and highlights pathological aspects of it (the notion of hypermasculinity with its associated abusive behaviour as psychological compensation for dominated men who do not enjoy access to the dividends of patriarchy)—this, though, seems to be largely the influence of Connell’s analysis of protest masculinity (see below). Finally, she focuses on explicit gender relations and hierarchy. By contrast, I am trying to look at the social logic of gendered subjectivity in general, and not only in relation to attitudes of men towards women and vice versa. Thus I highlight diverse aspects of style rather than narrow aspects of gender relations to show how pervasive the gendered structuring of subjectivity is. All this having been said, I would rather highlight the similarity in the overall conclusion and approach between Pyke’s work and mine. In both instances the gendered micro-practice/subjectivity/habitus/dispositions are seen to be implicated in class (understood as a process) rather than independent of class or the product of class. Thus, contra to a theme which runs through Connell’s work (e.g. Connell 1987, chapter 6), and in line with others such as Donaldson (Donaldson 1993; Donaldson 1991), we both challenge the independence of the gender order (and potentially also the independence of the class structure itself).
1920s through at least the 1970s celebrated the body of the male manual labourer (Blackley 1996; cf. Hobsbawm 1978; Rose 1992).

The traditional iconography of the labour movement is an instance of the more general cross-class predomination of the masculine perspective. In fact, in symbolic class struggles the masculinity of the different classes becomes the signifier that signifies those classes, and acts as a synecdoche for the class as a whole. When thinking of the "working class", "working Australians", "workers", "blue/white collar workers", it was primarily an image of the male of the class that my working-class informants—both male and female—had in mind. Similarly, when referring to the ruling class, the males of that class were what my interlocutors would normally imagine.

Working-class gender practice is, of course, no more uniform than the working class itself. In chapter one I distinguished between the dominant and dominated fractions among my dominated-class informants. The structural cleavage across the dominated class is reflected in various ways in the field of gender styles, most crucially in masculinity. Researchers have long observed that working-class masculinity was not uniform. Andrew Metcalfe, following E.P. Thompson, distinguished between two kinds of Australian working-class masculinity, larrikin8 and respectable. He associated the respectable with mature, settled, breadwinning males; and the larrikin with young, rough-around-the-edges, unruly males.9 Interestingly, Metcalfe commented that these categories do not necessarily distinguish between two different groups of individuals. The two ideal types he identified often typify different stages of single life trajectories, rather than different male careers altogether: the same male can conform to the larrikin type as a young, unmarried male, and subsequently adhere to the respectable type as a mature, settled male who is typically 'saddled' with a family (Metcalfe 1988).

Metcalfe's observation regarding the transformation of masculinity style with age agrees with my informants' experience. Quite a few of the men I interviewed would reminisce about their wild youthful days. One typical example was Meyer, in his thirties, who recounted how, as an adolescent, he had very little interest at school, performed badly there, and often got in trouble with

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8 Larrikin: "n. Colloq. 1. (formerly) a lout, a hoodlum. 2. a mischievous young person." (Macquarie Dictionary of Australian English, Second Revision, s.v. "larrikin").

9 The distinction between larrikin and respectable masculinity seems to parallel Stivens' distinction between "real man" and "family man" in her study of kinship in Sydney (Stivens 1985, 17 ff.), although she does not investigate the social bases for these different styles in masculinity. (There is a fair degree of overlap in social class between her informants and mine, even though hers included many more members of the dominant class, and very few members of the dominated fraction of the dominated class.)
teachers. He left after year ten, shifting among employers for a while, quitting whenever he got bored with it. All this changed when he moved in with his partner and became a father. He had to become more settled. He stuck it out with a heavy-industry corporation, participating in numerous technical training courses, and ultimately gaining substantial promotions. By the time of my fieldwork he had become a salaried staff member. Having his current familial responsibilities meant that he lost his flexibility in moving in and out of jobs. He resented that loss of flexibility and he hated his job. He also disliked being separated from waged workers (staff had their own toilets, were discouraged from joining unions, and stuck together). Still, he had to grit his teeth and persevere. He also adapted other aspects of respectable masculinity. He cut down on his drinking (although he was no teetotaller by any stretch of the imagination), tried in vain several times to give up smoking, and limited his consumption of marijuana to special social occasions. While I was in Newcastle, he was also involved in politics in the labour movement.

Although this instance shows the transformations that occur with ageing, one must approach this and similar life stories with caution. Ageing is not the only process in play here. Up until the 1970s, work in heavy industries was pretty abundant and apprenticeships were easy to come by. The subsequent squeeze on the labour market in the 1980s and 1990s means that regardless of ageing, the capacity to change employers has diminished, as has the quality of the labour experience. Further, general awareness about the harmful effects of smoking and excessive drinking has also become more widespread. In other words, that which my informants like Meyer might experience as a personal change in style may be partially a reflection of a broader social change around him, rather than any change in his dispositions. Still, the fact that my informants identify the process of ageing with transformations in gender style, and the fact that similar findings have been made in other periods (e.g. Metcalfe’s), underscore the link between the change in style, and the process of ageing.

This process of mellowing with age and responsibility is not independent from the material conditions in which it is embedded. The association of masculinity type with life-stage difference parallels some changes in the involvement of males in the production process. Donaldson pointed out that for blue-collar workers, ageing often entails a reduction in physical capital, as a result of the toll of the labour process on the body of the worker. This reduction is offset by an increase in skill level and experience (Donaldson 1991). In other words, in the lives of specific working-class males there are often two processes which occur at the same time. One is a shift in the composition of
capital, as the relative significance of physical capital diminishes while that of cultural capital increases. The other is a shift from larrikin style to respectable style of masculinity.

Metcalfe observed the transition in masculinity style over individual life spans. Donaldson related such a process to the material conditions of the working-class life trajectory. I have recast Donaldson’s explanations in terms of the relative weight of the different species of capital. This makes it possible to generalise the association of the relative weight of cultural capital with respectable masculinity. I am arguing that this is a general link—it can be seen not only over the life course of individuals, but also by comparing different class fractions. A comparison of the two fractions of the dominated class reveals that both a higher relative weight of cultural capital, and respectable masculinity, are more common in the dominant fraction as compared with the dominated fraction.

For example, in his recent work on masculinities Robert Connell discussed a type of masculinity which is an extreme variant of the larrikin type—protest masculinity. Protest masculinity stems from social powerlessness and expresses itself in exaggerated and destructive displays of masculine prowess, androcentry and unruliness. Connell associates protest masculinity with the most disempowered segment of the working class (Connell 1995, 109 ff.)—the dominated fraction which engages with the secondary labour market.

A group of youngsters who lived next door to me, in the ‘rough’ inner-city suburb of Islington, also exemplified protest masculinity in the dominated fraction. Nominally, the flat had two tenants—two teenage women. In practice, up to nine young men and women might have resided there at any one time. These youths, some White and some Aboriginal, were well on their way towards permanent attachment to the dominated fraction of the dominated class. Most of them had quit school but had no permanent jobs. The young men in the group had a very distinctly protest style of masculinity. For example, one day a fight erupted between the inebriated males over a hamburger. The women who were present at the time tried to calm the guys down, but to no avail. The brawl continued off and on throughout the day, with the police turning up several times. (Whenever the police arrived the young men dispersed temporarily, only to return after the police left and continue where they had left off.) Extensive damage was caused to the flat that day.

Napoleon was the brother of one of the two nominal residents and a regular inhabitant of that flat. His sister regularly complained that he never contributed his share of the rent. When his sister or
other people got him “pissed off” he would fly into fits of fury, at times smashing windows, doors and furniture. On a couple of occasions, while seemingly under the influence of intoxicating substances, he could not be bothered going to the dunny\(^\text{10}\) outside and urinated from the window onto the driveway. He and his friends also broke into the video shop around the corner (a feat which landed Napoleon in gaol for a short period of time), broke into the second-hand store across the road, and engaged in petty theft within the neighbourhood. It was the conduct of Napoleon and his male comrades which ultimately brought about the eviction of the whole group.

Another example from Islington was Bronislaw, who throughout his life stuck to larrikin style, bordering on protest masculinity; to the dominated fraction of the dominated class; and to a low level of objectified cultural capital such as formal training and qualifications. Bronislaw was born into the dominated fraction of the dominated class in 1927. He grew up in a shantytown on the outskirts of Sydney during the Great Depression, where he and his family were “living like hillbillies”. His parents were “virtually illiterate”. His father had worked most of his life in casual manual jobs. He himself became a seaman in his teens, joining the Communist Party as a young man. He subsequently left the sea, and for years moved among manual jobs. Bronislaw’s biography is a long series of conflicts with authority. He said he had been a rebel long before he knew of the Communist Party. Throughout his working life he would invariably fall out with employers, with union officials, and with CP leaders. He put his problems with the CP leadership down to the latter’s contempt for “us fuckin’ prolies”. His last job was a ten-month stint as a cleaner at the Worker’s Club. He was sacked after falling out with the officials of the Trades and Labour Council. His interrupted involvement in the labour market (including a long spell of unemployment) and his related labour activism were also partly responsible for the collapse of his two marriages. At least the first marriage was doomed from the start. His mother-in-law (“I detested the fuckin’ bitch”) was, by his account, a “man hater” and set his wife against him. His wife herself was extremely selfish and “made a cunt of me in front of me mates”. Bronislaw, both in his biography and in his self-presentation, exemplifies the association of class fraction and larrikin masculine style.

\(^{10}\) Dunny, in the sense it is used here, means “an outside toilet found in unsewered areas, usu. at some distance from the house it serves and consisting of a small shed furnished with a lavatory seat placed over a sanitary can” (Macquarie Dictionary of Australian English, Second Revision, s.v. “dunny”). The area itself had been connected to the sewer system since the house was constructed (apparently in the 1920s), and the toilet in the dunny was connected to the sewer system, but it was still placed in the shed, and was shared by the residents of a few of the flats and one of the shops downstairs.
Bronislaw, and Napoleon and his friends can be opposed to Meyer who exemplifies the respectable style of the dominant fraction, and its reliance on cultural capital (Meyer’s training) to secure its position (in this instance—Meyer’s position as salaried staff). I suggest that among working-class males, habitus often incorporates both larrikin and respectable styles of masculinity. Social agents are directed towards one style or the other in different contexts. Different agents incorporate these styles to varying degrees of success. Because respectable style seems a necessary (although not a sufficient) condition for the successful accumulation of cultural capital, agents whose habitus does not sufficiently incorporate the respectable style are much less likely to accumulate cultural capital. Further, the processes of accumulation of cultural capital further reinforce the respectable style—for example, to complete a training course at a technical college many aspects of respectable masculinity need to be honed, such as successful acceptance of authority. Finally, the cultural capital, once accumulated, attracts social agents towards further situations which are associated with respectable masculinity, for example, supervisory positions or positions of technical authority (both of which were obnoxious to the egalitarian sensibilities of dominated-fraction male informants). In other words, I am arguing that respectable masculinity and higher levels of cultural capital are mutually constitutive, rather than one of them causing the other.

Thus, within the dominated class, membership in a particular fraction is not predetermined. Young males—at least the ethnically mainstream—occupy a liminal space, and are yet to develop both a clear masculine style and the cultural capital which will determine to a large extent their ultimate attachment to a particular class fraction. The high-school years and the early years in the labour market are critical for the acquisition of both gender style and cultural capital (c.f. Willis 1977; Connell et al. 1982).

Because of this fluidity and uncertainty in social reproduction, dominant-fraction informants took great pains to ensure to the greatest extent possible the access of their children to the primary labour market, by attempting to instil various skills and (respectable-masculine) dispositions in their children. One such skill was work ethic: I mentioned above (page 182) a dominant-fraction family where the payment of the adolescent son’s pocket money was directly linked to performance of tasks such as cleaning his own bedroom and feeding the family pets. Another important skill was literacy: it was common among dominant-fraction parents of babies and toddlers to acquire baby books, brag about their children’s rapid acquisition of reading skills, and if they could afford to, seek commercial childcare providers who taught literacy and numeracy skills. The demand for placement with “good” childcare providers far outstripped supply. Some of my informants had to
rush to enrol their offspring with their preferred providers before these offspring were actually born. All of this was done with the express intention of giving their children a competitive edge in life, and ensuring they would not be disadvantaged in their competition with others.

These complications of social reproduction, and the broader daily conflict between the two fractions, expressed themselves in various practical ways, not least of which was the obsession with youth discipline that characterised quite a few dominant-fraction parents, especially mothers. This obsession was very much a symbolic clash between the fractions of the dominated class. Dominant-fraction parents feared that larrikinism would interfere with their children’s education, might land their children in trouble with the law, and consequently threaten their children’s future. Put differently, these parents were concerned about the risks posed to their children’s capacity to reach the dominant fraction of the dominated class. A decent secondary education and work ethic, and a clean record with the police, were seen by my informants as necessary conditions for a “good job”, that is, for attachment to the dominant fraction. My informants perceived the main threat to be posed primarily to boys by those among their peers who exhibited the protest style of masculinity, and it was that type of masculinity which the parents would combat in their attempts to protect their offspring. They commonly complained that schools were too soft on discipline and that there were too many children (especially males) who had a potentially bad influence on their children. One strategy adopted by some of my informants was to transfer their children to Catholic schools, which were perceived to be tougher on discipline. Another was an attempt to control the movement of children, especially their sons, in such areas as shopping malls, because other youths who hung around shopping malls were perceived as a threat. Even parents who regularly consumed alcoholic beverages and smoked both cigarettes and marijuana were extremely worried that their sons might be encouraged by friends to do the same.

The same concerns were echoed by counsellors and service providers. As a counsellor at the City Mission put it: “I think that adolescents are victims of the society . . . We’ve created a monster . . . They have pressures, materialistic ones.” The concern about stray youths had reached hysterical proportions around the country at the time of my fieldwork. At the time legislation was introduced in a few towns in Australia to enable police to “move on” youth in public places, or even detain youngsters if the police suspected they might otherwise get involved in unlawful or dangerous acts. But youth workers I interviewed pointed out that many of the complaints about youths were misplaced. For example, the common concern about the preponderance of youths who seem to be doing nothing around shopping malls overlooks the fact that adults have come to do pretty much the same thing, and that shopping malls have become the major public spaces in the city over the last generation. In any event, there was a consensus among people who work with youth that drug and alcohol abuse are a major problem, especially for boys. One youth worker also pointed out that while young men are often vilified as the perpetrators of violence, they also tend to be its main victim. I did not pursue the substantive claims about possible problems with youth in my work. What I rather want to highlight here is the preoccupation with youth and discipline at a time of increased competition over social reproduction.

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Members of the dominant fractions of the dominated class, owing their dominance within their class to the same political-economic structure which nonetheless confines them to the dominated class, thus find themselves in a somewhat contradictory position. In their daily life, the conflict between the two fractions of the dominated class seems more prominent. Respectable masculinity, a compliant dominated-class style, thus shares with dominant-class masculinity an antagonism towards larrikinism—a stylistic expression of the dominated fraction of the dominated class.

Both the clash of interests and the differences in masculinity style combined to produce in daily life a measure of social segregation along fraction lines within the dominated class. Among my informants, at least, primary labour-market workers\textsuperscript{12} workers tended to associate with other primary labour-market workers both within and outside their industries, much more than they did with secondary labour-market workers within their own workplace. Such networks constituted an essential element of social capital: they formed an important tool for members of the dominant fraction to defend their position. Information about employment opportunities and advice about career paths circulated in such networks, as did details about investment opportunities, the merits of different educational institutions, and other significant information for social reproduction. This process might also help account for the fact that in the transition from blue-collar labour to white-collar labour, there seems to have been a degree of fraction retention: information about good jobs and their requirements would be more readily available in dominant-fraction social networks.

Interestingly, it was women in their capacity as the main social organisers who contributed most to the maintenance of class-fraction segregation of social networks. The social networks of married men were almost invariably based on the network-maintenance work of their wives. When one partner had an independent social network, that partner was usually the woman. The much venerated Australian mateship and networks of mates were surprisingly foreign to my partnered informants' experience, much though it persisted in folklore.\textsuperscript{13} In their own independent social networks, wives of primary labour-market workers and women who were themselves primary labour-market workers tended to socialise within their fraction rather than with women whose access, whether direct or indirect, was restricted to the secondary labour market. Immediate social

\textsuperscript{12} I discuss the relation between labour market segmentation and class fractions in chapter one. Briefly, I associated the dominant fraction of the dominated class with the primary labour market and the dominated fraction of the dominated class with the secondary labour market. I also describe some concrete ways in which the former dominates the latter.\textsuperscript{13} In their lack of independent social networks, my male informants resemble working-class males from Britain (Allan 1979). The situation among my informants seems to agree very much with that among the Sydneysiders that Stivens studied in the late 1960s (Stivens 1985; Stivens 1978). See chapter three.
networks did sometimes cut across class fractions, although judging from my informants’
experience, this stems primarily from close relatives being in different fractions.

The close social network of Meyer and his partner, Lucy, was typical in that it was virtually
restricted to the dominant fraction, although it was much larger than most couples’ networks.
Meyer was a salaried staff member of a heavy-industry corporation, Lucy was casually employed in
social services, although at the time of my fieldwork she was on maternity leave. Their close social
network included two other couples, who along with Meyer and Lucy were buying, improving and
selling or hiring out real estate. In one of these couples, the husband was also salaried staff in
industry, and his wife a bureaucrat at an educational institution. The other couple was comprised of
Esther who was a training officer in the Public Service, and Jack who was employed in retail on a
casual basis and otherwise worked on their real-estate investments and looked after their baby son.
Other members of their social network included a woman who worked as a financial adviser to
clients of the Department of Social Security, a union organiser, a fellow worker in heavy industries
(who was completing a postgraduate degree in cultural studies at the time), the sister of the husband
who was studying industrial design at the University of Newcastle, an erstwhile colleague in
industry who moved to work for the public service at a low-level managerial position and a few
other persons who were attached directly or indirectly to the primary labour markets. These people
might drop in for a beer (mostly the single men), a cuppa and chat (mostly women), or have dinner
together (mostly couples).

One clear example of the symbolic struggle in gender style between class fractions occurred on
New-Year’s Day 1995. Meyer and Lucy and their close friends (a group of between ten and fifteen
people), had had a four-year tradition of meeting every New-Year’s Day for a day-long game of
croquet and a barbecue at their place. They owned a large block of land with three dilapidated
houses, which they had been slowly renovating over the years. They lived in one of the houses, and
the other two were let. The combined back yard afforded enough space for the whole event. In
1995 there was one unusual feature to the event. The couple had been out drinking a week or so
before at the bar of a local club. Meyer got a bit tipsy, and ended up inviting all the people at the
pub to the event. The turnout was rather impressive—around fifty people (including children)
turned up during the day. The social distinctions were clearly visible in the way people
spontaneously congregated. The couple and their close friends tended to sit in one area. Another
area was occupied by the guests who very much belonged to the dominated fraction. A third group
was the students—the husband’s sister and friends who turned up as well. In the middle, the
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croquet tournament continued lazily for the better part of the day. The children were mostly in and
around the small back-yard pool. Around lunch time Lucy and her female friends—the members of
the dominant fraction—retreated into the kitchen to cut salad. When I followed them to find out
what was happening, I came upon a discussion carried out in low voices. The women were irate
with one of the couples of the dominated fraction. The latter had turned up with their unruly
adolescent son. The women in the kitchen were livid that this couple allowed their son to smoke
and drink, that he backchatted, and that he was visibly out of his parents’ control. Lucy, who from
the start did not like the idea of inviting the mass of people to the barbecue, was lamenting how
hard she needs to work to keep her own adolescent son disciplined, and that all her hard work might
come undone under the influence of this unruly boy, and others like him. Her interlocutors agreed
wholeheartedly.

Conflicts between styles of femininity are neither as explicit nor as direct as those between larrikin
and respectable masculinities. In fact, my dominant-fraction female informants primarily opposed
dominated-fraction masculinity rather than femininity, perhaps because also within the dominated
class, it is the male of the fraction who is the prototype of his fraction. As the example just cited
illustrates, a major criticism which flowed from dominant-fraction women towards their dominated-
fraction counterparts centred on the latter’s ‘failure’ to properly rear and control their children,
especially their sons.

On the whole, the divergence in feminine style across the fractions of the dominated class seemed
less clear-cut than that of masculine style. The domestic division of labour itself inhibited the
emergence of larrikin or protest femininity among my informants. Given that women across the
fractions of the dominated class were those who were primarily charged with childcare and with
running the domestic economy—they were normally in charge of paying bills and making ends
meet—they could ill afford the ‘irresponsibility’ of larrikinism. Among my informants of the
dominated fraction, once a woman had dependent children she assumed responsibility for them.
She was not free to drop it all and leave. This greater burden of responsibility was matched by the
internalised structures of femininity, which incorporated an element of responsibility and self-
sacrifice. This internalised structure both adapted women to their social role as major caregivers,
and underlay some of their strategies in the daily symbolic struggles, as when a woman would
assume the high moral ground by virtue of her sacrifices, in an attempt to make as much virtue as
possible out of necessity. (Temma Kaplan has referred to this as female consciousness, as opposed
to feminist consciousness, when discussing women’s political mobilisation around state political
The moral dividends of martyrdom were a major stake in many symbolic struggles between parents and offspring, and between partners, struggles which took the form of the imposition and manipulation of a mix of guilt and gratitude. There was a cross-gender consensus among my informants that women were superior to men in this kind of struggle. Moreover, the fact that in the dominated-fraction married mothers generally depended on men’s participation in the labour market for their own living put them in opposition to the larrikin tendencies of their male partners, tendencies which might spell disaster to the household’s income. All this made ‘respectable’ femininity common in the dominated fraction as well as in the dominant fraction of the dominated class. Something resembling ‘larrikin’, or protest femininity was rare among my informants.

Furthermore, at least among my informants, women’s mobility between the fractions seemed greater than men’s, inhibiting the solidification of fraction-specific styles of femininity. In the period immediately following marriage breakdown or separation, women were more likely to find themselves in the dominated fractions than men were, especially if they had custody over dependent children (Wolcott et al. 1997; and see above chapter two). By the same token, women had a greater opportunity of upward mobility through marriage, compared with men. This was so because, due to the ‘patriarchal’ logic of nuptial ‘trade’, women’s ‘value’ was weighted more heavily by ‘assets’ such as physical attractiveness and charm, which are relatively independent of class, whereas men’s ‘value’ was weighted more heavily by ‘assets’ such as earning capacity, which very much define class. This allowed some women of the dominated fraction to acquire a greater ‘return’ on their ‘assets’ than their male counterparts.

The crowd of next-door adolescents are a good example of the difference between masculine and feminine styles in the dominated fraction. I have mentioned the escapades of some of the young men above. The young women had a different style of conduct. They were the mainstay of social networks in that flat, trying to mediate between the young men and solve problems whenever tensions reached the surface. While both women and men would binge drink and use narcotics, the inebriated women might get giggly or “stupid”, while the boys were more likely to get violent.

Employment was another factor which distinguished the genders. The two women and their female friends were either working or looking seriously for work. The men in that group did not actively participate in the labour market, and often scoffed at the women’s attempts to integrate into the labour market. It was the women alone who paid the rent and looked after the apartment.
Within the dominated class, then, differences in gender style, especially masculinity, are implicated in the structure of the dominated class. A respectable style of masculinity is virtually obligatory for a continuous attachment to the primary labour market, and is itself in many ways a product of such an attachment. Larrikin masculinity is similarly linked to the secondary labour market. Masculine style is a project which places the two fractions in opposition with one another. This is so especially for the members of the dominant fraction whose privilege is closely contingent upon respectable masculinity, and who have a lot more to lose than their chains.

GENDER STYLE AND THE CONFLICT BETWEEN CLASSES

The difference in gender styles within the dominated class should not be overemphasised. The material basis for the distinction between the fractions and their gender styles is rather tenuous. Mobility across the fractions is sufficient to undermine any sense of security my dominant-fraction informants had in their dominance. Both fractions share a common position in the broad political economy. Thus, while foremen and staff might be in daily conflict—explicitly or implicitly—with ordinary workers, they all seem to share a similar position and fate in the total scheme of things, because of their common total dependence on the labour market. When Newcastle’s erstwhile largest employer, BHP, wound down its operations there, workers of all fractions were laid off.

In addition, the manifestations of gender style might often be camouflaged by the requirement not to appear condescending or conceited, an imperative which unites the different fractions of the working class. Normally it was men of the dominant fraction who would resort to a larrikin style of self-presentation in mixed-fraction contexts. I was quite amazed the first time I went out with a local union organiser to a meeting with workers. The man who in private discussions with me adopted a respectable style of self-presentation and could eloquently reiterate the Australian Council of Trade Unions’ firm policy on gender equity, resorted to a totally different style when meeting with male workers at a steel plant. His accent broadened, he would slap people on their back in a friendly gesture, and peppered his speech with ‘vulgar’ expressions and references which were highly androcentric or misogynist. Another man explained that when he talked to mechanics and similar tradesmen he always reverted to broader accents, “foul language”, and mimicked their
behaviour because he did not want to appear pretentious, and be "screwed" by being over-charged or having his car mischievously damaged.14

Most importantly, the different variants of working-class masculinity, and femininity for that matter, share elements which distinguish them from dominant-class styles. Among my informants, it was invariably the women who were the more articulate, who were given to abstract, non-instrumental conversation, and who had wider social networks. The style of the 'respectable' men in speech and in social interaction was very close to that of the 'larrikin' men I encountered, much more than the style commonly found among the dominated fractions of the dominant class (e.g. academics).

There is a systemic logic to these differences between the dominant and dominated classes. Working-class masculinity is constructed in opposition to bourgeois masculinity, and in juxtaposition with working-class femininity. (Sonya Rose identified a similar structure for respectable working-class masculinity in nineteenth-century England—Rose 1992, chapter 6.) Consequently, a homology exists between bourgeois masculinity and working-class femininity—namely an opposition to working-class masculinity. (An equivalent situation in the ruling-class may create a homology between bourgeois femininity and working-class masculinity.) This structural homology motivates some gender constructions. Consequently, bourgeois and working-class gender constructions become at times inversions of one another. In other words, that which distinguishes male from female in the dominant class might actually have the opposite effect of distinguishing female from male in the dominated class (in addition to distinguishing the dominant-class males from the dominated-class males).15

14 This is part of what sympathetic observers have identified as egalitarianism (e.g. Oxley 1974; Kapferer 1996; Kapferer 1988), and others have denounced as the tall-poppy syndrome—a pet peeve among those unsympathetic to working-class culture, such as Australia's current prime minister, John Howard (himself a rather modestly sized poppy). A tall poppy is "a person who is outstanding in any way" (Macquarie Dictionary of Australian English, Second Revision, s.v. "tall poppy"), and the tall-poppy syndrome is the complaint that the generally average resent the high fliers and prevent them from getting their just rewards. The class overtones of the term cannot be mistaken. Consider the following quotes from the Oxford English Dictionary: "1931 New South Wales Parl. Debates 30 July 4840 The Premier cannot truthfully say that a measure which deals with a certain section of the community which he refers to as the privileged class and as 'tall poppies' is in accord with the Melbourne agreement. 1963 Times 12 Mar. (Australia Suppl.) p. xviii/2 The youthfulness is explained by the fact that nearly all the buildings visible at this distance are new ones, the tall commercial poppies that now . . . compare with the cathedral spires. 1967 J. YEOMANS Scarc Australian viii. 85 If there is one place where the genuine eccentric is crushed, the tall poppy lopped and the penetrating discussion stifled, it is Australia. 1969 Listener 13 Nov. 660/1 They booed this great man, and he had to take it. It was part of the thing no tall poppies. You've got to do well, but there’s supposed not to be any sense of excellence making any difference to human equality. 1975 Sydney Morning Herald 8 Apr. 6 Labor is obsessed with the 'tall poppies', and seems determined to pull them down" (from Oxford English Dictionary, Second Edition, s.v. "poppy"). 15 Researchers often have an intuitive notion of a Freudian/Victorian division, where masculinity is contrasted with femininity as the rational, disembodied, and "culture" element of the dichotomy (e.g. Connell 1995, 164 ff.). Although
For example, the following juxtapositions approximate the gender construction among my working-class informants. They appear to be the reversal of some gendered experiences and constructions which originate in some fractions of the dominant class.

**man:woman::wild:tame**\(^{16}\) (as opposed to **man:woman::tame:wild** in some dominant constructions). To my informants, it is the men who are wild. They have the capacity to be volatile, hot-headed, physical and brutal. Boys play rough, are more likely to binge drink, get in trouble with the law, get involved in violence, or rape. Women, on the other hand, are better socialised, and more responsible. To this we can add **man:woman::dangerous:safe** (in contrast with some dominant constructions of **man:woman::safe:dangerous**). Working-class men are more dangerous and more threatening to the dominant class, to women, to their fellow men, and to themselves—protest masculinity and larrikin working-class youths being a case in point.

**man:woman::nature:culture** (in contrast with the dominant notion of **man:woman::culture:nature**). Among my informants women exhibited a greater linguistic proficiency, were more likely to be interested in reading in their spare time or in other ‘cultural’ or ‘elevated’ pursuits. Among the youngsters I spoke with, girls reacted more positively to school, did better academically, and were less likely to have disciplinary problems. Men’s demeanour and favourite pastimes tended to be more physical, more ‘violent’, less ‘refined’. The linguistic proficiency exhibited by men was much less ‘developed’ than women’s, and they were more likely to use ‘vulgar’, “dirty” or “crude” language. Modes of cultural expression like poetry and literature were deemed to be feminine. So was talking “too much”, especially about issues of no immediate practical consequence, such as emotions or abstractions. We can therefore add here the couplet of **man:woman::crudity:refinement** (in contrast with some dominant constructions of **man:woman::refinement:crudity**). In her analysis of visage management, Fergie reaches similar conclusions. Men’s proper presentation of self should show little effort to modify one’s

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16 As I pointed out in chapter six—the dichotomies in this analysis are employed as mere formal approximations of the non-formal logic of practice.
appearance, whereas women's self presentation is based on an intensive process of modification, management and improvement (Fergie 1988).^{17}

The nature:culture dichotomy further accords with men's greater interest in sex as opposed to women's greater interest in romance, as does men's hairier and more muscular physique (see chapter six). This 'man-the-animal' masculinity fits in with a bourgeois pejorative construction of the male physical labourer—the prototypical member of the working class. In fact, in the rebellious, uncontrollable, protest masculinity this construction is accepted by males of the dominated class, but given a positive spin. In other words, in this context ruling-class notions construct the dominated class. It is within those ideas of the ruling class that the dominated class members find the space to construct an opposition of sorts.

From the perspective of the dominant class other dichotomies might assume greater importance. Power or grandeur, rather than physical strength might become significant. For example, Bourdieu discusses a character in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, to expose the innermost workings of genderedness in modern society (Bourdieu 1990b). Mr Ramsay is a specimen of dominant-class masculinity. At one point, he fantasises about himself standing in command of troops and dying heroically, as befits a man of his status. By contrast, the mythic person of the ANZAC digger^{18}—an honest, unassuming, hard-working soldier who is loyal to his mates above all else—is a working-class manifestation of the fantasies of military glory. While both masculine fantasies share much in the way of obsession with power, heroic Mr Ramsay's and the ANZAC digger also differ in a socially meaningful way.

Similarly, ruling-class perspectives might reconstitute the crudity:refinement dichotomy into some version of the simple:sophisticated. Altogether different dichotomies might also be invoked, such as traditional:advanced or savage:civilised, to celebrate the inferiority—temporal and developmental in this instance—of the dominated class. My brief here, however, does not extend to the ruling class. It should be noted in passing that the constitution of the dominated class as effeminate and infantile is not recent, and falls within the broader tendency of effeminising and infantilising exploited and dominated groups in general, be they slaves, colonised people, peasants

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^{17} Fergie's work was not concerned specifically with particular class, but reflects popular culture in general. I think that the proliferation of the dichotomy man:woman::nature:culture reflects the influence of working-class culture on Australian popular culture in general.

^{18} ANZAC—Australian and New Zealand Army Corps; digger: *4 colloq. an Australian soldier esp. one who served in World War I* (from *Macquarie Dictionary of Australian English*, Second Revision, s.v. "digger").
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and so forth—a cognitive practice made possible by the logic of the domination of the masculine perspective, and the economy of practical logic which extends it to other situations of domination.

Because of the oppositional nature of some aspects of the masculinities of the dominated and dominant classes, and because of the structural homology between gender domination and class domination, some parallels emerge between the embodied constructions of gender and class. In fact, the inverted construction of gender which I described above could be used to map out the class relations among males from a dominated-class perspective as follows:


This convergence of class and gender structure is not far from the daily consciousness of my informants. As part of their daily symbolic struggles, men often highlight the disagreeable nature of their paid work. This happens across the fractions of the dominated class, sometimes resulting in a somewhat perverse homology. Men work for their families. They also work for their bosses. This homology between the ‘missus’ and the ‘boss’ emerged in some conversations I had with a few disgruntled husbands. In other situations it emerged more implicitly, as when a dominant-fraction worker told me that although he hated his employer and his job, and although he had been trying for a couple of years to find a way out of his position, he had no alternative but work because he had to support his wife and kids. Another dominant-fraction worker explained that his job was indeed boring, but that was the reason his wife and kids had food on their table. This homology has emerged also in women’s discourse. In one all-women focus group, a participant construed women’s position in the domestic domain as “bosses”, a term taken up by other participants. Commenting on the conflict between adult women and their mothers and mothers-in-law, a participant explained that “two bosses can’t share the same nest... as a home manager.”

Even in consumption, the mapping of the gender divide onto the socio-economic divide has the consequence that the masculinity of the dominant class is, at times, equated by members of the dominated class with femininity (cf., inter alia, Mennell et al. 1992; Morgan 1996). To many of my informants, practices and preferences of male members of the dominant class were effeminate. Similarly, the way men were juxtaposed to women in their consumption style tended to replicate the way dominated-class men were juxtaposed to dominant-class men. For example, drinking beer rather than wine was identified and presented as masculine in a gendered context and working-class in a classed context. In my experience, the actual consumption practices varied strongly in both
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these ways. The situation was similar with regard to salad vs. steak, vegetarianism vs. meat-eating and other such dietary preferences. Here, too, the symbolic association reflected actual preferences among my informants. Preference for vegetable salads and a vegetarian lifestyle (including partial vegetarianism, such as avoidance of red meat) were not very wide-spread among my dominated-class informants, but when they were found they were invariably among women. Otherwise they were more commonly found in the dominant class. The genderedness of the salad vs. steak has reached near-mythical proportions in the institution of the “Aussie Barbie”, an important Australian icon which is very much alive and well. In the barbecues which I attended it was almost invariably men who attended to the steaks and sausages around the fire outdoors, while women would colonise the kitchen, cutting the salad.

Such homologies as man:woman::beer:wine::working class:bourgeoisie, and man:woman::steak:salad::working class:bourgeoisie seem to reflect the preferences and prejudices of virtually all my informants, whether larrikin or respectable, male or female, blue-collar or white-collar, homemaker or paid worker. Such constructions were not confined to food, and could be found in many other aspects of lifestyle, such as preferred pastimes, sports and clothing style.

To sum up, even though gender style is profoundly implicated in the division of the dominated class into two antagonistic factions, the gender order forms an integral aspect of the structure of the contradiction between the dominant and dominated classes. The different working-class masculine

19 A counsellor working in the relatively low-income suburb of Boolaroo puts down much of these trends to attitudes to health and the body: “Health is also a commodity, and it’s a commodity that the working class really can’t afford. It’s something that they accept as a necessity, but they don’t have an idea of their health being their own. I think that’s a very middle-class thinking, the idea of looking after yourself. And I really do believe that it’s a very middle-class way of thinking, this thing about looking after yourself, and eating well. I don’t meet very many working-class kids who are vegetarian: I met lots of middle-class kids who study and become vegetarian, you know. I don’t know what’s going on there [. . .] I do not meet, it’s very rare for me to meet a working-class family that has kids who’ve made a real conscious decision to become vegetarian.” She proceeded to comment about other aspects of health consciousness like jogging, which she described as essentially middle class.

20 Gender is not associated only with the consumption of food. Elisabeth L’orange Fürst has recently highlighted the implication of gender identity and the production of food (Fürst 1997). For a theoretical elaboration on the social significance of differences in food preparation and consumption see the various articles in an edited book by Fürst (Fürst 1991) as well as the general outline of the sociology of food by Mennell, Murcott and Van Otterloo (Mennell et al. 1992) and more recently in a collection edited by Germov and Williams (Germov & Williams 1999). There have not been many studies of these patterns in Australia. These tend to focus on the role of family in producing food, ethnic differences in food preferences, and recently, a comparison between rural and urban families (Lupton 2000; Santicch 1994; Lupton 1996; and see the historical study of Symons 1984). The Australian work on gender and food tends to focus on social pressures on women to keep thin (e.g. Williams & Germov 1999; Williams & Potter 1999). Studies of class and food tend to highlight the nutritional inadequacy of some choices of members of the dominated fractions of the dominated class. While there is definitely awareness, in the wake of Bourdieu’s Distinction, that food choices obey a practical logic which is sociologically meaningful, not much has been done in the way of concrete research or elaboration of these points (e.g. Crotty 1999).
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styles share some basic components which set them apart from dominant-class masculinity. Opposition in masculinity style thus becomes one acute manifestation of this class conflict. This motivates the structure of gender construction which becomes, in the dominated class, a reversal of the dominant-class constructions. Eventually, gender distinctions become mapped onto class distinctions, and can be extended to many and varied aspects of lifestyle. Up to a point, then, gender and class are mutually constitutive. The differentiation of gender style motivates the differentiation of class, and class differences motivate the differentiation of gender style, thus creating an overlap between distinctions of class and distinctions of gender style. In no way can gender style be mechanically collapsed into the class structure, as if it were a mere epiphenomenon of the latter. It is the challenge of social analysis to elucidate the logic which connects those two structures—the gender order and class.

This, of course, in no way exhausts the connection of kinship practices with class. A full account of the linkage between class structure and the field of kinship and family would take more than one dissertation dedicated specifically and exclusively to this issue. Here I chose an angle which is not commonly used in order to contribute some new ideas on this linkage, and to demonstrate that the gender order—rooted as it is in the field of kinship and family—and the class structure are not independent of one another.

THE FIELD OF KINSHIP PRACTICE, AND THE STRUCTURE OF CAPITALIST PRODUCTION

Not only the class structure is strongly intertwined with the field of kinship and family. The structure and function of Australian capitalism is predicated on the specific structure and function of the field of kinship and family. This contrasts with the commonsensical view that capitalist societies are unique in that their economy is autonomous from kinship structures. This inevitably sketchy discussion seeks primarily to undermine this commonsensical view—itself an element of the ideological distinction between private and public (and between the primitive and the modern).
The family and field of play: between fields

The field of kinship and family affects the structure of Australia's economy in many fundamental ways. These include the distinction between private and public, and other idioms which construct the market as a whole, and specific institutions such as the corporation. I discussed these issues above. Here I would like to press the point further, and argue that even fundamental economic processes such as the direction of technological development and the dynamics of economic development are critically shaped by the dynamics and structure of the field of kinship and family.

I first discuss the link between Australian kinship and the Australian economy from the perspective of the household, and then from the perspective of the total economy.

**FROM THE HOUSEHOLD PERSPECTIVE**

One of the effects of the specific organisation of the political economy is what one could term, with apologies to Aleksandr Vasilevich Chayanov, the household mode of consumption. Chayanov described the household mode of production among peasants (Chayanov et al. 1986). The needs of the household in the household mode of production are determined by factors such as the number of persons living within the household. Such needs are independent of the productive capacity of the household. It is the household needs which determine the household's production output. Once

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21 The family and the market are mutually constitutive opposites. They often define each other negatively, that is, that which is personal is not public nor political, while that which is political or public is not personal. (Radical attempts to confound the personal and the political have had some effect, in the environmental movement for example as discussed in Connell 1995, chapter 5, but this effect has so far been very limited.) Market relationships are conceived of as antagonistic, motivated by self interest and driven by rationalist strategies of individual utility maximisation. As such they are diametrically opposed to family relationships. This opposition is an inherent part of the logic of the two spheres. For example, to extract surplus value from the toil of kith and kin is often deemed illegitimate (definitely among most of my informants). Similarly, the introduction of family considerations into various aspects of market relationships is considered wrong, and is often illegal. Nepotism, cronyism and so forth are all terms which describe precisely this kind of crossover from the sphere of the personal to that of the impersonal. Economists seem to be particularly vulnerable to taking this ideological distinction for granted (e.g. Becker 1991). Interestingly, while criticising previous economists for falling in the trap of associating the marketplace with selfishness and family with altruism, Snooks, himself, falls into a similar muddle. He argues that in both contexts dynamic economic man acts rationally in pursuit of the maximisation of his material utility. But, he still reconstitutes family and market relations as opposites. In his discussion of family firms, for example, he argues that family members must relinquish any non-economic claims for the firm to be successful, and that in that way the family members relate to one another differently in the household context and in the firm (Snooks 1994, 64-65). Suggesting that it is not the agents, or their strategies which are different, but their social relations, only begs the question of where the social relations come from. In any event, the distinction between the types of social action which prevail within the family, and those which prevail in the marketplace informs the practice of social agents, be they workers, or academic economists. This distinction is not a law of nature, though. As the kibbutz systems in Israel have shown, organising firms on the basis of non-market personal relationships may, in fact, be a very successful business strategy. Small family businesses, like farms, or the fruit and vegetable shop down the street from where I lived in Newcastle, are still viable too, although they do not tend to grow at the rate of corporate firms.

22 On private vs. public see chapter two; on the corporate nature of the family household see chapters three, four and five; on the construction of domination (in relation to gender) see chapter six and the previous section in this chapter.
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such needs are satisfied, the household does not engage in further production. In sum, the consumption needs of the household determine its level of production. Furthermore, those needs are independent of the level of production whether potential or real.

Among my informants the situation seems to be reversed. Among my informants, at least, consumption is very elastic upwards, but very inelastic downwards. The level of consumption is largely determined by the level of income of the household, with the needs rising quickly to match any increase in earning capacity. Related to this is the phenomenon observed by scholars such as John Kenneth Galbraith, that contrary to neo-classical dogma, preferences and demand are not independent of supply in modern consumerist political economies (hence the great investment in industries like advertising whose sole purpose is to drum up demand for supplied goods and services) (Galbraith 1969). In other words, there was a seemingly unlimited potential for consumption. The level of household consumption would quickly rise when the level of income rose. Readjustment of consumption downwards in case of a drop in income was not so easy.

The high level of expenditure was not only for the purposes of ‘mindless’ or ‘irresponsible’ consumption. Part of the reason for this tendency of needs to rise was the general inflation in cultural and material capital, an inflation which increases the cost of social reproduction and the maintenance of position in social space down the generations. The desire to enhance the social standing of offspring—an integral aspect of the field of kinship and family—pushes towards increased expenditure on education, for example. This inflation can be gauged, among others, by high-school retention rates. The Australia-wide retention rate to year twelve rose from 34% in 1980 to 77% in 1992, coupled with a substantial increase in the rate of those pursuing tertiary education. Similarly, the proportion of 15–19-year-old full-time students had risen between 1961 and 1992 from 28% for men and 24% for women to 62% for men and 69% for women. In the age bracket of 20–24 the ratio of full-time students rose from 4% for men and 1% for women in 1961 to 14% for men and 16% for women in 1992 (McDonald 1995, 27). The inflation rate in academic qualifications seems to be higher for women than for men. This is so probably because of the greater proclivity of women to participate in the service industries. Men still dominate technical education (55.3% of those enrolled in 1990), and apprenticeships (85.4% of apprentices in 1990). Unfortunately, the lack of historical data makes it hard to assess the developments in the market for technical education and apprenticeships (Snooks 1994, 92–94).
The very inflation in cultural capital is fuelled by the structure of the household mode of consumption. Because family units operate in an uncoordinated fashion—an essential structural aspect of the field of kinship and family—they are thrust into a continuous competition for social reproduction. This competition becomes particularly fierce at times when the structural shift in the economy results in a shrinkage of the traditional basis of the dominant fraction of the dominated class. (This basis among my informants, was essentially skilled blue-collar jobs in heavy industries.) This competition over shrinking stakes is a major driving force for the further commodification of social reproduction, as exemplified by the increasing rate of inflation in educational qualifications.

The inflation in the value of educational and vocational qualifications in the last few decades means that more and more investment is required in the education of offspring merely to maintain their relative position within the social structure. In addition, beyond the investment which is required by the children, the reduction in child labour market participation, coupled with recent cuts in youth wages, increase the children’s dependency on their parents’ access to the labour market and thereby increase their parents’ dependency on the labour market (Hartley & de Vaus 1997).

In other words, both consideration of social reproduction and the increased cost of living—considerations which are born out of the structure and functioning of family households—create the need for maximisation of income, thereby securely fastening household units to the labour market. To this, of course, must be added the weight of the internalised imperatives of consumerism. This is expressed in a profound sense of lack which requires satisfaction through consumption, and the harnessing of desire to the options available in the market for goods and services. All this explains the ease with which consumption rises, and the difficulty with which it drops. My informants generally claimed that when they increased their earnings, they did not normally increase their savings. An exception to this was when the worker increases his/her earnings (e.g. by taking extra work) for a specific and well-defined purpose (e.g. buying a car). Further, my informants claimed that taking on extra work for more pay was not easily reversible. Higher levels of consumption proved habit-forming. I should stress that among the dominant fraction, the levels of consumption go well beyond the bare necessities of life. In one particular factory, for example, workers could significantly increase their income by working overtime. Many workers earned between fifty and sixty thousand dollars in 1994, whereas one young worker who worked quite a few extra shifts on a regular basis earned in excess of $90,000 that year.
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However, familial levels of income may also dramatically drop, as when the breadwinner is retrenched. This may pose a great problem as readjustment of consumption downwards may be traumatic for various reasons:

1. A great degree of the economic activity of families is based on credit. Credit is very often borrowed against future income. Indebtedness compels the household to maintain a high level of income.

2. Property ownership may involve financial commitments (e.g. rates on housing, high maintenance costs) which may be very hard to minimise, at least in the short run.

3. There may be other long term commitments, especially in the ongoing purchase of services, like private school/childcare and private medical insurance, which are based on a forecast of continued high levels of earnings. These, like credit, oblige householders to maintain a steady level of income.

4. Continued direct pressure towards consumption, especially to the extent that self realisation is based on purchases of goods and services.

5. Loss of prestige and self-worth—symbolic capital, that is—in a family faced with the need to cut consumption in a conspicuous way.

6. Loss of the relative power of the person who had direct access to the wages, which might force a shift in the dynamics of interaction in the family.

The level of consumption is sensitive to the developmental stage of the household, although this point may be overstressed. Pressure increases dramatically with the birth of children. Among my informants, the common reaction of a couple to the birth of children was for the mother to reduce her participation in the paid work force, and for the father to increase his. As children become adolescents their financial needs increase, and the pressure they bring to bear towards increased consumption is very great. When offspring move out and find a job, consumption may drop in the short run, although transfer of funds from parents to now-mature offspring may continue, and may actually intensify as the offspring start having their own children. This continued transfer of economic capital down the generations might be a source of continued power of the parents over their adult children. However, another consideration to keep in mind is that children normally establish their own family households close to the time at which their employed parents may be required to increase their saving rate in preparation for retirement (cf. Millward 1993).

The maximisation of consumption is ironic in two ways. One is the result of the competition among households. The more an individual household increases its income, the better it would be able to
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maintain and improve the social standing of its offspring in the next generation and the better it will be able to enjoy the cheaper cost of living which accrues to the more affluent. On the other hand, once all households do so, none of the households will accrue any benefits, and all will have to increase their earnings and expenditure only to retain the same position they had occupied before. The second irony is that each household experiences itself as dependent upon the labour market, even though in total, it is the labour market and the political economy which is dependent upon the product of working-class households, namely labour power and the absorption of production through consumption. As Graeme D. Snooks points out, “the household can exist without the market, but the market cannot exist without the household” (Snooks 1994, 125).

FROM THE TOTAL ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVE

The autonomous and serial status of nuclear-family households is a major source of the weakness of the working class in the political-economic order. The capitalist system depends on working-class households both for the provision of labour, and for the absorption of production. This is one of the fundamentals of Australian capitalism. The monopolisation by the working-class household of the reproduction of labour is itself a result of long historical processes.\(^{23}\) In colonial Australia, Labour was originally supplied through indentured labour (including convicts whose labour was sold by the government, and the Kanaka) and an immigration policy tied, among other things, to labour-market needs, although since the mass migration of the 1950s, the reproduction, maintenance and supply of labour was left largely to working-class households (Grimshaw et al. 1994, chapter 4; Snooks 1994; cf. Zaretsky 1982; Rapp 1992).

The household produces goods and services whose significance is easily overlooked because they are not normally included in national accounts. There is probably not a single activity which regularly takes place within households which could not be commodified and supplied through the market. Some goods and services, especially those which are labour intensive and are not given to

\(^{23}\) But not only the workers are reproduced by households. Capitalists also reproduce primarily through households. The integrity of private ownership and of capitalist estates down the generations is also predicated on family lines. The Murdoch and Packer family empires are clear examples of how the integrity of capitalist relations is maintained by family connections, as the owners, as well as the workers, are reproduced by family households. Inheritance is an integral element of the regime of kinship and family. People acquire their identity from their forebears. With it, along homologous lines, they acquire property. Ownership is passed down the generations primarily on the basis of kinship and family. This is how the integrity of class is maintained. If the death of a person meant the dissolution of his/her estate Australia’s political economy would be vastly different from what it is. Ipso facto, the non-ownership of the means of
mechanisation, like childcare, would be very expensive if left to the market to produce. By producing these goods and services outside the market, working-class households—whose main contribution to production is the maintenance and supply of labour power—end up subsidising the employers. They do so by reducing the cost of reproduction of labour which would have been much higher had the entire process of labour maintenance and supply been achieved through the market (c.f. Middleton 1974). The reason that household production of such services comes at a lower price than market production is that working-class households do not extract surplus value from their production of goods and services. The structural competition between workers on the labour market further drives working-class households towards the absorption of an increasing share of the costs of the maintenance and the reproduction of labour. This situation is glossed over in ‘sciences’ like economics by failing to define the production at home as work, and shrouding it in the feminised mystique of familism and selflessness—that is, as labour of love. A more positive spin can be put on the household subsidy of production when considering the households as consumers. Making the employers pay more for labour would increase the cost of consumer goods and services, and the increase would be born by the households. (Other factors will determine how far these benefits to the household as consumer make up for the cost to the working-class household as producer, although it is unlikely the benefits will ever make up for the entire cost, if only because the consuming households in society are a larger group than working-class households. This is so because the subsidy for production is extracted from working-class households alone, while its benefits are distributed across society to all households, making the working-class households’ share of the benefits less than their share of the cost.)

Thus, the working-class subsidy to industry plays a contradictory role in the dynamics of capitalism. By reproducing and maintaining labour it supports the production of goods and services. The more it subsidises the costs of labour reproduction and maintenance, the cheaper production becomes and the greater the output of Industry and the pressure towards the further commodification of everything. On the other hand, by providing such services outside the market, the household provides a check on the expansion of the market into such areas. In any event, the volume of goods and services produced by households is large.

production—a lack which essentially defines the working class—is equally inherited. The inheritability of social, cultural and material capital makes the field of kinship and family the arena where social structure is maintained through time. There are, of course, other contradictions which Marxist and other analyses have highlighted in the structure of capitalist production, such as the contradiction between the drive to lower wages to increase production, and the need to
In fact, the aggregate of households forms a critical sector in the total economy which consumes much labour, and produces a substantial output (Reiger 1991, 5–8, 56–57). In his analysis of the total economy, Snooks distinguishes between three sectors: the public and private sectors—which together make up the market economy—and the household sector which is outside the formal economy and tends to be ignored by economists. In the period 1860–1990, the Australian household sector has been slightly bigger in size than either the public or the private sectors: the household sector accounted for 35.8% of Australia’s gross community income (GCI: market + household income), the private sector for 32.4%, and the public sector for 31.8% (Snooks 1994, chapter 2). At different times different sectors led the growth of the Australian economy.

The different sectors function within the economy in different ways. The household sector largely determines the rate of expansion of the market. While in the past immigration played an overwhelming role in this expansion, ever since the end of the wave of immigration following WWII it was the local households which determined the rate of expansion through reproduction. On the other hand, economic growth is the preserve of the market sector where the economies of scale, and the legitimacy of extracting surplus value motivate and enable an increase in productive efficiency (Snooks 1994). During periods of rapid growth, the market sectors have shown a slight ascendancy in growth. The household sector has shown a significant ascendancy during periods of slow growth or stagnation (Snooks 1994, 30).

The household sector systematically affects the dynamics of the market sectors. In the short run, it has a dampening effect on trade cycles, which counterbalances the fluctuations of the market sector. But while the cyclical process played by the household sector is reactive, in the secular process the
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household sector falls in line with the market sector. Thus in periods of rapid growth, the household sector plays a positive, if secondary role. It grows as well, though not at the same rate as the market (Snooks 1994, 30-32). Intuitively, the countercyclical role of the household in periods of market downturns makes sense. Hard times like the Great Depression are times when people ‘make do’ and resort to mutual aid (ie household provision of services) and to improvisation. My informants who were old enough to remember those years, recounted stories of improvisation and cooperation, when households exchanged more goods and services outside the formal market.

But the significance of the interaction between the sectors of the economy goes beyond the dynamics of growth and expansion. The two market sectors and the household sector condition and structure one another. The shifts in technology of production and the gender segmentation of the labour market are cases in point. Snooks is persuasive in his demonstration that the increase in the participation rates of married women in the labour market following WWII was precipitated by technological change and structural shifts in industry (Snooks 1994). He is incorrect, though, in assuming that this proximate relationship exhausts the causal linkage between the changes in industry and the manufacturing process on the one hand, and the gender order on the other. The family wage system as it emerged in the first half of the century was the direct result of the gendered structure of the family household. Manufacturing industry had to rely primarily on a masculine workforce, which was rather expensive. The cost of labour was a major driving force for technological development. Capital was created to replace the masculine skilled and heavy labour. This already shows how the household structure influenced the very manufacturing process in Australia. Married women were a residual source of cheap labour. As conditions ripened, with the increase in consumer spending following WWII and the creation of many new unskilled, light-duty jobs, the demand for female labour grew, and women moved into the labour market, while households imported more technological processes. It was the particular division of labour which made women’s labour cheaper, especially the fact that women were predominantly secondary wage earners who supplemented their husbands’ income. The availability of cheaper female labour created the economic incentive for industry to develop its technology in the particular direction that it did, namely to replace skilled and heavy labour.

Specifically, the truism that service-industry work suits women more than men is based precisely on the division of labour within the household. It is those jobs which apparently most resemble what

by the market sector (the figures on the historical development of the different sectors can be found in Snooks 1994, chapter 2).
women ideally do in the household which become feminine. Women tend to gravitate towards caring professions like nursing, or jobs that have to do with children, like school teaching (Game & Pringle 1983, 91 ff.; Boreham & Hall 1993). Women were also more prone to interrupted involvement in the workforce, and generally preferred to participate on a part-time basis in the labour market because of their household responsibilities. Furthermore, being usually the second income earner, women's wages could be more easily pushed down, so that the feminisation of professions also entailed a deterioration of remuneration. So much so, in fact, that even with the added cost of relying on a larger pool of part-time, casual workers, employers still find it profitable to employ the cheaper labour, commonly women, in many such low skill jobs (Game & Pringle 1983, 91 ff.). This way, the 'casual-ness' of jobs becomes one major means of gender segmentation of the labour market. Married women mostly prefer part-time employment, and are willing to settle for lower wages. Hence feminisation and deterioration of working conditions become linked. The gender segregation of the market thus continues, based on the division of labour within the household, with women being overrepresented in causal and part-time employment. In other words, the gender structure of the household motivated the kinds of technological changes that occurred in manufacturing, which in turn brought about the increase in participation of married women in the labour market.

CONCLUSION

Anthropologists used to take it for granted that 'primitive' societies are organised by kinship, and that this distinguishes them from modern society which is organised by other principles, most notably the rationalist regime of the market and bureaucracy. While it is currently accepted that this view misconstrues 'primitive' societies, the argument above suggests that this juxtaposition of the primitive to the modern also misconstrues modern societies. In fact, through the structure of the household, the field of kinship and family emerges as a crucial foundation of social structure at large. In this chapter I outlined a few ways kinship and family operate as such a foundation. In the first section I outlined some of the cross-field dynamics of social action. I then focussed on one aspect of the complicity of kinship and family in producing the gender/class order in Australian society. In the end I confronted the very structures of the Market—allegedly the privileged site of rational action—to highlight the critical structuring role of the field of kinship practice.
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This chapter completes the cycle that was begun in chapter two. Chapter two began the focus of this thesis on family and household by highlighting how the field of kinship practice was embedded within large social structures (e.g. the political economy), and how these structures have affected the evolution of the field. This chapter brings us full circle to consider how the field of kinship practice affects other fields of practice, and those broad social structures. In between the two chapters, kinship practice was analysed. The next chapter brings together the disparate theoretical elaborations that were made during the thesis, and attempts a systematic presentation of the theory of practice which underlies the analysis.
Chapter Eight

Towards Theorising Kinship Practice

In the analysis so far I have relied on Bourdieu’s formulation of his theory of practice, and have otherwise tentatively developed some relevant concepts. This chapter brings these disparate discussions together, and systematically develops the theory of practice which underpins the foregoing analysis. In the course of this theoretical elaboration I will clarify a few specific patterns of practice, and some typical dynamics of play in the field of kinship and family. This chapter seeks to theorise agency which is neither entirely free from social structures, nor reducible to a mere enactment of these very structures.

Following Bourdieu (e.g. Bourdieu 1990c; Bourdieu 1977),¹ I rely on a metaphoric application of economic concepts to practice in order to theorise motivation. This approach constitutes practice as if it were economic, that is, as if it were geared towards the satisfaction of some interests, a process during which agents accumulate and use capital—a kind of energy that can be put to use in the course of social practice. Once practice is thus constituted, one can proceed to analyse empirically...

¹ At times it seems like there are as many readings of Bourdieu as there are readers. Here, as elsewhere in this work, when I cite Bourdieu it should be read as shorthand for “Bourdieu as I read him”. I will point out throughout this chapter the aspects of theory which clearly deviate from Bourdieu’s formulations.
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what specific interests are pursued by practice, and what the implications of particular practices are on the capacity of social agents to engage in further social practice.²

The successful application of this economics of practice cannot, however, be taken to demonstrate that human practice obeys economic logic. The heuristic economics of practice is imposed by the analyst, and therefore the fact that human practice appears to conform to this logic is trivial. But because no prior assumptions are made about the actual motivation of agents, this approach should enable a search for that which motivates agents in different practices. This stands in contrast with substantivist economistic approaches which assume that practice is geared towards the maximisation of personal utility, and that what constitutes utility is constant across society (see below).³

Part I of this chapter explores the concepts of habitus and posture. These are the lynchpins of the heuristic theory of practice I am proposing here in that they are the means by which the agent itself is conceptualised. Part II discusses interests and motivation. These are conceptualised in the heuristic approach differently from the way they are conceptualised in substantivist approaches. I demonstrate the difference. In the course of the analysis I touch upon the question of why people have children. After discussing the question of motivation I move in the final section of the chapter to a discussion of capital, and how it is accumulated and lost over time. In the course of this discussion I raise some issues of power in society, and dwell on the infantile paradox of power, in order to exemplify the difference between the heuristic deployment of the concept of capital, and substantivist approaches.

² Bourdieu's use of economic concepts serves so as to highlight the way in which his theory differs from economistic ones. However, it is also responsible for much misreading of his own theory. While the dominant position of economics as a theory of practice in modern societies might justify the appropriation of economic concepts, this choice is ultimately arbitrary. The anthropological literature is replete with instances of foreign cosmologies which incorporate theories of practice that differ from rationalist economistic ones. These might include various participants like spirits, magic and witchcraft; individuals might not be the atom of social structures; and social agents might be driven by motivations quite inconceivable to economistic theorists. In principle, any substantivist theory of practice, and not just an economistic one, can be reconstituted metaphorically as a heuristic framework to account for practice.

³ In fact, it is through the use of a heuristic economics of practice that it is possible to delineate the scope of practice in which social agents obey rational calculations of utility maximisation. The question of which contexts lend themselves to the rational action of social agents (assuming for the moment that rationality can be established objectively) can be approached empirically once the stakes involved in different practices are identified. This way, the heuristic economics of practice seeks to supersede and incorporate the various substantivist ones.
PART I: HABITUS AND POSTURE

THE WORK OF HABITUS

Bourdieu’s concept of habitus\(^4\) seeks to undermine the false dichotomy between free will and social structure, thereby sidestepping the artificial problem of agency. The term habitus does not refer to an actual psychological mechanism, or a concrete neurological function. Rather, habitus is a heuristic device. Without getting into the actual physiological and psychological mechanisms that operate, habitus describes the product of such mechanisms. Habitus, then, is a descriptive/analytic model.

Significantly, habitus is not conterminous with individual physical agents. Internalised structures are passed down the generations and spread across societies in innumerable ways many of which have formed the mainstay of studies of socialisation (e.g. Bourdieu & Passeron 1990). Habitus thus forms a parallel line of historical evolution to the “objective”, or extrinsic social structures (Bourdieu 1981).

A critical aspect of habitus is that habitus evaluates. The behaviour it conditions is not produced by some pre-programmed algorithms. Rather, the most powerful aspect of habitus is that it incorporates standards of judgement, aesthetics, and modes of assessment. It is through these functions that habitus constructs for the agent the very social situation, complete with the range of alternative modes of action which are embedded in that situation. Thereby, even the most calculated and reasoned of action has at its very core the unreasoned, arbitrary-cum-natural, structures of habitus.

These standards of judgement and other aspects of the organisation of habitus are continuously internalised.\(^5\) Through their own experience and the experience of others social agents experience

\(^4\) Habitus is discussed in various places. A good discussion with a very useful diagram is in *Distinction* (Bourdieu 1984). The diagram is “Figure 8: Conditions of existence, habitus and lifestyle” which is in chapter 3 “The Habitus and the Space of Life-Styles” (Bourdieu 1984, 171). Generally, another good reference for Bourdieu’s concepts is in his interview with Loïc Wacquant, (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, Part II, especially 115 ff.).

\(^5\) In Bourdieu’s formulations the structures that are internalised early in life carry more weight than subsequent internalisation. While this may well be so, it would be wrong to assume that the process ends anytime before the embodied social agent him/herself expires.
various orders of things. This can be from very basic principles like up vs. down, to more complex principles of order which are embedded in the way things are such as the gestalt of the realised category of the family. These structures are internalised by agents as they learn to behave and act upon the world. These internalised structures are used by agents to perceive the world, assess it, and act upon it (cf. Johnson 1987).6 This structuring process may or may not be conscious. The transfer of such structures from one context of practice to another is what forms the economy of the logic of practice. Cognitive economy, whereby familiar and well-structured cognitive domains are extended metaphorically to structure less familiar domains, is one instance of the economy of the logic of practice. Significantly, though, the economy of the logic of practice extends to emotive aspects, as emotions which originate in one domain of practice are transposed to other domains. In the previous chapters I highlighted the cognitive economy of habitus by showing the metaphorical and metonymic extensions from some contexts (normally concrete and immediate) to other contexts of practice (normally abstract).7

Habitus is thus the generative principle by which social structure is incorporated into a set of dispositions, modes of perception, action, understandings, and more generally, modes of being in the world. An integral part of the work of habitus is to incorporate interests—in the broadest sense of the word—interests which are extrinsic (objective) in that they stem from the structural position of the social agent, but are also intrinsic (subjective), in that they are incorporated into the body of the social agent in the form of dispositions. These interests are expressed subjectively as interest in—, as tastes, preferences, aesthetics, likes and dislikes and so forth.

But it is not only the spontaneity of unusual situations which the concept of habitus helps clarify. Without some notion of habitus, it would be hard to explain how individuals who are not brought up together can still marry and spontaneously recreate marital relationships which in fundamental ways replicate other homologous relationships within their social space. My informants did not recall explicitly negotiating most of the aspects of their married life. The same holds for respondents in other Australian studies (e.g. Richards 1985, 82–85). Such constant spontaneous recreation and coordination of relationships is only miraculous if we ignore the workings of habitus, which in the

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6 I am not arguing for an a priori non-biological cultural constructionism. Quite obviously, the internalisation of structures is predicated upon the physiological makeup of social agents. The potentialities that this makeup provides, the constraints it imposes, and the role of physiological differences in effecting differences in habitus, are all important questions that will not be discussed here.

7 This use of cognitive science to approach the internal structures of habitus is one of the major additions I am making to Bourdieu’s own analysis of habitus. Bourdieu, himself, tends to rely on traditional formal structuralist analysis, which is
case of newlyweds, for example, predisposes them to act and react in certain ways which are predictable and comprehensible to each other’s habitus without having explicitly negotiated them in any way. By the same token, it is the similarity in their internalised dispositions which contributes to the attraction between agents of similar social locations (Bourdieu 1990a, 71).

In general, people who live under similar conditions tend to undergo similar experiences, and internalise similar structures. This means that their habituses would be more similar to one another than to the habitus of agents who emerge from different social contexts. Therefore, Bourdieu can talk about class habitus—the aspects of habitus which distinguish a class of agents who inhabit a similar position in social space. (I am using class here in a broad sense to mean any category of agents, and not only categories which derive from relations of production.)

POSTURES

I have added the metaphor of posture to Bourdieu’s concept of habitus in order to capture some of the dynamic aspects of habitus, and to include the somatic, as well as the social, structures of agency. Posture includes the persona a person adopts, as well as the range of emotional states it implies, and the somatic states it entails. Postures are thus positions which involve a set of principles which social agents can creatively apply to fluid and unpredictable social situations. Specifically I seek to allow for the integration of the affective dimension of agency into the analysis. This dimension includes emotions, feelings and moods, all of which are ever-present embodied experiences. Their physiology, though critical for their ultimate understanding, is outside the scope of this investigation.

The concept of posture also highlights the fact that different dispositions may be linked to one another. A single posture can incorporate a variety of dispositions. For example, liking to chat, liking to cook, liking babies, not being interested terribly much in Rugby League, not being good at fixing machines, and not throwing balls efficiently were closely linked in various feminine postures. Postures, in other words, are integrated complexes of particular dispositions.

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based on interchangeable sets of binary oppositions. (For a recent example see his “Schéma synoptique des oppositions pertinentes” in Bourdieu 1998, 17).
I am using the term postures in a broad sense. Postures imply a particular position a person adopts at a particular moment. It includes abstract as well as embodied aspects, expressions, physical conduct, emotional states, moods and so forth. Bodily hexis is very much part of the total posture. My use of postures is thus broader than Bourdieu's deployment of the concept of bodily hexis (Bourdieu 1977). Moreover, I conceive of social agents as oscillating between any number of postures. Thus I would treat the bodily hexis that Bourdieu famously associates with the man of honour among the Kabyle (Bourdieu 1977, 92–95, 161–162) not as the way the man of honour walks, so much as the way a man walks when he is being a man of honour. Individuals may resort to many different postures in the course of social interaction. In fact, postures are fluid and at times ambiguous, enabling participants to avoid a definitive definition of their social interaction or to creatively reinterpret particular moments of social interaction and impose a particular view on a situation through the kind of posture they adopt.8

The distribution of postures across society is non-random. The quality of the postures adopted by different classes of habitus, and the frequency with which they are adopted, vary systemically. (Thus, not every Kabyle male could successfully adopt the posture of a man of honour, nor could any female adopt such a posture.) In other words, postures should be interpreted within the context in which they emerge. The fact that agents may adopt different postures opens up a whole area for quotidian political play, namely the interpretation of the reality of social interaction.9 I will now move to exemplify how this conceptualisation may be used to analyse concrete practice, and its consequent significance for the interpretation of structure and practice.

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8 In a sense, my use of posture here strives to integrate some of the analytical power of Marilyn Strathern’s construction of the social whole as composed of relationships, rather than individuals (Strathern 1988; cf. Gell 1995), while still adhering to a realist approach rather than Strathern’s idealist perspective. The focus on the embedded person rather than the abstracted person is not altogether new (e.g. Sartre 1976–1991; Laing 1962).

9 There is an obvious affinity here between my approach and that of micro-sociology, specifically ethnomethodology and symbolic interactionism (For recent reviews see Fine 1993; Maynard & Clayman 1991; Atkinson 1988), which study the way people construct and make sense of interactions, and the way people give meaning to themselves and their social interaction. While it is important to my approach that interaction is fluid, that agents construct meaning, and that their selves are immersed in that interaction, all these aspects of the social world are not my main focus here. Rather than cataloguing the means which generalised social agents use to negotiate the meaning of interactions, I am interested in the specificity of social agents as expressed, among others, in their interactions. I am not interested in generalised social agents, but rather in socially specific agents whose location prior to interaction conditions their interaction, and whose location following the interaction may be affected by that interaction. Moreover, both symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodology seem to make a priori assumptions about motivation in order to focus on the interaction, whereas motivation holds a much more central interest to me here. Of course, all this is a rather broad generalisation, and it is quite possible to arrive at a very similar theoretical project to mine from a micro-sociological direction, especially symbolic interactionism, broadly defined to include, among others, Goffman’s various perspectives.
STRUGGLE OVER VISIONS OF SOCIAL DIVISION

What makes a social context at a given moment is very complex. Never are relationships between family members reducible to their relative kinship positions, ages and genders. Every relationship between any number of individuals at any given time is open to a number of interpretations and reformulations as to who is doing what with/to whom and why. These visions of social division underlie practice by defining its context. True to their nature as part of practical logic, these visions need not be coherent in a way which would satisfy formal logicians. Social agents might, in fact, hold conflicting visions of social divisions which are formulated in different contexts. Further, any interpretation as to any particular event need not be fixed, and may be creatively reinterpreted during, as well as after, the event with every recounting of the particular event, or with every attempt to expunge it from living memory.

Thus, the structures of the relationship between the spouses and the postures they entail vary as a matter of course. Gender relations tend to be constructed in hierarchical, in complementary or in serial modes, a distinction which is often blurred and lends itself to political manipulation as part of the struggle to impose a particular vision of social division. Often the different structural positions—embodied, as they are, in postures—that a particular husband and wife adopt towards one another in different contexts may be somewhat contradictory. When conceived of as partners the metaphor implies seriality and interchangeability. On the other hand, when conceived of as father and mother the metaphor implies an element of complementarity, and possibly of hierarchy too. Which notion prevails at a given time, and which is relegated to the background is one of the stakes of the symbolic struggles between husbands and wives.

Jack and Esther are a case in point. They were one of the couples discussed in chapter six, where she was the main breadwinner, and he the main day-time caregiver. They explained the rationale for their division of labour in economic terms. She had a better paying job with greater job security (she was employed in the public service) and better working conditions. It therefore made sense that she should be the main breadwinner. Here, in relating to each other, the two adopted postures which imply seriality. On the other hand, when it came to decisions regarding their newborn baby, such as when it should go to sleep, when it should see a physician, disciplinary policy and so forth, it was she who was the main decision maker. She was, after all, the mother. In the context of parenting she adopted a certain maternal posture which relegated her partner to an auxiliary paternal posture which involved secondary, or mediated involvement with the child. In this context the
relationship between the spouses was complementary. Relegated to two different contexts of their relationship, one as spouses, the other as co-parents, no contradiction was ever felt between the two visions of social division.

Different social agents may hold different visions of their relationship with one another, depending on the context, and might struggle in specific contexts to impose particular visions of social division which are commensurate with the particular posture they adopt. In chapter six I recounted the story of the woman who “trained” her partner to change nappies. She insisted that he should do his fair share, and resisted the urge to step in and take over in the early weeks when he was performing these tasks particularly clumsily. Within this drama of suburban conflict, we can see how different postures came into play. The father adopted a paternal posture which included a complementary vision of the division of labour; the mother adopted a serial approach, and ultimately had her way.

The temptation that women felt to take over performing the tasks is part of a posture of maternal expertise which women often adopt. They are assuming the position of the sole competent operator in that domain, while condemning their partner to the status of the incompetent, dependent element.\(^\text{10}\) Some men use similar strategies to enhance the symbolic capital they gain from performing mechanical tasks at home. This posture has the effect of denying others authority over specific skills, and the opportunity to rehearse them.\(^\text{11}\)

Just as some postures incorporate expertise, they at one and the same time incorporate incapacities. Men often perform various domestic tasks in a gauche manner. This is not normally a conscious strategy. It is often a genuine physico-practical awkwardness which is incorporated into their socio-somatic postures. Men who can handle spanners with great agility lose much of their agility when it is babies they need to handle in order to change their nappies. Some who wash cars very efficiently and effectively lose their prowess in the face of a sink full of dishes. Among my informants, at

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\(^{10}\) In a similar vein, Fürst suggested that daily home cooking is very much an integral aspect of Norwegian women’s identity, and reflects “a rationality of the gift” which stands in contrast to “a rationality of the commodity” (Fürst 1997). Although couched in different terms to the ones I use here, her notion of the two rationalities covers much the same theoretical grounds as some of the concepts I am deploying here.

\(^{11}\) This strategy of making a virtue out of necessity, rejecting what is not allowed anyhow, and making the most of one’s destiny, can have an insidious effect. In social contexts where social capital is greatly devalued, and economic capital is increasing in value, women’s concentration on social capital at the expense of their pursuit of economic capital may amplify the process of their social marginalisation. Maximisation of benefits from their undervalued form of capital inhibits women’s pursuit of the overvalued types of capital. In other words, women may be individually pursuing strategies of maximising their capital by emphasising their dominance in the domestic sphere, thereby contributing in the long run to their very own marginalisation. (The situation is similar in contexts in which working-class men maximise the value of their embodied skills and despise those of the bourgeois, cf. Willis 1977.)
least, this phenomenon was not confined to men. Women of great baby-handling skills felt compelled to leave some of the most minor mechanical tasks to their husbands, and tended to exhibit a similar reluctance to ‘multi-skill’. This was not confined to manual skills. Women were often reluctant to worry themselves too much with issues such as the cost and value of investment houses, tax liabilities and so forth. (This phenomenon is considered in greater depth in chapter six, when discussing comportment and bodily hexis following Young’s work.)

Occasionally skill coordination and division breaks down due to the dissolution of the conjugal union. Often, when coming to terms with the new situation, social agents have no choice but to incorporate new skills. One woman recounted to me with a fair degree of pride how, following her divorce, she eventually discovered that she could use, clean and fix a lawn-mower. A retired man discovered after he was widowed that he could, in fact, cook, clean and do the shopping himself. (Remarkably, in both cases these discoveries were experienced by my informants as liberating.)

It would be wrong to assume that everybody can adopt any posture at any given time. There are definite limits on the scope of postures that can be adopted by particular social agents. Thus in contexts where a clear hierarchical mode was invoked to organise relationships between spouses, it was typically with the man as dominant and woman as subordinate, and not the other way round. This would happen when the man would have the final say in a domain which is feminine. (When women assumed a dominant position it was normally in feminine spheres, and was juxtaposed to spheres of masculine domination. Domination within a gendered sphere was part of a complementary mode in which there are masculine domains and feminine domains. By contrast, the hierarchical mode I am discussing here places one spouse—usually the male—in a dominant position across both masculine and feminine domains). A typical example is one couple in which the task of disciplining the children on a regular basis fell to the woman. Nevertheless, her husband was unquestionably the ultimate source of authority. Thus she described the situation as follows. “I set the discipline, my husband just steps in, ‘takes the hard line’, and then takes the back seat again.” She was the one who did most of the mundane work of disciplining, “but when he steps in he overrides ... At least to the best of his knowledge. Sometimes I go and tell [either of their sons] don’t worry about that. We will sort it out later.” This way, even when subverting his immediate intentions, the fact that she would resort to a conspiracy with the sons reinforced the father’s dominant position. (Another by-product of her strategy was a continuous tension between father and children, with her as the necessary intermediary.) By contrast, I did not come across any situation in which the woman enjoyed a similar, blatant position of dominance across both feminine
and masculine domains. This reflects some of the differences between masculine and feminine habituses in the postures they are likely to adopt at given circumstances. (The structures of masculine domination were analysed in greater detail in chapter six.)

Another example of the limit of postures which agents may adopt is the incompatibility of the parent–child postures with the posture of an equal adult. This is behind the difficulty which gives rise to the granny flat. Various reasons might lead to a situation in which parents and their adult, married children share a house. This might arise because the parents wish to transfer some of the property to their children who might not be able to afford their own home, or because the parents need intensive care and attention from their children. My suspicion is that at times when young adults were justifying such arrangements in terms of looking after their aging parents, it was also a way for them to save some of their economic capital by either moving to their parents’ home, or else by selling their parents’ home or letting it out and having the parents move in with them. This area of ambiguity lends itself to creative impositions of alternative visions of social divisions and different constructions of the motivations involved. In fact, all alternatives might be equally true at this serendipitous convergence of familial obligations and financial advantage.

Significantly, among my informants simple house sharing between parents and adult, married children did not occur. The series of parent–child postures which my informants adopt still excludes the relationship which could incorporate the parents into the household of their married children. Adults said they were reluctant to share their homes on a permanent basis with their parents because the latter impede their freedom, would not let them run their own affairs the way they themselves saw fit, and various other complaints which suggested that aspects of their adult independence would inevitably be compromised by the mere continuous presence of their parents. When not sharing a household these contradictions between the parent–child relationship and that between independent adults can be glossed over quite easily, but this ease dissipates in the face of having to share a single backstage.

The granny flat is thus a solution to the problem of the incompatibility of egalitarian relationships between adults, and hierarchical cross-generational relationships. It enables families to reap the financial and symbolic benefits of shared living while retaining the independence of the adult children’s nuclear family from those adult children’s parents. It becomes a necessity because of the limit on postural flexibility. Parents/parents-in-law and children/children-in-law cannot easily adopt an egalitarian practical vision of the relationships between them.
THE BASIC UNIT OF AGENCY

One concern which might be raised regarding the progression of the argument so far is that of the location of agency—who is the agent? If the social agent is construed as if it were inhabited by postures, and if these different postures imply different dispositions and different modalities of practice, the question arises as to where the site of agency is: in the agent as a whole, or in each individual posture? Furthermore, when groups of agents operate in a purposeful and coordinated fashion as a corporate unit, should agency be construed as residing in the collective, or in each and every individual member?

The immediate answer should be that agency can be construed as residing in all levels: collective, individual agent, and postures. Where one chooses to locate it in any analysis should be resolved on the grounds of analytic and heuristic convenience. But there is merit in trying to conceptualise agency in a bit more uniform way so that the analysis of practice in different contexts could be discussed in comparable terms.

The problem can be sidestepped analytically by arguing, in relation to the pursuit of collective interests for example, that in some situations agents adhere to their own interests when they share in the pursuit of collective interests. Regular contexts in which agents act as groups are by virtue of the heuristic approach contexts in which it is in the agent’s interest, as internalised by habitus, to act as a group.

Therefore, the fact that the analysis in this thesis ultimately revolves around individual social agents does not mean that agents always operate as individual agents. Collections of agents, families being one typical example, operate at times as a corporate body in pursuit of group interests. The process of negotiating the unit of agency is itself part and parcel of the politics of daily life, in which different postures may be adopted. For example, in one social outing I attended one father tried unsuccessfully to stop his children from fighting. He appealed to his quarrelling offspring to stop and to act like brothers. He was thereby trying to impose a certain vision of social division which implies a commonality of interest and unity of agency within the nuclear family, and the suppression of interpersonal conflict within it. The cooperative, collaborative postures the man had
invited his children to adopt did not meet with any enthusiasm on their part. At that moment his view of the situation was not shared by the offspring.

Similarly, agential units which are smaller than the individual agent may also be reworked analytically to the level of individual social agents. By units smaller than individual agents I mean particular postures which agents adopt, as opposed to the individual person as an enduring, integrated and transcendent whole. The agency of postures can be linked to that of the individual agent as a whole by the time reference of interest and practice. Short-term considerations of practice normally reflect the interests of postures or agential units smaller than the enduring embodied agent. Long-term considerations of practice reflect the interests of an individual agent as a whole. This can take several forms. Commonly, when agents feel compelled to exercise restraint they feel the conflict between temporary interests associated with their posture at the time, and their general interests as persons. In any event, the pursuit of momentary interests on behalf of particular postures at the expense of the person as a whole can also be analytically brought back to the level of individual social agents. It becomes a question of in what contexts agents are disposed to pursue short-term interests, and in what contexts agents are disposed to take a long-term perspective. Or rather, this can be reconstituted as a question of what determines the time-span of interests which habitus pursues.

The convenience of the individual social agent as the analytical unit of agency derives precisely from the dominant indigenous construct of personhood and self among my informants. It is the most common emic unit of agency in Northern and Western European metropolitan and settler societies, and in current academic social theory. Ultimately, it is the level at which most such social agents rationalise most of their practice.\(^\text{12}\) It should therefore be reiterated that while most of my analysis of agency has been at the level of individual agents, I am not implying that practice is directly geared towards the fulfilment of the interests of individuals. The substantive empirical question of which unit it is whose interests agents pursue in concrete situations cannot be answered a priori.

\(^{12}\) Strictly put, the secular version of the individual is not the longest-term level of agency. A longer term version might take into account an individual’s afterlife, or future reincarnations. However, among my informants neither extensions to physical life span seemed to be a significant part of the emic agential unit. For simplicity’s sake, then, I will not consider these extensions here.
Towards Theorising Kinship Practice

The questions of the structure of agency (i.e. habitus and posture), and the unit of agency are only the starting point of a theory of practice. The motivations which drive the practice of that unit of agency, and inform the decisions it makes, are tackled next.

PART II: MOTIVATION AND INTEREST

Rational choice theory (rational action theory) in particular, and other substantivist approaches to motivation in general (including sociobiology), assume that agents have interests which are independent of their social position or the field of practice in which they are engaged, and that these interests precede and motivate practice. They further assume that these interests are material, quantifiable, and objectively observable.

Here I depart from such assumptions. My analysis seeks to deduce the causes of practice from regular, predictable effects of practice. My rationale is that the predictable effects of practice feed into the judgements that habitus forms. This may be through the power of conscious observation on the part of social agents or through other means, such as a sense of pride or shame, which may reflect an implicit accumulation or loss of symbolic capital. My rationale relies on the effects of practice being sufficiently regular, which requires a certain measure of stability in social structure. Occasionally conditions might change so that the regular effects of practices change. This is when habitus misfires as Bourdieu has demonstrated in relation to the deracinated Algerian peasants who found themselves in the midst of a rapidly transforming urban environment (Bourdieu 2000; Bourdieu 1979; Bourdieu & Sayad 1964; Darbel & Bourdieu 1963; Bourdieu 1962).

In order to demonstrate the difference between substantivist approaches to interest and motivation, and the heuristic approach I am following here, I will discuss the question of why people have children.

THE QUESTION OF INTEREST, OR WHY HAVE A FAMILY?

When I asked my informants why they had children, their reactions, though kind and sympathetic, indicated to me that this was indeed a “stupid question”.

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Rational choice theory postulates that preexisting, objective interests effect strategies aimed at pursuing those interests. First comes the interest, then comes its implementation (Hechter & Kanazawa 1997). All too often, though, social agents do not relate to their interests in a straightforward way as rational choice theorists might suggest. While it is true that sometimes agents are aware of their interests as interests and proceed to rationally attain them, often the process unfolds in different ways. In many and varied contexts, in fact, the process seems reversed. That is, people do things and learn of their interests only through their action. This is what, to some extent, happens with parenting.

Having children involves a great deal of sacrifice. Children constitute an immensely expensive and demanding commitment, that involves a great transformation of the lifestyle of those individuals and couples who have them. The added economic burden that children impose reduces the family’s

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13 Michael Hechter and Satoshi Kanazawa, in their defence of rational choice theory, tread a fine line between reconstituting rational choice theory at times as a purely heuristic exercise, and at times as a coherent macro theory which through complications is forced to reduce the complexity of human decision-making into more coherent structures often based on “subjective-expected utility theory” (Hechter & Kanazawa 1997, 194). While shifting in ways which make it hard to pin them down, there are a few elements of rational choice theory as they present it which should be criticised. The first one is that those rational choice theorists who try to understand practice (proponents of “thick” rational choice theory) analyse agents as decision makers who weigh alternatives (Hechter & Kanazawa 1997, 208–209). This downplays the extent to which practice does not result from decisions of decision makers. It also overlooks the extent to which the capacity to perceive a situation and the alternatives which are entailed within it is neither objective and trivial, nor universally distributed across society, and itself depends on the habitus of agents. Moreover, rational choice theorists have some theoretical safety valves to counteract problems and contradictions so that ultimately their approach becomes a litany of ‘just so’ stories. They initially assume that all human subjects are identical in their calculations. Where systematic differences appear between different categories of agents, those are said to result from “values” or from “structural constraints”. Values and preferences are usually assumed rather than empirically established (Hechter & Kanazawa 1997, 208), so that any deviation from ‘objective’ rationality can be attributed to this external factor in order to sustain the ‘objective’ rationality of rational action. Structural constraints are used as background to justify the rationality of action and further safeguard the assumption of rationality from empirical contradictions. Furthermore, rational choice theorists habitually break a social context into its constitutive parts, and explain each part by reference to the others which are taken for granted as background. For example, Japanese parents are said to invest more in boys’ education than in girls’ because they can rely more on boys than girls, as girls would be incorporated into other families. Similarly Japanese employers do not like to hire women because they would leave the job for marriage at age 25 (studies reviewed and discussed in Hechter & Kanazawa 1997). But the rationality of these choices is merely a product of what is taken for granted, and what is examined for its rationality. Japanese girls can be said to join other families because there was less investment in them and they are not financially independent, and they might get married early because they do not have jobs. Any practice can be construed as rational if its result is taken as its cause. I do not think all this gets us terribly far in understanding either rationality or practice, or motivation (cf. Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, 124 ff.). It definitely does not explain how it is that Japanese women come to be marginalised in the workforce and attached to domesticity. This is a particular instance of a general difficulty of adaptationist thinking which Stephen J. Gould and Richard C. Lewontin have dubbed the Panglossian paradigm (Gould & Lewontin 1979). (Moreover, rationality is always a slippery concept to work out, for various reasons, not least of which are issues concerning the time span of consideration, and the units under consideration. Game theory has generated a goodly number of paradoxes like the prisoner’s dilemma, where the ‘correct’ solution depends on how many rounds the games are played and whether participants can communicate and can enforce a collective perspective on one another or not.) At any rate, rational choice theory analyses motivation by deducing it from aggregate patterns of practice, based on a set of procedures such as I described above. These general objections apply to the various explanations some rational choice theorists put forth for the question of having children (they are reviewed in Hechter & Kanazawa 1997, 197). I will therefore not spend additional space on these accounts. By contrast, the heuristic approach I am following seeks to derive motivation and the logic of practice by reference to the concrete practice of concrete practitioners.
economic independence, and the capacity of parents to engage in further accumulation of capital: additional training in order to increase their cultural capital, for instance. Also, through the great demands in time, and the shorter sleep cycle of infants, they greatly restrict the opportunity of their parents to socialise as freely as they once might have, thereby reducing their parents’ opportunities to increase and maintain their social capital.

So why do people have children?  

One of the statements that was repeated by parents time and time again was that one could not appreciate how much joy can be gained from having children before one actually had them. This rationale was repeated several times to me, in different contexts, and merits a closer look. People could tell stories either about themselves, or about friends who had their first child, and were a bit apprehensive, but found the experience extremely edifying beyond any expectation. In my fieldnotes I very quickly explained away such statements as expressions of a cognitive dissonance in action: people decided to have children, the baby proved a greater hassle than they bargained for, and in order to protect their self image they rationalised, post-fact, the choices they had made. 

This explanation proved deficient in some ways, most significantly in the fact that very often the first child is not the pre-planned result of an explicit choice. Disparate statements by informants regarding the fortuitous-cum-fortunate nature of their first child started accumulating. In one of my focus groups an admission by one man that his first child was an accident—a contraception failure—was reiterated by three other participants. The other two remained silent on the issue. (Among Richards’ interviewees, too, first pregnancies were not often pre-meditated. See responses in Richards 1985, chapters 5–6.)

It is important to bear in mind that much cognitive-dissonance theory explains distortions of reality as an attempt by social subjects to defend their own self image. For instance, a social subject takes initially some form of conscious action which later proves to be inadequate. This would threaten

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14 The reality I discuss here is in no way unique to my informants. An identical ethnographic picture, for example, emerges from Richards’ interviews with 120 Australian-born young married couples in Melbourne in 1976 (Richards 1985, especially chapters 5–6).

15 Cognitive dissonance theory was originally formulated by Leon Festinger (Festinger 1957). Following much research over the conditions under which subjects might act to reduce the dissonance, cognitive dissonance theory was linked to situations in which the self concept was potentially under threat (Aronson 1969; Nel et al. 1969). Another line of research focuses on the elimination of aversive consequences as the motivating element for dissonance reduction. There are various reviews of the changing fortunes of cognitive dissonance theory in social psychology (e.g. Aronson 1997; Markus & Zajonce 1985), and a recent collection of papers delineating the state of the theory today (Harmon-Jones & Mills 1999).
the self image of that social subject. In order to protect his/her ego, the social subject distorts reality and avoids the recognition of the inadequacy of his/her original action. But even those informants who acknowledged that their first offspring were unplanned expressed a similar attitude towards that bliss of having children which could not be communicated to those who have not gone through a similar experience. This detracts from the cognitive-dissonance hypothesis of parental bliss, whereby the positive attitude of parents towards children is taken as the result of a mechanism to defend one’s ego from the realisation of the silliness of one’s action. This is so because once the parents acknowledge that their child was unplanned and not the result of a deliberate choice, the consequences of having the child do not reflect on the parents’ egos. Further, in many cases the failure was deemed to be that of the contraceptive device, thereby minimising the threat to my informants’ egos. In all such cases there need not occur a cognitive dissonance which requires resolution by rationalisation and self deception.

The cognitive-dissonance hypothesis might be somewhat resurrected by the suggestion that the parents might have terminated the pregnancy, but did not, or that the fact of failing to prevent the pregnancy in the first instance was the act which threatened the self image of my informants. The problem with this rationale, though, is that to many of my informants, termination would not be an option because of factors external to ego such as moral injunctions. Men had an additional external factor in their way, namely their limited say in the question of abortion due to the sovereignty of the woman over her own body. Moreover, in most of the instances of unplanned pregnancy it was women who were in control of the contraception, which means there is no threat to the male self image by admission of failure. In other words, even persons whose ego would not be threatened by the conception and the continuation of the pregnancy experienced the appearance of their children in a positive way. Thus, in a focus group a father whose first child was conceived when his wife was using an IUD, and who was later widowed, confessed to the hardship of single paternity but still professed his love for his children and insisted he had absolutely no regrets, and that his children were the best thing that ever happened to him. Finally, to varying degrees social agents, especially women, who have not yet had children looked forward to parenthood as a positive aspect of future life. (Cognitive dissonance theory would predict that people who have not yet reproduced would not experience the dissonance, and would therefore have a realistic assessment of parenthood.)

It is for these reasons that I do not think one can interpret as cognitive dissonance the fact that so many parents find parenthood a greater bliss than they had imagined, or that they can communicate
to non-parents. Rather, what is happening here is that faced with the travails of parenthood, from financial expenditure to sleep deprivation, agents make a virtue out of necessity, and commit themselves morally and emotionally to parenthood. Like the worker who finds satisfaction in particular tasks which are productive, parents find satisfaction in their parenthood. For parents to experience parenthood as positive is "natural", that is, doxic. People who are not yet parents have a pretty good idea that parenthood is a great challenge, but that it is a part of life, and has its own rewards. Parents know that parenthood is what they want because they invest of themselves in these tasks. Investment as such is, of course, no guarantee of positive experience. But in the case of parenthood, the ideology of parenthood is there to assist the parents in the interpretation of their actions and their experience, and to shape their experience. It is precisely because the physical investment and the long sleepless nights are necessary to convey to the parent just how important children are to them, that people cannot communicate to the uninitiated the joys of parenthood.

In this case the posture agents adopt reflects the agreement of internalised structures and the external social structure. Parents tend to experience their parenthood in a stereotyped way. In the case of women, for example, mothers love their children. This is part of the objective world (as expressed, among others, in the taken-for-granted expectations of fellow social agents), and every woman who has a child is constantly made aware of it by the congratulations of people around her and by the whole conduct of the whole universe in which she is situated, in which she is constantly reminded and reassured that of course mothers love their children and that children are a loveable thing, especially to their mothers. This is also a reflection of the habitus of women who internalise structures which have been embodied since early childhood, through specific games girls play, specific issues of interest to girls and so forth. It is impossible to point to any particular cause of the loving mother precisely because she embodies the agreement of internalised structure and social structure. But not always does habitus meet social structure. The non-loving mother is either explained away as a curious outcome of strange 'cultural norms' (e.g. Bourgois's description of young mothers from El Barrio, Bourgois 1995),\(^\text{16}\) or medicalised as a case of some disorder, postpartum depression, for example.

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\(^{16}\) Such accounts treat the stereotypical European loving mother as an absolute standard. The loving mother does not need to be explained. Only deviation from this model requires explanation. Those are then related to social/cultural/economic peculiarities of the groups under observation. This mode of analysis rather than beg the question of the loving mother, constitutes her as doxic, that is self-explanatory and natural. Incidentally, these modes of explanation, often reminiscent of the culture-of-poverty approach, differ from the medical approach which individualises the woman and her symptoms. The two approaches are not incompatible, though, and could be combined in an epidemiological approach to the non-
Chapter Eight

To use the metaphor of interest, social agents invest in parenthood because they have an interest in it. But at one and the same time, their constant investment in this project constructs to parents their interests in the project. Because it appears to be a natural part of the life cycle, there seems to be little consideration of reasons why to have children. In fact, nearly all my informants never decided whether to have children. They only decided when to have children, some by actively deciding to have a child and following the decision with action, some by default by not doing anything to stop the process once it was accidentally set in motion. The few high-school pupils I interviewed all presumed they would have children when they grew older. “That’s the way things are,” explained one of them. It was taken as natural as growing old, as partnering, and as dying. It is one of those things that happen to a person as part of his/her life. At least to some of my informants it made as much (non)sense to wonder about the advantages or otherwise of parenthood as it did to wonder whether one wanted to grow older as time passed by (cf. Richards 1985, 79–82, 87 ff.).

Once the project has commenced, there is no turning back. This means that there is usually no conjuncture or context in which parents can reconsider or reevaluate their parenthood. In fact, at least among my informants, most parents would rarely if ever step back and wonder whether parenthood was indeed something they wanted or needed, nor would they commonly waste time on investigating why they experienced parenthood the way they did. The only exception are those who think they experience parenthood differently from what they should, in which case their difference might lead them to wonder about their practice, and possibly seek clinical help, as do mothers who are diagnosed with postpartum depression. As long as people’s access to parenthood and its implications is subjective, and parenthood is not objectified in any way, the doxic elements of the parental postures remain invisible. In the case of new parents, it is not only a general lack of inclination to objectify one’s social behaviour which prevents the objectification of parenthood, but also the immediate relentless demands on parents’ time and resources. Sleep deprivation and the pressures of the radical change in lifestyle which the first-time parents among my informants typically underwent made it all the less likely they would bother to step out of the natural flow of time and action to examine their parenthood from the outside, as it were. The parents’ habitus offers them the postures of the happy, fortunate and loving, albeit tired, parent to make sense of, and to benefit from, their current ongoing heavy investments (cf. Richards 1985, 92–97).

loving mother. In fact, recently such epidemiological approaches seem to be very popular in dealing with various ‘social ailments’ ranging from suicide to alcoholism and illicit-drug use.
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This so far might sound like nothing more than the Lockheed fallacy in a different context. The Lockheed fallacy is the proposition that previous heavy investment justifies further investment in a sub-optimal option, when similar further investment in an alternative would yield a greater return. But the similarity is limited. The posture of the pleased, loving parent is in itself a strategy for capital accumulation. Being "good parents" increases one's symbolic capital substantially, especially among women. Child rearing activities are common bases for social relationships and cooperation among parents, especially mothers. Women may make claims to superior knowledge and experience in child rearing. This cultural capital lends itself to be used in symbolic warfare against men, but also among women. Many young mothers complained that totally strange women would come up to them and feel fully entitled to pass judgement about how they were handling their babies, about the way the baby looked and acted, as well as offering unsolicited advice and lectures on various issues which have to do with child rearing (this, in total breach of normal codes of conduct between strangers). There is also some material capital to be gained once the child is born not only by reliance on State welfare, but also by seeking help from other members of the family, especially the other generations. This might take the form of money, or other material gifts. Upon the birth of their first child, one young family got a car from one set of grandparents to replace their ailing old car. (The grandparents had ceased using the car a while before it was transferred to the young family.) So not only is the loving parent posture the suitable posture to make sense of the presence of children, it also entails additional capital accumulation. 18

The doxic and highly orthodox nature of parenthood is exemplified in people's attitudes towards voluntary childlessness. Voluntary childlessness is more than an individual choice in specific circumstances. It is a personal affront to all those who do have children and invest in them. For a married couple to choose not to have children was construed in interviews as an expression of selfishness, because it was explained as people preferring not to spend the money or assume the responsibility of children. The same attitudes prevailed among Richards' informants (Richards 1985, 90 ff.; cf. Callan 1984; Callan 1983). My informants who had children interpreted voluntary childlessness as a strategy aimed at the accumulation of material capital. Denouncing these

17 Richards discusses in her study the "difficulty of disentangling the reasons for having children. Parents themselves seem rarely to have sorted those things out" (Richards 1985, 90).

18 Following the 1970s feminist attack on maternity as a source of oppression of women, maternity has been rediscovered in the 1980s as also a source of feminine power and rewards (Crouch & Manderson 1993, 4 ff.). This excited a great deal of interest in the experience of motherhood, and the way it interacts with society at large, especially the State and the Market. (The studies of mainstream Australian motherhood include Everingham 1994; Crouch & Manderson 1993; Reiger 1991; Harper & Richards 1986; Wearing 1984.)
strategies was as much an act of justifying their own strategy. What they were in effect doing, from a practical perspective, was to negotiate the exchange rate between the symbolic capital accumulated by doing the right thing, namely parenting, and the economic capital lost in the process. In other words, they were making a virtue out of necessity.

During my fieldwork in Newcastle I came across only one couple who had explicitly decided not to have children.¹⁹ The woman herself described the decision as a selfish one, motivated by the financial costs and lifestyle sacrifices involved in rearing children. It is significant, perhaps, that both were firmly located in the dominant fraction of the dominated class. He had made the transition from blue-collar to white-collar work, and was employed in the tax office at a middle-level position. She was also employed full time in a white-collar position. Still, once she unexpectedly fell pregnant they decided to have the child. A while later, he had a vasectomy. Both said they loved their daughter very much, and did not for a moment regret having her, even though she was completely unplanned. (Interestingly, even they opted for sterilisation only after they had a child.)²⁰

Offspring are thus a stake in the game of family. Parenthood is, in its own right, an interest which agents pursue in the course of their game in the field of kinship and family. Interestingly, people become acutely aware of this interest and its significance only after the birth of children. The significance of children varies across the field in a socially meaningful way. The obvious factor is gender. Women whose habitus predisposed them to invest in family relations in order to acquire more social capital valued those interests higher than men, and higher than the much fewer women who were inclined towards a career and investment in their earning capacity, that is, had a greater interest in economic capital. The differences between maternal and paternal interests in children tend to be incorporated into different ranges of postures, maternal and paternal, which involve also

¹⁹ This in no way reflects the extent of the phenomenon. Because my research focussed on families, people who chose not to produce offspring would have been much less likely to be involved in my research. Furthermore, it is a safe bet that those not positively predisposed to having children would be less likely to marry or enter into de facto arrangements.

²⁰ The denunciation of voluntary childlessness was more, though, than the defence of orthodoxy. It was also embroiled in a symbolic class conflict. In the mind of my informants, voluntary childlessness was associated with a certain posture of yuppiness and with professionals who ascend to the dominant fractions of the dominant class, and with the individualism of the lifestyle addicts of the dominated fractions of the dominant class. Indeed, even the snobbish general medical practitioner who was practising in the inner city entertained that idea about childlessness, although from a diametrically opposed class position. "This is not a nice world to bring children into," she lamented once. "The problem is that only the good people take that view. Those who should not be having all these children keep on reproducing." There was no doubt she was referring to the majority of the patients in her bulk-billing, no-appointment-needed, inner-city clinic. And so it was that through the indignation at voluntary childlessness my informants were able to account for the fact that they were not as well off as some, but still they cared for what "really matters", as one informant explained—children and
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different forms of investment in the offspring. The paradigm for the difference in investment is the
blatant difference in physical investment—mothers carry the foetus during gestation and later
breastfeed the infant for a while. These differences are responsible, for example, for one typical
situation (discussed in chapter two) in which fathers increase their involvement in the paid
workforce, and mothers reduce theirs, in response to the birth of the child.

INTEREST AND MOTIVATION

One conclusion that follows from this discussion is that the model by which interests precede
practice and inform the decision making of social agents does not reflect the way social agents
operate in this instance. Many of them learn of their interests in the process of practice and through
their engagement with practice, even occasionally as a result of practice. To most of them children
happen, and only then do they discover the benefits of having them. Obviously, the interests which
social agents fulfil through having children cannot thus be seen as the straightforward motivation
which precedes and effects practice by informing agents’ decision making.

Placing the interests alongside or after the fact of reproduction begs the question of motivation.
Substantivist theories of practice normally require that the cause should precede the effect. The fact
that very few parents indeed seem to have ever considered the question of whether to have children
would make the solution to the conundrum of motivation even more counterintuitive. To answer
the question of motivation we must therefore depart from unidirectional linear approaches to
motivation.

As I pointed out above, the regular and predictable consequences of practice feed back into habitus
in situations of relative stability in social structures. This underlies the fact that habitus, as a
principle of reproduction of practice, is not coextensive with the physical life of social agents.
Much of the structures of habitus, such as the attitudes and dispositions involved in parenthood, are
transmitted among social agents through socialisation, and do not rely exclusively on firsthand
experience. We can thus see two types of enduring, evolving historical structures which stand in a
dialectical relationship: on the one hand extrinsic (objective) social structures; and on the other hand

family. Thus, making a virtue out of necessity, they were able to make sense of the parental posture they did, or were
going to, adopt, and make some coherence of their perceived location in the social structure.
habitus—internalised (subjective) structures (Bourdieu 1981). 21 Those contexts in which the internalised dispositions conform over the generations to social structural demands give rise to an unreflexive automatic mode of practice—doxa. Many aspects of reproduction fall into this category. To understand the particular motivation ‘behind’ reproduction we must therefore concentrate on the regular predictable consequences of practice. 22

To do this we must depart from the general level of habitus, to consider specific class habituses, because the patterns of investment in offspring, and the consequences of reproduction, vary systemically across society. Classes of agents, dominant-fraction women of the dominated class for example, share similar patterns of practice, with regular and predictable outcomes. These differ from dominant-fraction men, for example. At this level of generalisation, we can seek the motivation which drives habitus in such regular, predictable consequences of practice. I do not propose to recapitulate here the details of the regular consequences to women and men of having children. These consequences form one of the main themes which runs through all previous chapters. In any event, it is the achievement of the regular consequences of parenthood, and ipso facto the avoidance of the consequences which flow from not parenting, that the various class habituses seek through reproduction. In other words, the consequences of parenting are the reasons for parenting.

The interests—intellective, emotional and otherwise—are the principles which condition agency and predispose agents to follow this motivation. The interests that practitioners regularly experience during their practice can be said to be the interests of these agents’ particular class habitus in that particular practice.

This does not mean, though, that all the consequences of practice taken individually should be construed as interests of agents. Rather, practice is motivated by the balance of the totality of its consequences. So, in the example of having children, the consequences as a whole of having children (and by implication the avoidance of the consequences as a whole of not having children)

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21 It is furthermore impossible to rule out a priori the effect of physiological dispositions in practice, dispositions which may be predicated upon genetic transmission. It might be, for example, that the internalised dispositions which make up the parental postures include genetically biased dispositions. It would be wrong, though, to assume that even if there are physiological factors involved, that this would mean that the prevailing patterns of practice are inevitable, or that they do not fully depend on cultural transmission.

22 Whereas the linear-unidirectional model of interests and motivation (first come interests, these become motivations which drive the agent, and agents are subsequently moved to carry out an act) is not a good model of reality, it does operate as a model for reality. Even when agents construed their interests during, or after, practice, they organised their
motivate agents towards parenthood. Particular consequences of practice may well be experienced quite negatively, and might in themselves have an inhibiting effect on practice, even as their negative effect is overridden by other positive consequences. For example, the substantial economic costs of rearing children are not in themselves interests of agents, but the total predictable consequences of having children are what motivates practice.

Different postures which a single agent adopts may entail contradictory interests. For example, I mentioned before that many women, as well as men, held that maintenance payments imposed by the courts on husbands were too high, and they also felt that these should be linked to child-access rights. In other words, in the exchange rates negotiated in the courts between the capital which is typical of that held by women, and that typically held by men, those women felt the exchange rate was weighted too heavily in favour of women. This approach was not typical of single mothers who relied on maintenance payments. They rather felt they were disadvantaged by such arrangements. However, other women stood to lose from their own households through payments which were transferred to husbands’ ex-wives, and so might not have had as much an interest in supporting the wife’s position. Women who were not currently married, too, stood to be disadvantaged by such arrangements if they were to marry a divorced, non-custodial parent.

Of course, my informants were not performing a cost benefit analysis when discussing how they felt about maintenance payments. In adopting a position on this issue, what they seemed to be doing is thinking through what might loosely be called myths, or stereotypical situations. Those who felt that the exchange rate was unfair to the men were envisioning a hard working man, and a somewhat lazy woman who abuses her right to get money from the powerless, hard-working man. Those who felt that the women were hard-done by were conjuring up the imagery of a tired woman who struggles to provide her children with a decent childhood, and a father who remains aloof, uninterested and uninvolved. My contention is that one thing that influences which of these scenarios would be adopted to work out a position would be affected by the capacity of social agents to sympathise with the hard-working man, oppressed by the lazy ex-wife, or with the genuine undervalued mother, who is left to do it on her own by an uninterested man. Which image is more amenable to social agents would be greatly influenced by the general experiences of these social agents and by the specific context in which the issue is raised. This way agents’ interests experience along those lines of interests which justify practice. To them there originally were good reasons to have children, although those who had children became aware of many such reasons only once they had the children.
condition agents' practice, even when social agents do not calculate their interests, and the positions they entail.

\textbf{PART III: CAPITAL}

The previous section examined the question of motivation by the heuristic deployment of concepts such as interest. This section takes a deeper look at one aspect of the economics of practice. Specifically at the effects of practice on the distribution of capital. Here, too, the approach is heuristic.

Obviously, the acquisition of capital is in the interest of agents. However, it does not exhaust the interests of agents. This is one reason practice need not maximise the agents' capital. Furthermore, capital does not exist independently of the internalised structures of habitus. (This applies even to economic capital—fiat money, for example.) I will return to these points below.

Bourdieu defined capital as follows:

Capital is accumulated labor (in its materialized form or its 'incorporated,' embodied form) which, when appropriated on a private, i.e., exclusive, basis by agents or groups of agents, enables them to appropriate social energy in the form of reified or living labor. It is a \textit{vis insita}, a force inscribed in objective or subjective structures, but it is also a \textit{lex insita}, the principle underlying the immanent regularities of the social world (Bourdieu 1986, 241).\textsuperscript{23}

He distinguished between three forms of capital: economic, cultural and social. Economic capital is capital in the narrow economistic sense (e.g. money), cultural capital is what people learn in life (e.g. technical know-how, an appreciation of high-brow art), and social capital is the value of the social networks that one can mobilise (e.g. what one's family could and would do to help one). These forms of capital are interchangeable, to a greater or lesser degree, in that they can be converted to one another. Economic capital is the most liquid of capital, that is, the one most easily converted to other forms of capital, and the one to which other forms of capital may most easily be converted (Bourdieu 1986).
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To these three forms described by Bourdieu must be added physical capital. Although in resources such as physical capital the origin of the resource is often exogenous to the immediate social environment, its value is constantly negotiated in society. While there are limits to the social origins of such capital, and much of the physical capital (like health and strength, or fecundity as opposed to sterility) is not fully culturally/socially determined, its valuation is a cultural process. This resource can be used, or converted into other capital (e.g. physical labour for wages, ‘good looks’ as a resource on the ‘marriage market’), and should therefore be included in the analysis.

Capital in its different forms can also be characterised as either material or symbolic. Material capital is a resource which can be quantified independently of the subjective perception of social participants. A prototypical example might be gold. The quantity of gold that one possesses can be measured independently of the subjective perception of particular social agents. Of course, the value of gold can only be approached through the subjective and inter-subjective assessments of social agents, as it carries no inherent value whatsoever. Symbolic capital differs from material capital in that its quantity, as well as its value, are only approachable through the consciousness of social practitioners. Prototypical forms of this capital include prestige and good will. Of course, even the resource which functions as the most material form of capital can function as symbolic capital too. For example, being a successful businessman may carry with it prestige and sway well beyond that which would be predictable based on the economic value of one’s assets. (This is different from the conversion of material capital to symbolic capital which practices such as philanthropy entail.)

Capital carries over from practice to practice. It also carries over from one field of practice to another, as I discussed in the previous chapter. Common to substantivist approaches is the assumption of a capital-maximising social agent. Here I am not making such an assumption. Practice implies gains and losses in terms of capital (which may well be independent of explicit conscious calculations on the part of social agents). In any event, there is no need to assume that social agents operate so as to maximise their capital. Obviously, agents who consistently lose capital, will have less leeway in practice, than agents who accumulate capital. Furthermore, the

23 Unlike Bourdieu’s quote here, I ascribe the immanent regularities of the social world to interests in general, and not specifically to capital.
24 Others, especially Loïc Wacquant (e.g. Wacquant 1995a; Wacquant 1995b), have theorised physical capital as such, although in this analysis I am adopting a more systematic analysis of physical capital as capital.
maintenance of agency will require that social agents should accumulate and maintain some minimal capital over time. But agents need not maximise their capital returns.

In other words, while the pursuit of capital is in the interest of social agents, the pursuit of capital does not exhaust the interests of social agents. This is the reason social agents may systematically engage in practices which fail to maximise their capital returns. For example, larrkin masculinity regularly produces very sub-optimal capital gains. Still, while some dispositions may lead agents to practices which do not optimise their capital returns, these practices are often followed by secondary strategies of capital enhancement, such as making a virtue out of necessity. In any event, the efficiency of agents’ pursuit of capital over time is the essence of class stability and mobility.

**THE QUANTITY OF CAPITAL**

Changes in one’s total capital can come from changes in the quantity of the resource which forms that capital, or from changes in the value of the resource one holds as capital. In this section I look at the logic of capital distribution by focussing on the process of accumulation of capital, and control over access to resources. In the next section I will discuss the symbolic strategies of increasing the value of one’s capital.

The different interests different groups of agents develop is an integral aspect of their class habitus. They result in—as much as stem from—social patterns of distribution of capital. Often, social agents who share a class habitus compete over similar types of capital. One example could be the competition between adult women and their mothers or mothers-in-law over the position of domestic power. This structural conflict is an expression of the similarity of habitus of the agents involved which leads some agents, through the similarity in their dispositions, to compete over similar capital. Other such structural conflicts which were discussed in chapter three include the conflict between the two families of origin of the adults who form a nuclear family.

By contrast with agents who share a class habitus, different classes of social agents may find themselves enjoying access to socially differentiated mixes of capital. Often what supports the value of particular agents’ capital is their capacity to restrict the access of others to a particular resource they control. For example, mothers’ primary access to children, an integral aspect of their social capital which is embodied in the various maternal postures, is something women often seek.
to defend when threatened by possible encroachment from men. At times social agents engage in
collective practice which supports the exclusion of others from access to capital. Thus, there was a
measure of discrimination against men in women-dominated networks of primary care givers. It
was the wife of one of the male primary care givers who complained to me that the mothers of
children in play groups were never particularly welcoming to her husband. A different woman I
interviewed said she did not like the idea of male carers’ children participating in her child’s
playgroup, because she liked to get together with the “girls” to gossip and “bitch” about men in
such groups, and feared that the presence of the male would completely spoil the dynamics of their
interaction. Some women reported that other women would also put down male care givers,
challenging both the latter’s capacity as carers, and their manliness. (While those female
informants said they could understand why this should happen, none reported having done so
herself.)

While the women in playgroups might not have been engaged in a conscious defence of
their position of power, this was a definite outcome of their practice.

The defence of unique access to capital may also be carried out by individual agents. For example,
the woman (discussed in chapter six) whose husband was the harsh discipliner secured her access to
familial social capital by accentuating the conflict between father and sons, thereby reinforcing her
role as the social and emotional hub of the family. Similarly, the two mothers who were employed
full time while their husbands worked part time are a case in point. As mentioned in chapter six,
both took great care to continue breast feeding their children longer than most other women. One
would express milk in the evening so that the baby could be bottle-fed during the day, and as a
means to maintain her milk production. The other woman would meet her partner for lunch at a
coffee shop near where she worked so that she could breastfeed their toddler.

Breastfeeding reinforces the primacy of maternity over paternity in access to the child. Women said
they cherished the experience which enabled them to bond with the child in a very unique way, and
men acknowledged that this part of the interaction with the child was an aspect of the relationship
from which they were excluded. My informants described it as a kind of relationship that could not
be shared with or communicated to men, a kind of primordial, elementary contact which is direct

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25 This strategy of exclusion is reminiscent of the men’s exclusion of women from local social organisations in rural
communities such as those described by Ken Dempsey (Dempsey 1992; Dempsey 1990). One thing that seems to differ is
that men in “Smalltown” were forthright about such exclusory practices, and felt it was legitimate, in a way I did not
encounter in Newcastle either with women in relation to excluding men, or with men in relation to the exclusion of
women. The difference might be related to the different periods under consideration (Dempsey and his assistants visited
the town in the 1970s and 1980s) or to the difference between large urban communities such as Newcastle, and small,
and unbreakable—an extension of pregnancy, in a sense. Thus women were not explicitly increasing the value of their capital in an explicit way. They experienced their pursuit as following the purest and most natural dictates of maternity. In doing so, they were nevertheless pursuing their interests and increasing their capital.26

Women’s centrality in childcare is paralleled in men’s centrality as breadwinners. For example, when I discussed with one father the fact that he saw very little of his children, he expressed confidence in the fact that they knew that he had to go and work for them, just like their mother looked after them. This is the basis upon which women dominate the social aspect of the family, and men the financial one. The spontaneous gravitation of males towards economic capital, and women towards social capital, was apparent with all parents. In the two instances in which women worked full-time and men only part-time, men still exercised a great authority in decisions relating to economic capital. (Furthermore, both these instances were experienced as forced or as a thought-through rational accommodation to reality, rather than simply the way things were.) Among the rest of my informants, when both partners were involved in full-time paid work it was the men who were the main breadwinners, who tended to work longer hours, and to earn more money. This way, following childbirth, the increase in men’s hours of work was seen as the equivalent familial contribution to women’s decreasing participation in the labour market and greater expenditure of time at home. In fact, the institutions of “extra hours” and “overtime” make it mutually contradictory for individual agents to pursue economic capital in the form of extra wages, and social capital in the form of extra time spent on childcare. Some men construe this as the compulsion of economic necessity which forces them to spend less time with their family than they would otherwise have (cf. White 1994).

This gendered distribution of capital is further expressed in the common divorce arrangements, following which men remain with increased earning capacity, and women dominate access to the

26 In Australia, as in similar societies, breastfeeding rates increase with the educational level of the mother (Scott et al. 1999; for North American studies see, inter alia Ryan et al. 1991; Losch et al. 1995; Nolan & Goel 1995; Ryan 1997; Beshgetoor et al. 1999). This linkage between education and breastfeeding might be a reflection of the mother asserting her access to the child—an aspect of social capital—in situations where her exclusive hold over such capital might be challenged, namely in households where the division of labour becomes more fluid. In any event, it is interesting that in a recent survey in the United States the three most common reasons given by mothers who chose to bottle-feed rather than breastfeed their infant in the first few months were benefits to infant’s health; naturalness; and emotional bonding with the child (Arora et al. 2000). The last two are commensurate with the maternal posture and its superiority over paternity that I am arguing for here. Interestingly, the Australian study cited above which was conducted in Perth (Scott et al. 1999) shows that baby girls are breastfed until an older age than are baby boys. This might reflect a stronger bond between mothers and daughters (or possibly result from the possible anxieties underlying the potential erotic nature of this physical contact between mother and son—see chapter seven).
children. To the extent that masculine domination is dependent upon the primacy of male access to economic capital, women’s concentration on the accumulation of the dominated form of capital supports masculine domination. This is so particularly because agents who monopolise particular forms of capital are able to force other agents into positions of dependency. Men among my informants often completely depended on women to maintain their social networks, in some instances women even monopolised men’s contact with members of their families of origin and with their own children once the latter moved out. By the same token, very often women depended on men for their material wellbeing (cf. Bryson 1996). These relations of dependency are also bonds which tie children to their parents, as becomes obvious when considering the fate of children who leave their homes (Parliament 1995). These bonds of dependency—a crucial technology of power—permeate throughout society, and tie together all the different fields of practice into one overarching field. It connects workers to the labour market, dependants to workers and so forth.

THE VALUE OF CAPITAL

Above I focussed on the strategies which aim to increase one’s relative access to resources which serve as capital. I now turn to the strategies which aim to increase the relative value of one’s capital.

Struggle over the Exchange Rate of Capital

As I pointed out above, capital can largely be converted from one form to another (Bourdieu 1986). Moreover, different classes of agents tend to be associated with different mixes of forms of capital. One way to increase the value of one’s capital is to increase the relative weight of the form of capital which one has, compared to the value of the form of capital which others have. This struggle over the exchange rate of capital can get many and varied expressions.

For example, one husband presented his wife’s participation in the labour force as none other than an opportunity for her to go out of the home and get some extra spending money. This man was not only deflating the relative value of his wife’s capital. He was also putting a specific spin on their relationship, having a vision of social division in which he, and he alone, is the breadwinner, and she, and she alone, is homemaker. He was conducting a symbolic struggle to defend the value of
his access to economic capital. This followed from the drop in his relative control of this resource as a result of his wife’s recent entry into the labour market.

One place where the exchange rate of capital is almost explicitly negotiated as such is the marriage market, both in the nuptial trade and in divorce litigation. Pairing agents on the ‘marriage market’ requires the capacity to evaluate—indeed, to valuate—different agents with different mixes of capital, taking into account many and varied factors (e.g. looks, financial standing, demeanour, ethnicity). Similarly, a common theme in divorce litigation and legislation is the relative value of homemaking and breadwinning—an issue that comes to the fore in disputes over property settlements. Custody disputes often raise equivalent questions. I have discussed some of the aspects relating to the trade on the nuptial market before (see chapter six), as well as the typical consequences of divorce (see chapter two).

The Symbolic Struggle over Capital, and Its Denial

A different way to increase symbolic returns on practice is making a virtue out of necessity. It depends on the agent’s denial of the economics of his/her practice. An extreme version of this strategy is martyrdom—an act which enhances exclusively symbolic capital.

Martyrdom is reminiscent of the potlatch. It is an act of selfless sacrifice for the benefit of others. It demands recognition from those at whom it is directed. It is the extreme version of what Elisabeth L’orange Fürst has called the “rationality of the gift”, whereby a sense of achievement is derived from the capacity to give (Fürst 1997). Martyrdom seeks to create in its targets a sense of

27 It is for this reason that both have lent themselves to much analysis by rational choice theorists (see works reviewed in Hechter & Kanazawa 1997, 196).
28 Fürst relates this logic to the emotional and psychological investment of women in mundane tasks of housework like cooking, and opposes this logic to the “rationality of the commodity”. Her notion of rationality is similar to my heuristic use of the concept of logic in this thesis. She stresses the association of femininity with the rationality of the gift, although concedes that the recent increase in the involvement of women in the workplace might increase their association with the rationality of the commodity (Fürst 1997, 446). She does not seem to allow for the association of masculinity with the rationality of the gift, though. Nevertheless there were some areas in which men among my informants exhibited a rationality of the gift. Perhaps the clearest would be in instances in which masculine sexual prowess is translated into a capacity to “keep it up” long enough to generate a substantial number of orgasms in her. In some conversations it became clear that much in the way of pride and shame would be associated with one’s sexual performance. I did not investigate this aspect of sexuality in any systematic way, so that other than pointing out the anecdotal information, I cannot make any general statements. But in more mundane areas, some male informants took great pride in being able to build and fix things at home, and had much of their gendered identity invested in their capacity to perform such tasks in a way which is similar to women’s investment of their identity in the act of cooking. To many of them, providing for their families was experienced within this very logic, too. I therefore would argue that both men and women adhere in some areas to the “rationality of the gift” rather than the “rationality of the commodity”, and that it is not necessarily a predominantly
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obligation through either gratitude, or guilt, or both. The targets/beneficiaries of martyrdom may challenge the genuineness of the selflessness of the martyr, in what is a political struggle over symbolic capital.

At its core, martyrdom works through the denial of self-interest. While always useful as a symbolic strategy, this denial is particularly common in the field of kinship and family because of the special status of the family as the antithesis of the impersonal marketplace. For example, the father I discussed earlier who presented his participation in the workforce as a sacrifice on his part for his children’s sake, was making a virtue out of necessity and striving to maximise the symbolic gain from performing the tasks he needed to perform anyhow. The requirement to deny the profit of domination makes it illegitimate for parents to gain financial income from their children’s labour. When they can afford to, they engage with their children in a pattern of unequal exchange, a pattern which often continues throughout the parents’ lives. It is through this pattern of unequal exchange that parents are able to sustain a dominant position, and offspring, even as adults, continue to feel dominated by their parents.

Further, in the course of my inquiry into the rationale of parenthood I suggested to some informants that children might provide parents with a measure of long-term security. For example, parents might derive a sense of added security knowing that if they should become incapacitated and require care—stereotypically in old age—their children would be there for them. My interlocutors flatly rejected the suggestion that such considerations played any role whatsoever in their decisions relating to having children in particular, or in parental investment in children more generally. This denial left me sceptical at first. It did not elude any of my informants that the lion’s share of the responsibility for the care of the infirm and the elderly falls initially on spouses, and otherwise on offspring—especially daughters. But for parents to desire to have children as security for times of need would threaten to disenchant the whole field of kinship and family, and undermine the altruism of both parental investment, and the aid provided by children to their needy parents. It is precisely this altruism which forms the basis of the moral bonds of obligation which tie offspring to parents.

For this reason, familial action can accrue the greatest symbolic value by appealing to familial common destiny, or by presenting itself as selfless. Coercion may well back this as a means of last

feminine mode of practice. Within the framework I am developing here, these rationalities are best seen as integral parts of specific postures.

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resort, but the appearance of coercion marks a strategic failure on the part of the dominant player (cf. Foucault 1982). Thus, even punitive acts which are taken against children were thought of as “for their own good.” “If they don’t learn how to behave now,” one mother explained to me, “they will suffer more later.”

The denial of the economics of practice is one of the main reasons that an analysis of interests cannot be confined to that which social agents present or experience as interests. For example, the fact that offspring function as carers in predictable circumstances, and that this function is obviously an enhancement to their parents’ capital, makes it an interest of habitus, regardless of parents’ ostensible ignorance and genuine denial of this interest.

FURTHER ELABORATION ON THE METAPHOR OF CAPITAL

The heuristic nature of the constitution of the economics of capital here allows the deployment of the conceptual apparatus to be guided by the empirical reality it seeks to explain. This is so because ultimately the substance of the heuristic concepts is sufficiently free from a priori theoretical commitments. This is opposed to substantivist approaches where the substance of the concepts is fixed by the basic assumption of what it is that practice is all about. Below I attempt to demonstrate the utility of the heuristic apparatus by accounting for the position of children, and especially for what I call the infantile paradox of power. My analysis of the position of children stands in contrast to some substantivist approaches. (I briefly discuss some recent substantivist analyses in the following chapter).

The Infantile Paradox of Power, and the Position of Children

The position of children within the broader constellation of capital is very interesting. On the face of it, they are deprived of any independent capital, but in practice, as parents and advertisers know, they exercise a tremendous amount of power. Within the family, children, and babies in particular, pose a particular challenge to analyses of capital. Especially when very young, they completely lack independent economic and cultural capital. They are only able to access these two forms of capital indirectly, through the social capital they have, namely their relationships with their parents, or in extreme circumstances, through their independent relationship with welfare agencies. On the
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face of it, one should expect them to be totally powerless. This however, was not entirely the picture.

Infants’ power relies on a mixture of physical and social capital. To the extent that they benefit from the parental posture with all the emotional attachment and attitudes that are involved in it, such as parental love and an adult sense of propriety—they should be seen as enjoying social capital. At a very early stage, even before they can speak, babies learn how to be “cute”, how to generate the right smile and so forth. Even before that, whatever positive sensation babies generate, by suckling for example—and their attractiveness more generally—can be classed as physical capital with which babies are endowed at birth. This is also true of the annoying and unsettling cries of babies which normally drive adults to attend to their needs. Very early some infants learn to use tantrums, too, to secure their interests, a strategy that among some of my informants was amazingly successful.

One of the mothers among my informants instituted a counter strategy to eliminate tantrums. Whenever the baby would embark on a tantrum, all adults in the room were required to turn their gaze away and ignore the child until his behaviour became acceptable again. My informant claimed that this strategy, recommended by child-rearing specialists, was successful. Her best friend, by contrast, had a slightly older baby who regularly used tantrums to monopolise the attention of people around her.

Another element of infantile physical capital which helps wear down the resistance of parents is the difference in daily cycles between babies and adults. In the early months following birth the parents of the newborn baby, especially the mother, are normally worn out by the need to adjust to a different daily cycle from the one they are used to. The baby’s daily cycle includes early morning feeding sessions, occasional sleepless nights and constant care. Indeed, one of the first struggles between parents and infants in Newcastle was over sleep routines, as the parents strove to liberate the night and gain as much continuous sleep as possible. The babies, for their part, demanded physical attention around the clock. As the baby matured and lent itself more and more to parental domination, parents were able to regain control of progressively larger aspects of their own lives, the night being one of the first acquisitions. (The struggle over the night would normally continue for many years to come, as parents try to maintain it as their private time, and children try to push the barrier of curfew or bedtime as late as possible. This dynamic continues into late adolescence and is then gradually transformed into an attempt by the parents to control the whereabouts of
young adolescents at night, as adolescents seek to secure greater and greater control over their own nights.)

A baby’s acquisition of language and physical skills (the ability to sit, walk, control one’s excretions) must intuitively count as an increase in the capital held by the infant. However, all these skills become means by which the infant’s carers can exercise greater control over the baby, substituting a power differential for a differential of strength, and a relationship of power (always a collaborative effort on all parts) for a relationship of coercion (in which the target of the relationship is passive). (This distinction is derived from Foucault’s distinction between power and violence in Foucault 1982, 220). This is the infantile paradox of power: the more capital the infant accumulates, the less powerful the infant becomes. The physical capital embodied in the form of linguistic capacity and bodily control must therefore initially be added to the parents’ aggregate capital, rather than the baby’s.

In other words, the acquisition of social skills and capacities—especially language—has a complex effect on children. On the one hand, the child acquires the capacity to understand the particular social circumstances more accurately, and acquires the ability to orchestrate a whole myriad of means to achieve his or her needs. On the other hand, the acquisition of language makes the embodied habitus become structured more accurately and efficiently. Needs are being created at the very same time that the means for their satisfaction are being acquired, and simultaneously, the parents and other social agents acquire symbolic means of manipulating their children. Before the acquisition of language the living body is impervious to most of the symbolic field around it. It is the acquisition of language which opens the body to relations of power rather than coercion.

All this demonstrates that what makes capital, and in whose ledgers the capital should be registered is not an a priori given, but rather always depends on the empirical context. The infant’s acquisition of bodily skills and linguistic capacity should be seen as an element of the parents’ capital when considering the relationship between parents and children. This is only paradoxic if an increase in linguistic and bodily skills is seen a priori to be as an increase of the capital of the agent whose skills have increased. This is one reason that a heuristic economics of practice—which always relies on empirical reality to fill its conceptual framework with content—can succeed where a substantivist economics of practice would flounder. Further, this analysis should show that the dominated are not normally dispossessed of power, and that they are quite capable of exercising a
fair amount of it. This last point is further highlighted by the dynamics which typify the relationship between parents and their children well past the latter’s infancy.

Children occupy a dominated position in the field of kinship and family. Consequently, they seek recourse to the typically dominated strategies of manipulating the holders of power with forms of attrition warfare, like “whingeing”\footnote{Whinge—to whine or to complain.}, sulking and emotional blackmail. This they do alongside more positive strategies such as being cute and appealing to the dominant. The limits on the power of children, their dominated position, is largely due to their exclusion from other sources of capital, especially economic capital. The difficulties faced by children and adolescents who run away from home—most of whom quickly return, defeated, while the rest normally suffer dire consequences (cf. Parliament 1995)—are one real demonstration of the dependency of children. Normally their dependency is driven home to children in less extreme measures.

For example, financial dependence became a major form of power many of my informants used to control their offspring. The linkage of pocket money to particular chores and tasks is one very common strategy. The manipulation of economic dependence is sometimes very explicit. For example, Lucy, complained to me once about her twelve-year old son, Max. She said that for a while he had been treating her “like shit”. But she solved the problem, at least for a while. A few months earlier she and her spouse Meyer, had agreed with Max that if he saved half the price of a bicycle he had wanted, they would pay the other half. Max saved the money, but then Lucy informed Max that she was not impressed with his attitude, and that she would not contribute her half until he improved his behaviour. That had happened a few weeks before the conversation, and Lucy said that Max’s behaviour greatly improved since she laid down the ultimatum.

Children’s capital is reinforced by social capital in the form of public opinion about what parents should and should not do regarding children, the kudos involved in being “a good parent” and having “good children”, the support from other relatives, and their ability to play parents and grandparents against one another, and in extreme circumstances, the intervention of state agencies. Children learn to manipulate this form of capital as they grow a bit older. Often children’s strategies appear to the parents as calculated mercenary utilitarianism.
For example, Max, the adolescent just discussed, lived with his mother Lucy and her husband, Meyer, and had no contact with his biological father. He did maintain contact with his father’s parents, although this contact tended to fluctuate in rather predictable ways. Both in the lead-up to his birthday, and the lead-up to Christmas, he would spend more time with his father’s parents, and invest more in his relationships with them (e.g. by phoning them more often). The rationale for this behaviour was not lost on his mother, who put it down to Max’s concern regarding the gift he expected to get for those occasions.

Max was an adolescent. Audrey, however, was two years old, almost three. According to her parents, she had already mastered the art of pitting them against one another. She worked out that if one of the parents says no, the other parent might also be asked separately, and the result might be more satisfactory. This causes some difficulty to her parents, who felt they needed to maintain a united front. Her father, Clifford, said he found it necessary whenever Audrey would ask for something to ask her if she had already asked her mother, Hildred, and if so, what her mother’s response was. Both Clifford and Hildred were convinced that Audrey was able to identify who was most likely to say “yes”, and when they were most likely to say “yes”.

To recapitulate the analysis of capital, while capital has an important role in the understanding of practice, what constitutes capital varies between contexts and situations and should be determined empirically. While practice is not universally geared towards the maximisation of capital, agents do need a certain minimum of capital to sustain their agency. The ultimate worth of one’s capital is a product of one’s relative access to specific resources which are used as capital, and the value of that resource relative to other resources which function as capital. One of the properties of capital is that losses and gains of capital carry over from practice to practice and from one field of practice to another.

**CONCLUSION**

In this chapter I aimed to explore some of the dynamics which reproduce—and create—the structures which were outlined in previous chapters. I sought to exemplify some of the dynamics of the game in the field of kinship and family by elaborating a heuristic theory of practice which underlies the structural analysis in this thesis.
I initially discussed habitus and postures, and analysed one of the dynamics of social interaction, namely the struggle over visions of social division. Social agents in this approach are neither free floating agents, nor are they dupes of social structure. It is this conditioned agency which an economics of practice must analytically systematise. I also discussed the heuristic merits of constructing agency at the level of the individual social agent.

I then canvassed the issues of motivation and interest by reference to the question of why people have children. In the analysis of practice, the causes of practice can be deduced from regular predictable effects of practice. This analysis does not necessarily relate to the immediate motivation behind a particular action of a particular person at a particular time. Nevertheless, this analysis does rely on the effects of practice being sufficiently regular. Occasionally the conditions might change so that the regular effects of practices change. This is when habitus misfires.

I subsequently turned to the role of capital—access to social energy that underwrites agency—in social practice. The concept of physical capital was added to Bourdieu’s formulation. I showed the contextual nature of capital and its accumulation, and argued against the notion of social agents being capital-maximisation automatons. Significantly, capital carries the effects of one practice to other practices. Agents who consistently lose capital, will have less leeway in practice than agents who accumulate capital.

Changes in one’s total capital can come from an increase in the quantity of the resource which forms that capital, or from an increase in the value of the resource one holds as capital. While not necessarily calculated as such, social agents are obviously sensitive to the effects of their practice on their capital in various ways. Pride and shame together form a mode of sensing the effects of practice on symbolic capital without having to explicitly quantify and calculate gains and losses.

Different classes of habitus may be attuned to different interests and types of capital. This systemic distribution of interests and capital may also effect a systemic distribution in styles of practice. Through a focus on the different interests one can identify the differences between different classes of habitus. By associating these with the different strategies of capital accumulation, one might go a long way towards showing how the practice of both dominant and dominated contribute to the reproduction of social domination. This might help show the complicity of the dominated in their own domination, without rendering them passive, or defective, and without needing recourse to psychologism.
Chapter Eight

I contrasted the heuristic economics of practice with prevalent substantivist approaches. The latter proceed from a certain understanding of what constitutes rational behaviour and then proceed to analyse behaviour to see if it is rational. (A common accompanying assumption is that practice is a rational pursuit of rationally constituted interests.) Substantivist approaches seek to study to what extent practice is logical, and what is the underlying logic of all practice. By contrast, the heuristic economics of practice proceeds in an opposite way. The economic structure is analytically imposed on practice. Unlike substantivist approaches, it does not seek to reveal the hidden underlying logic which will account for all behaviour, but rather it provides a means for seeking the particular logic of specific contexts. Rather than asking if practice is logical, this approach assumes that practice is logical, and seeks to tease out the logic which underlies particular practices, and the practice of particular agents, by developing a heuristic framework whose content is always dependent upon the empirical context it discusses. The heuristic economics of practice can, in principle, be used to describe the limits and conditions under which the various substantivist economics of practice work. For example, it may specify, based on observation, which agents and in what contexts would seek to maximise their economic utility. Similarly, the question of which contexts lend themselves to the rational action of social agents (assuming for the moment that rationality can be established objectively) can then be approached empirically once the regular effects of practice are identified.

The heuristic economics of practice, thus, offers social analysts several benefits. By highlighting the contextual specificity of the logic of practice it allows for an empirical analysis of the practice of different classes of agents in different typical contexts, without having to rationalise practices which do not conform to expectations based on sociologists' own interests. As Bourdieu would have it, this is one way of avoiding the intellectualist fallacy (e.g. Bourdieu 1990c, 29 ff.). As will become apparent in the concluding chapter’s discussion of the sociology of the family, the heuristic economics of practice is particularly useful in accounting for those practices of dominated agents which ultimately contribute to their continued domination.

Furthermore, the heuristic economics of practice is not committed to any particular proximate mechanism which produces the behaviour under consideration. It is not predicated on any particular view of the role of heredity in effecting behaviour, or any specific psychological theory of motivation.
Finally, the heuristic stance is flexible enough to handle the intricacies of reality, such as the infantile paradox of power, without slipping into interpretative muddles. (I highlight an example of a muddled approach in the final chapter.) This is so because the substance of its concepts is not fixed independently of the context under investigation. Thus, in one context increased linguistic capacity might count as an increase in an agent’s capital, and in another as a decrease in an agent’s capital. It is this flexibility which ultimately allows the social analyst to focus on accounting for the practices under consideration, instead of attending to the protection of logic from the irrationality of the logic of practice.
Chapter Nine

Conclusion and Implications for Research

The first part of this chapter recapitulates the main points of the previous chapters. The second part of the chapter situates the work within the broader context of research on kinship and the family. It subsequently draws some implications for the social study of Australian kinship practices.

SUMMARY AND REVIEW

This thesis began by setting out the project, and locating the informants within the social structure. Most of my informants belonged to what can be identified, adapting Bourdieu’s relational scheme, as the dominant fraction of the dominated class, and the dominated fraction of the dominated class. This class division is linked to the segmented structure of the labour market. The concrete relation of domination between the two fractions was highlighted. While the ethnographic data motivated much of the discussion, the purview of the analysis extended beyond the immediate confines of the field site in an attempt to explicate the logic of my informants’ kinship practice.

The analysis moved to an exploration of the current historical conjuncture of kinship and the family among Anglo-Celtic Australians with a particular focus on the political economy and other societal processes. The nuclear family—conceptualised as a life cycle—remains dominant both as a
practice and as an experiential paradigm. The main changes to the developmental cycle of the nuclear family appear to be a growing distinction between a child-bearing phase and a child-rearing phase, and a growing phase of semi-adulthood in which young adults remain economically dependent. Recent changes to the household division of labour were limited, and while some diminution of the gendered division of actual labour is manifest, this has a tenuous effect on the division in gender responsibility for tasks, and on the association of masculinity with economic capital as opposed to the association of femininity with social capital in the family. Based on the literature and on original ethnographic data, extended family networks appear to conform to the principle of the nuclear family whereby different households become connected by virtue of their adult members being primary kin (i.e. parents’ offspring, and less significantly siblings).

In order to approach the experiential significance of the nuclear family it was constituted as a realised category. I argued that the nuclear family is prototypical, and as a corporate entity is structured by the container metaphor which is rooted in the culturally mediated experience of the body as person. The nuclear family further comes to structure aspects of life such as time and space.

Bourdieu’s tripartite typology of practice—doxa, orthodoxy and heterodoxy—formed the basis for an analysis of the current distribution of family practices. This typology of practice enables an analysis of the politics of continuity and change because it goes beyond a mere catalogue of practices towards a structure of the distribution of symbolic power which is associated with these practices. I discussed some heterodoxies, and the dynamics of the heterodox challenges, while highlighting the privileged position of the status quo.

Delving deeper into the structure of my informants’ kinship practice, the discussion turned to the basic principles which organise these structures, namely filiation and kindred, and to the ideology and experience of relatedness. I described the logic of kinship terminology and the distinctions it draws, predominantly those of individual, generation, age and gender. These distinctions are reflected in language and in various mundane rituals, and are fundamental aspects of social structure among my informants.

Focussing on gender, I analysed the manifestation and internalisation of masculine domination. The analysis centered on the practical embodiment of masculine domination, for example, in techniques of the body such as modes of motility. Masculinity turned out to rank higher than
femininity as a prototypical person, and masculine domination to be metaphorically structured by, and rooted in the domination of adults over infants. This helps to account for the logic of many and varied practices, such as some bodily aspects of mate selection. In certain domains (e.g. parenthood) feminine domination can be observed, although these domains tend to be subordinate domains. The division into domains of dominance mirrors the empirically studied patterns of division of responsibility and labour in the family and household.

Having discussed the field of kinship practice in isolation, I sought to reintegrate it with other fields of practice. I canvassed various ways in which development within the field of kinship and family can affect adjacent fields, and vice versa. Such ways include the deployment of capital gained in one field in games played in other fields; the use of structures derived from one field to structure practice in another field; and collaboration between homologous positions in different fields. The discussion then focused on the relationship between gender style as developed within the field of kinship and family on the one hand, and class structure on the other. The two are mutually constitutive. Further, an argument was presented for a critical role for kinship and family practices in structuring Australia’s political economy.

I then moved to expound the theory of practice which underlies the analysis. Following Bourdieu’s theory of practice, my approach is heuristic. In the course of presenting my approach I sought to resolve a few intractable questions of practice (such as the reason people have children, and the infantile paradox of power), and account for some strategies of the political struggles of everyday life (e.g. martyrdom).

The elaboration of the structures of habitus departed from Bourdieu’s traditional structuralist approach in favour of a mode of structural decomposition which was developed in cognitive sciences. Specifically, the discussion relied on Rosch’s analysis of categorisation, and Lakoff and Johnson’s work on metaphor and metonymy. This mode of analysis was extended beyond its original purview of conceptual structures to encompass practice in general, and thereby overcome the intellective bias in much cognitive anthropology. I further developed the notion of posture to complement Bourdieu’s concept of habitus and systematically incorporate affective and corporeal aspects of practice. Furthermore, it is significant that habitus is not coterminous with the individual

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1 This bias was epitomised by Ward H. Goodenough’s dictum that culture consists “of whatever it is that one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members” (Goodenough 1957, 167). Absent from this
social agent. The temporal endurance of habitus over the generations is the reason that the regular
effects of practice can be construed as its cause. This recursive, circular nature of the interaction
between internalised and objective structures stands in contrast with commonsensical
unidirectional, linear constructions of causality in much social science.

It is the recursive, circular approach to causality, the inclusion of symbolic as well as material
capital, and the heuristic nature of the construction of the economy of practice, which allow for an
analysis of the logic of practices which might well appear illogical to a substantivist investigation.
One main advantage that a heuristic economics of practice offers is that it enables analysts to avoid
psychologism which seems to be a necessary solution in substantive economies of practice. By
psychologism I mean a tendency to ascribe a certain rational practice to sociological factors, and
then explain practice which does not conform to this rationality as the product of psychological
mechanisms which pertain to agents who act ‘irrationally’. Psychologism occurs because
substantive economies of practice run into contradictions when they meet with classes of habitus
whose logic of practice differs from that postulated by the substantivist theory of practice, and then
those practices which seem now ‘illogical’ are accounted for by some interference in the social
agents’ capacity for logical practice. This has so far been discussed primarily in relation to gender
practices above. Similar problems also dog some of the sociology of the family as described below
(page 261 ff.).

SITUATING THE CURRENT WORK WITHIN THE LITERATURE

ANTHROPOLOGICAL LITERATURE ON KINSHIP

Recently Michael Peletz observed that “Contemporary kinship studies tend to be historically
grounded; tend to focus on everyday experiences, understandings and representations of gender,
power and difference; and tend to devote considerable analytic attention to themes of contradiction,
paradox, and ambivalence” (Peletz 1995, 343; cf. Collard 2000). This dissertation obviously bears the hallmarks of a kinship study in late twentieth-century anthropology.2

The centrality of metaphor in my analysis of the structure of subjectivity and practice is also in keeping with current trends in anthropology. For example, the reconstitution of the fields of kinship and gender into one unified field (Collier & Yanagisako 1987) has as its rationale the common metaphorical root of both gender and kinship, namely the cultural construction of biological reproduction. This unified field of study, which is the focus of this thesis, is based precisely on the metaphorical relationships between what were formally seen as distinct domains of social practice.

Another way in which this dissertation is typical of its time is its focus on ‘Western’ kinship. While anthropologists have never altogether shunned European kinship and gender, recently anthropological interest in current European kinship has reached unprecedented levels.3

An example of two paradigmatic approaches to the study of kinship in the dominant ethnic group of the English speaking world was provided by two related works conducted in the 1960s, one by Schneider on American kinship, the other by Raymond Firth, Jane Hubert and Anthony Forge on English kinship (Schneider 1980; Firth et al. 1969). These two works were originally conceived as a combined project, but it is rather the divergence in their approach which is more remarkable than their similarity.

Schneider chose to take nominal unity (the general uniformity in kinship terminology) for substantive unity (uniformity in the significance attached to the designata and connotata of these terms) and distill a set of identifiable cultural objects. This resulted in the construction of an ideal type which oscillates between a composite model, in which the knowledge of different informants is

2 This modern trend, of which this thesis is an instance, comes at the expense of “kinship theory” which had been the mainstay of the anthropological study of kinship. Kinship was seen as a discrete and universal institutional domain, which was based on universal facts of reproduction (Schneider 1984). Still, there have been dissenting voices long before the 1980s—such as Arnold Van Gennep (Van Gennep 1906; discussed variously in Part III of Schneider 1984). In any event, the rumours of the death of kinship theory are both premature and exaggerated. Thus, a recently published introduction to kinship studies (Parkin 1997) breaks with current trends in focussing virtually exclusively on the “algebra of kinship terminology” and on the traditional themes of kinship studies in anthropology.

3 Peletz discusses this line of literature in his review, although his list of recent studies (Peletz 1995, 362) is quite incomplete and highlights studies which focus on homosexual kinship and on modern reproductive technologies. Judging by my fieldwork data, the new emergent technologies do not seem to have dramatically transformed the structure and function of kinship among my informants. For a greater glimpse into the latest trends in kinship studies see the report from the recent Wenner-Gren international symposium (Franklin & McKinnon 2000), and Collard’s review article (Collard 2000). In any event, judging by a recent double issue of L’Homme which was dedicated to the study of kinship (154–155, avril/septembre 2000), the new trends are taking root rather unevenly across the Channel.
combined to produce the picture of the cultural units which make up kinship, and a shared model which isolates the knowledge that is commonly held across society. Variation within the circumscribed population under investigation is external to the analysis (cf. Casson 1994).

By contrast, Firth, Hubert and Forge, along with other anthropologists and anthropologically inclined sociologists (e.g. Young & Willmott 1962; Willmott & Young 1967; Rosser & Harris 1965; Rosenberg & Anspach 1973; Schneider & Smith 1973; Strathern 1981), have focussed on socially defined groups, usually classes or restricted communities, and studied patterns of kinship and family behaviour.

Such studies apprehend particular practices of kinship and family as a direct product of the living conditions of the people observed. They tend to oscillate (often implicitly) between two explanatory rationales. One—the diachronic—conceives of the current social circumstances as acting upon, and modifying various cultural traditions. This rationale proceeds by identifying a particular class or social group, describing its prevailing kinship system, and attributing the uniqueness of this group to the vagaries of history. In this line of reasoning, different classes reflect different historical continuities and can be analysed as distinct cultural groups. The other rationale—the synchronic—sees the immediate circumstances as acting upon a socially universal kinship system. This rationale tends to conceive of class in a gradational way, class structure being conceived of as a ladder reflecting different positions of income or prestige, and attributes kinship and family patterns found among the poor to the physical conditions of their existence, which operate as constraints. Changes that are observed as one’s gaze climbs up the social ladder are attributed to the marginal increase in freedom from the dull compulsion of economic necessity. The kinship system is taken as essentially constant across society, barring the effects of economic constraints, such that if a poor family were to be made rich all of a sudden we would expect it to quickly develop rich family characteristics.

In the preceding chapters I took a relational approach which strives to combine the insights of both synchronic and diachronic lines of explanation. I did so by adopting a relational underlying notion of class, which rather than conceive of particular classes as discrete entities views class structure as a fractured whole, with its own systemic logic, that develops over time. I did not generalise this

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4 The relational approach underlies Bourdieu’s famous Distinction (Bourdieu 1984). For a brief programmatic statement see his outline of a sociology of sport (Bourdieu 1988).
Conclusion and Implications for Research

analysis due to the class-specific nature of my ethnographic field, and the paucity of coherent relevant sociological research which highlights social class.\(^5\)

But very quickly I came up against the constancy of much of the underlying structures which are reproduced by and produce kinship and family practice. In seeking to explicitly analyse and describe the relevant doxa and orthodoxy, I found myself reintegrating into the line of work much of the observation of strictly cultural analyses, such as Schneider’s (Schneider 1980; Schneider & Smith 1973), albeit without the commitment to an ideal-typical structure which is divorced from practice. It is largely the reliance on analytic tools like prototypicality, and the acceptance of the formally illogical nature of practical logic which allowed my analysis to proceed in this way.\(^6\)

I could do this precisely because I am focussing on the dominant ethnic elite, which remains largely impervious to foreign cultural influences in the field of kinship and the family. Those anthropologists who study people or communities whose practices derive, among others, from indigenous or foreign historical traditions (and often from great social dislocation), would face a much more complicated task in identifying and theorising the various influences on kinship and family practice.

The latter research interests—indigenous and non-Anglo-Celtic kinship—have occupied the lion’s share of anthropological research on kinship in Australia. By contrast, scant anthropological attention was given to the kinship of Australia’s ethnic mainstream. Whatever attention was given

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\(^5\) In focussing on the dominated class rather than the elite I join with the majority of scholars whose analysis includes an awareness of class. The consequences of this focus on the dominated to the near exclusion of the dominant cannot be beneficial either intellectually or politically, and it should be hoped that more scholars should join the few who have targeted the elite in their writing (e.g. for a study of Australia’s elite Connell 1977; for a study of elite kinship and family Marcus & Hall 1992). Similarly, the paucity of sociological material which distinguishes between rural and urban settings, and between stable and established communities on the one hand and communities in flux on the other, make it impossible to examine the logic of variation in practice between the city and the bush, or between **gemeinschaft** and **gesellschaft**.

\(^6\) In conceptualising constancy and variation in USA kinship practice, Schneider and Smith distinguish between three levels of social phenomena, namely that of cultural conceptions, that of normative structures, and that of patterns of actual behaviour. The distinctions that this typology seeks to capture, namely between statistical patterns of practice, and norms of practice; between the self-evident nature of things, and preferred modes of action, are very important and have been approximated here in the form of the distinction between statistical regularities and internalised dispositions, and between doxa and orthodoxy. One of the weak points in Schneider and Smith’s formulations is the connection between the three levels of social phenomena they nominate, a weakness which I argue is overcome by adopting the typology I have. In the previous chapters I have tried not only to show how doxa, orthodoxy, dispositions and patterns of practice are linked theoretically, but also tried to weave them into the various historical accounts of the development of kinship and family in Australia.
typically followed rather narrow sociological interests, rather than broad anthropological concerns in kinship systems, structures of domestic groups and so forth.\footnote{Anthropologist Jean I. Martin has written an early overview of “Marriage, the Family and Class” (Martin 1957) although such overviews were not a reflection of a concerted anthropological research effort into Anglo-Celtic Australian kinship. While the collection in which this overview was published was also edited by an anthropologist, A.P. Elkin, the rest of the chapters were not written by anthropologists (Elkin 1957). In fact, historians (e.g. Borrie 1953) were more likely to engage with anthropological themes of kinship among Australia’s dominant ethnic group (Martin 1967, 45). This is due in large part to the development of Australian anthropology as an outpost which specialised in Aboriginal and Pacific Islander societies, as well as to the very slow emergence of sociology as an academic discipline in Australian universities. For instance, at the time W.D. Borrie published his chapter, there was no chair of sociology in Australian universities, and only one chair in anthropology (Borrie 1953, 23).}

Publications which were stimulated by more straightforward anthropological interests came rather late. They include Ernst’s structuralist analysis of a familial atom (Ernst 1990) and Hamilton’s symbolic analysis of the cultural construction of spouses as teased out from a once-popular children’s book (Hamilton 1975), both of which are exegetical reinterpretations of mass media or literature rather than an engagement with practice. These reflections by anthropologists upon their own society were not, however, the result of a comprehensive research engagement nor were they the product of an overall specialisation in White Australia. Moreover, at least in these two instances, the anthropologists do not seem to have distanced themselves sufficiently from their subject matter, and end up reinforcing their national mythology rather than subjecting it to any critical investigation (I discuss their work in chapter three in relation to mateship).

By contrast, Maila Stivens’ field-based research is unique in combining an ethnographic methodology with anthropological theoretical concerns in studying kinship among the ‘true-blue’. Her work in Sydney (Stivens 1974; Stivens 1985; Stivens 1981; Stivens 1978) focussed on the connection between class, the gender order, and kinship and family. In going beyond the narrow, unreflective preoccupation with family, and focussing broadly on kinship, Stivens’ study differs from the qualitative sociology of the family. Virtually all of the reality she describes agrees with the observations I have made throughout this thesis. This is important for several reasons. In corroborating other similar observations, the confidence in the generality of the observations made in any particular ethnographic research increases. Furthermore, the fact that her observations in Sydney in the late 1960s—before the major juridical and administrative reforms of the 1970s—agree with mine in Newcastle in the mid-1990s suggests that what we have found is not a reflection of a fleeting temporal ‘accident’ or the immediate circumstances of her informants or mine.
The extent of the agreement between the two descriptions can perhaps be emphasised by describing the differences. The only substantive difference is that Stivens highlights the solidarity between mothers and adult daughters (Stivens 1978), while my representations of my informants' worlds gives greater attention to the tension between the two. This difference may be more apparent than real, though. The difficulty in accommodating an old parent in an adult child's household was acknowledged by Stivens' informants (Stivens 1978, 170). Interestingly, a study in north London found that adult women and their mothers were not very intimate and close, and that it was sisters who formed “very close” relationships (O'Connor 1990). Otherwise, on the questions of the gendered nature of family work and the total division of labour (including psychological and social labour); on the active role played by women in reproducing the gendered order of kinship; on the structural tensions between family of orientation and family of origin; and on the ideology of relatedness, her informants seem to be leading very similar lives to my informants. If we extend the purview of the relevant anthropological literature to include the anthropological study of kinship and family in Anglo-Celtic metropolitan and settler societies, the Australian picture does not exhibit any major exceptions, either (e.g. Young & Willmott 1962; Willmott & Young 1967; Rosser & Harris 1965; Firth et al. 1969; Rosenberg & Anspach 1973; Schneider & Smith 1973; Strathern 1981; Rapp 1987; Smith 1987; Rapp 1992).

SOCIOLOGICAL LITERATURE ON FAMILY

Compared with anthropologists' general avoidance relationship with Anglo-Celtic kinship in Australia, the sociology of the mainstream Australian family has flourished for both disciplinary and institutional reasons. The literature can be divided into several (somewhat overlapping) genres. One is that of community studies, another is that of interview-based research into family practices, and yet another is survey studies of Australian families and households. On the whole, the practice they describe conforms to those of my informants. (Where there were discrepancies or noteworthy differences, I discussed it in the text.)

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8 Many of the community studies were, in fact, carried out by researchers trained as social anthropologists (Manderson 1985, 6).
9 I will not review the findings of the sociology of the Australian family. The findings which are relevant to the issues discussed in this thesis have been referred to throughout the previous chapters, especially in chapter two above. Fortunately, many such reviews exist, most commonly in the form of chapters on the Australian family in collections on Australian sociology (e.g. Bittman 1993), or in entire books dedicated to the Australian family (e.g. Aspin 1994; Weeks & Wilson 1995; cf. Funder et al. 1996). For a general review of family studies see David Morgan's recent book (which focuses on England) (Morgan 1996). A general review of Australian community studies, now somewhat outdated, was written by Ronald Wild (Wild 1981). Lois Bryson and Betsy Wearing (Bryson & Wearing 1985) reviewed the field with
The remainder of this chapter addresses the sociology of the Australian family from a theoretical and methodological perspective, and, based on the analysis above, suggests some correctives to current and recent scholastic practices which are common in that literature. I argue that due to some conceptual shortcomings, sociologists of the family often misconstrue their subject matter. I further hope to demonstrate that an anthropological approach can enhance the sociology of the family, by broadening the research agenda, generating kinds of questions and data not normally tackled by sociologists, and by correcting theoretical gaps which dog some sociological research.

Most of the recent sociological work on the Australian family, qualitative as well as quantitative, has followed issues relating to public policy, with particular attention to issues which are (or should be) of interest to state agencies. These issues include the roles and limits of family support networks and how they relate to family wellbeing; the gendered division of labour and income; the relationship between employment and family wellbeing; domestic violence; and family and schooling. This preoccupation with policy-related matters is partly the result of the political economy of the sociology of the family. For example, the Institute of Family Studies which sponsors much of the study of the Australian family is explicitly aimed at generating a body of data and knowledge to serve the development and implementation of public policy (Funder et al. 1996). Furthermore, the academics who study the family often have a professional association with government agencies. Michael Bittman, for example, has conducted several projects for, and in conjunction with, the Australian Bureau of Statistics. Finally, in order to justify their continued position of authority social scientists find themselves under increasing pressure to produce ‘relevant’ and ‘useful’ research. This is not only a matter of gaining symbolic capital by producing knowledge that is in demand. The progressive changes in the funding of research put increased pressure on academics to justify their research on grounds quite different from that of the expansion of human knowledge for its own sake.

A main drawback of the production of social knowledge for immediate consumption by institutionalised power is that it encourages those lines of research that share the doxic with social practitioners. This does not mean that all research is oblivious to the self-evident. Thus Lyn Richards has explicitly raised the questions of “why marry” and “why have children” (Richards 1985). But such research questions are unusual.

more attention to issues of gender and family. Recent relevant Australian community studies include Dempsey’s on

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Conclusion and Implications for Research

Another recurring problem stems from the sociological penchant for quantitative methods, and the use of questionnaires to construct and measure attitudes that are seen to reflect modes of action. A good example may be derived from a comparison between some of my analysis and that of Claire Williams' community study of Queensland miners, a study which focussed on the interaction of patriarchy and capitalism (Williams 1981).

In studying the gender roles of her informants, Williams classifies her informants, both male and female, as having a patriarchal or egalitarian attitude towards changing sex roles. This was based on the answers of her interviewees to questions such as those regarding how decisions should be made, how labour within the family should be divided, and so forth (Williams 1981, 149 ff.). The point has been made in the literature that attitudes towards egalitarianism do not correlate in a straightforward way with actual practice (Bittman & Pixley 1997, 129 ff.; Dempsey 1997a; Lindsay 1999), but that is not the issue I want to raise here. Nor do I want to pursue the question of whether those two designations—patriarchy and egalitarianism—actually exhaust the different types of attitudes which may exist, and whether they neatly differentiate two distinct approaches of social agents. Rather, I would like to contrast the classification of people as either egalitarian or patriarchal with my focus on practice in chapter eight above in which I showed that my informants used different and often contradictory logics to structure their practice in different contexts. (I used serial, complementary and hierarchical postures as heuristic devices in my discussion.)

Williams' classification of people according to attitudinal orientation might gloss over the complexities of practice, and may conceal rather than reveal the ways in which the gender order is produced and reproduced in daily practice. The two types of presentations, Williams' and mine, are in one sense different types of data. Explicit attitudes might well reflect the mood of the society studied, and the main issues which social agents perceive to be facing them. On the other hand, a focus on actual practice—of which explicit attitudes are only one component—yields different results. A full appreciation of the contradictions of practical logic, and the contextualisation of different postures, would best be served by a typically anthropological emphasis on participant observation, and the willingness to question commonsensical understandings of agency (e.g. Strathern 1988).

“Smalltown” (Dempsey 1992; Dempsey 1990).
Moreover, participant observation, and a willingness to go beyond readily quantifiable data, may introduce types of data that conventional sociological analyses seem to overlook. Techniques of the body such as motility, and slippages such as children referring to their teacher as “mum” are both types of data which are extremely significant (see chapter six), yet out of the purview of the general sociological investigation of the family.

Perhaps the most important endemic problem in the sociology of the Anglo-Celtic Australian family that might be remedied by a greater heed to anthropological sensibilities lies in the implicit theory of practice which informs much of the sociology of the family. Of course, anthropologists do not agree on one particular theory of practice, and will probably continue to debate the issue with and past each other for some time to come. But the engagement with the question of practice and agency is an integral part of the anthropological endeavour. This is not so among some sociologists whose theory of practice remains implicit and analytically distanced from concrete practice, with quite dire consequences to the analysis.

Some of these sociologists, perhaps under the influence of demography, substitute a statistical method for a theory of practice, and employ a mode of reasoning derived from physical and natural sciences. This naturalist theory of practice may obscure, rather than clarify, the logic of its subjects’ practice. The following example is taken from Bittman’s overview of the family in an introduction to the sociology of Australia.

Painstaking historical research has shown that late marriage has been used to keep fertility levels well below the maximum since (at least) the seventeenth century; postponing marriage was a typical response to economic recession (Anderson 1979:51–52). The current tendency to marry later, which became evident in the 1970s, conforms with this general trend (Carmichael 1988). Over the last two decades Australian women have, in contrast with their own mothers, delayed having children until middle and later child bearing years (Bittman 1993, 436).

In fairness to Bittman, the reasoning he quotes is quite common in demographic and sociological writings. But while it may be excused in demographic writing as a dramatic dressing up (women delay marriage in order to reduce fertility) for a statistical correlation (increased age in marriage and decrease in fertility), it should not be allowed to slip into sociological writing, precisely because it most likely misconstrues practice.
The rationale of this ascription of motivation to social agents is as follows: there appears to be a correlation between increase in age of marriage, an increase in age of childbearing, and a decrease in fertility rates. Naturalist reasoning, based in logic, would require that the phenomenon which appeared first must be the cause, while the phenomenon which follows it must be the effect. Specifically, marriage generally precedes reproduction, therefore the increase in the age of marriage must be the cause of the increase in the age of mothers, and the consequent drop in fertility rates. This observation, observed through the objectivist prism of scienticity, is then assumed to reflect the subjective motivations of social agents: a delay in marriage is “used” to reduce fertility.

This specific argument appears to confuse cause and effect. Pre-marital, extra-marital and non-procreational sex are not restricted to particular segments of society. Among my informants in Newcastle—where sex quite often precedes marriage—a correlation between age at marriage and age at parenthood would normally reflect a reverse causality from the one postulated above. The usual chain of events would be as follows: a couple would want to settle down and have children, an existing de facto relationship would then be consecrated as marriage, and then would come the mortgage and the babies. So long as there is no willingness to reproduce, the couple might well decide to refrain from upping the ante in the relationship by getting married. In other words, decisions about reproduction often precede and motivate decisions about marriage. So the delay in marriage may well be motivated by the delay in fertility, and not vice versa. More generally, the order in which social phenomena appear behaviourally need not reflect the logic of the practice of social agents.

The naturalist misconstruction of human agency might seem innocuous enough on its own, but the misapplications of naturalistic reasoning do not exhaust the conceptual difficulty that many sociologists of the family have with human practice. It is probably their lack of an explicit theory of practice which leads many sociologists to mistake their own practice, values and reactions, for a universal subjectivity across society. They might assume that social agents operate like they themselves do and forget that the social conditions of practice vary across society (cf. Bourdieu 1990c, chapters 1–2; Bourdieu 1981, 310, endnote 13).

To demonstrate the extent of the problems which this misconstruction of practice can produce I will focus on a recent book by Bittman and Jocelyn Pixley on the family. I have chosen this book for
several reasons. Most importantly, the book, co-authored by one of the foremost sociologists of the Australian family, was very well received in the sociological community (e.g. Sarantakos 1998; Women & Work 1997; Barkley 1998; Dempsey 1998; Jamieson 1998). Also, it is the most recent comprehensive exposition on the Australian family.\footnote{As a general book on the Australian family, the work has been criticised for ignoring the existence of families not of the ethnic mainstream, and for ignoring variations in the organisation of family life (e.g. Sarantakos 1998). I will not dwell on these points here.}

The fundamental problem with Bittman and Pixley’s approach is the authors’ adherence to an implicit notion of humans as rational actors whose practice should maximise their utility. Because of their substantivist approach, they hold the content and meaning of utility to be universal across society, and embodied in things like material capital, ‘free time’ and so forth. In other words, the interests of all social agents, regardless of class and gender for example, are identical. This implicit theory of practice leads the authors to a major muddle in trying to account for the practice of women within families, practices which would appear to militate against their own interests. To resolve this problem, the authors seek refuge in psychologistic explanations.

At the heart of The Double Life of the Family (Bittman & Pixley 1997) is the hypothesis that the modern family is in the bind of pseudomutuality: family life is strained by a clash between a perception of the way things should be and a reality which contradicts it. People perceive family as being all about equality. Moreover, the emotional basis of the modern family—a romantic attachment between spouses—necessitates that equality should exist between husbands and wives. According to Bittman and Pixley it is a psychological impossibility for individuals who are unequal to entertain a romantic relationship. Familial equality, however, is a myth. In fact there is a gross and extensive inequality between men and women in the household. This contradiction leads to a cognitive dissonance which forces people to deny the fact of inequality in order to justify their necessary belief that equality prevails in their families. This, in turn, prevents people from being able to confront and correct the blatant violations of the normative expectations of equality, thereby causing strain to the family members. They sense the inequality, but because they deny it, are unable to confront it effectively. This turns the family into a source of great stress which accounts for the common familial misery and increasing divorce rates.

The authors borrowed their pseudomutuality hypothesis from studies in the 1970s into the causes of schizophrenia. The hypothesis was that schizophrenia was caused by conflicting emotional signals.
that patients received in their families as they were brought up. These conflicting signals were thought to put the patients in a constant state of uncertainty and anxiety regarding the nature of their family relations. Without accepting this theory as necessarily that which accounts for schizophrenia, Bittman and Pixley generalise this description of the dynamics of schizogenic families to all families. Their specific argument runs as follows. On the one hand, perception of equality is a necessary element of family relations because intimacy between partners can only occur in situations of equality, and intimacy is an essential part of the modern family in which the person of the wife and the mistress are combined. On the other hand equality in the family does not exist, a fact demonstrated by focussing on time-use studies, showing that women spend substantially more time than men on housework. This prevents women from pursuing their career interests as fully as men do. It also means that they have to be confined to meaningless chores, as opposed to their husbands who are free to find self-fulfilling occupations. The financial income associated with participation in the labour market gives men, the main breadwinners, a material advantage compared with women who earn less, and tend to be less involved with the labour market. In addition to material advantage, this difference in remuneration elevates the prestige associated with paid work compared with unpaid homemaking and relegates women to a dependent status.

In their own words:

Pseudomutuality is a faked or a false complementarity, where the actor may deny or conceal evidence of non-mutuality in order to maintain a sense of reciprocal fulfilment. Pseudomutuality [...] is a characteristically ‘modern’ form of the exercise of domestic power. Modern couples subscribe to some version of romantic love which in principle must involve an intimate relation between equals. No man should order his wife about today—they make shared decisions. Yet all the evidence suggests that despite the rise of intimacy, women are still waiting on men and taking the major responsibility for bringing up children. Pseudomutuality is a possible way of explaining how the hurt and exasperation is shuffled off the family stage in various ways (Bittman & Pixley 1997, 146).

It is important to note that no data are provided to demonstrate, let alone substantiate, the process of pseudomutuality. Bittman and Pixley construct this psychologic argument to account for three sets of data: opinion polls suggesting that both male and female respondents support parity in the
family; figures suggesting a disparity between the work of men and women in the family; and figures suggesting a modern increase in marital breakdowns.

There are some dubious assumptions and analytical manoeuvres in this analysis. Mistaking their own class ethos for a universal condition, Bittman and Pixley assert that equality is necessary for romance which is the basis of the modern family. But, the inherent necessity of social equality for the purpose of romance is hardly self evident. Presenting courtly love—which they see as the precursor of modern conjugal relationships—as a relationship between equals is extremely odd given the highly gender-differentiated medieval aristocracy. Furthermore, Bittman and Pixley argue that “According to Giddens, what we described earlier in this chapter as the tradition of ‘courtly love’ is an example of a type of love—passionate love—found in all cultures and all epochs” (Bittman & Pixley 1997, 66). Unless one is willing to argue that men and women are deemed equal in all societies, that quote rather goes to show that such love does not necessitate equality between the partners. In fact, one can find substantial expressions of erotic and romantic attachments in societies in which equality between romantic partners is deemed neither necessary nor desirable. These could range from cultural literary expressions of romantic attachment, requited or otherwise, to normal modes of communication between spouses and family/household structures, such as those prevalent among settlers in colonial North America (Norton 1980, chapter 2). In short, there does seem to be, on the face of it, considerable data to suggest that it is quite possible for persons who are not completely equal, and who do not think of themselves as completely equal, to have a romantic or intimate attachment. Romance does not seem to necessitate total equality nor does it require that the two persons involved should be in an equal relationship, or believe that they are in an equal relationship. The authors’ argument that equality is an essential aspect of current marriage is not compelling.

Moreover, Bittman and Pixley’s use of cognitive dissonance theory (Bittman & Pixley 1997, 153 ff.) is too loose. They rely on Festinger’s forty-year-old general formulations of cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger 1957). According to Festinger, subjects strive to maintain cognitive consonance. When faced with contradictory cognitions (e.g. thoughts, attitudes, beliefs), subjects

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12 Such expressions can be found, for example, in virtually all Mediterranean civilisations, ranging in time from the biblical Song of Songs to many of the lyrics of the immensely popular songs of Umm Kulthum, the legendary twentieth-century Egyptian singer. But one need look no further than premodern English literature to find the motif of erotic or romantic love bundled with gender inequality, such as Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet, or even more so, The Taming of the Shrew, and its apparent sequel, John Fletcher’s The Woman’s Prize or The Tamer Tamed.
feel anxiety, which they move to reduce by changing the content or significance of some of the
contradictory cognitions. The authors seem oblivious to the enormous literature which has
modified the original theory as researchers attempted to delineate the conditions under which
subjects would experience a significant distress or anxiety as a result of the dissonance, and the
conditions under which subjects act so as to reduce their dissonance (see chapter eight for some
references).

Setting aside the theoretical developments in cognitive dissonance theory, and taking up the
authors’ interpretation of cognitive dissonance—in this case as a process of mystification of reality
when it conflicts with the way things should be—we are still faced with some difficulties. How
does their theory account for the desire of never-married men and women to marry, or of divorced
women to remarry? In both instances agents are not married, and need not experience a
contradiction between the way things should be in marriage and the way things are. We would
therefore expect them to be very much aware of the inequality in the family, and of the
unacceptable nature of that inequality, and consequently, of marriage altogether.

Furthermore, given that women are the disadvantaged party according to Bittman and Pixley, we
would expect them to experience a harsher dissonance, and to be more strongly committed to
misconstruing reality in order to alleviate their stronger dissonance. We should therefore expect
men more than women to be aware of the reality of inequality in the family: men should be more
inclined to believe that there is inequality in the family, and less inclined to trivialise that inequality,
while women should be more inclined to believe that there is equality in the family, and more
inclined to trivialise expressions of inequality. This, however, does not conform to either Bittman
and Pixley’s data, or other data.

Moreover, why should this particular conflict be so acute as to require a mystification of reality?
Bittman and Pixley’s analysis overlooks the fact that people are able to handle quite effectively the
realisation that things may not be as they should be. In a similar vein, Bourdieu has already
demonstrated that practical logic can hold what formal logic would see as contradictions. The
consignment of contradictory ‘propositions’ to different contexts ensures that they do not confront
one another and are thereby glossed over. As discussed in chapter eight, among my informants, at

13 Mary Beth Norton examined this very issue in eighteenth century colonial America and concluded that “the hierarchical
organization of such marriages, therefore, did not preclude their being solidly based on mutual affection” (Norton 1980,
64). See chapter 2 in her book for many examples.
least, egalitarian aspects of intimacy exist in particular circumstances of relationships, while other non-equal aspects (be they complementary or hierarchical) might prevail in other circumstances, so that the contradiction would never emerge as such. In other words, it is possible for people to relate to one another equally in the romantic or intimate aspects of their lives, and unequally in relations to the division of labour in the home without this causing any great difficulties.

Additionally, distorting the perception of inequality in the family is not the only way such a putative dissonance can be resolved. Another way would be for subjects to drop their belief in the necessity or desirability of equality in the family. If Bittman and Pixley’s analysis were correct we would expect a large number of people to resolve the dissonance by this way, too. Bittman and Pixley would argue that a sense of equality is a psychological imperative for romantic attachment, and this is presumably the reason why social agents do not resort to that strategy. It is, nonetheless, quite conceivable for people to drop any belief in the necessity of romance for marriage, and have stable long-lasting marital unions which are not held together by romance. (In fact, if Bittman and Pixley’s analysis were correct, it would be hard to imagine the historical scenario whereby romance could have become so intricately linked with marriage in the first place.) This, in addition to the evidence I presented above to the effect that inequality and romantic attachments are not mutually exclusive, makes the absence of any resolutions of the dissonance by means of accepting inequality in the family cast further doubt on the utility of this particular use of cognitive dissonance theory.

Bittman and Pixley’s demonstration of inequality itself contains a few theoretical gaps. The use of time-allocation studies of housework as an operationalisation of inequality or immiseration is problematic. The authors assume that there is a uniform disutility value for the work whether paid or unpaid. This assumption is hard to justify. One hour of washing dishes may not be the same as one hour of sociological research, and neither would equal one hour of manual labour at a blast furnace, one hour of changing nappies, one hour of sex work etc. If the accounts are right regarding the amount of time men and women work, and if men and women feel there is a measure of equality in their relationships, perhaps the uniform disutility assumption needs to be modified. (It is a simple algebraic procedure to calculate a series of disutility coefficients for the hours of work involved in different tasks which would equalise the disutility value of the total time men and

14 This use of time-allocation studies, though, is quite common in sociological literature. The conceptual framework of such attempts to gauge gender inequality through quantitative studies of housework division has also been criticised recently (eg VanEvery 1997).
women spend on work.) The possibility that disutility values of activities might also vary by age, class and gender, for example, is not even considered.

The difficulty with operationalising inequality through time-use measures comes to a head when considering the position of children in a two-parent household. The contribution of the former to carrying out house duties is very low. This should indicate that children exercise superior power over parents, and exploit them. Indeed, Bittman and Pixley conclude that “These findings are consistent with the idea that parents bear a disproportionate amount of the housework burden, that is, parents are in a sense slaves to their children” (Bittman & Pixley 1997, 103). However, all the mechanisms that according to Bittman and Pixley support male domination in the household (such as control over economic capital), should support parental domination over children. This leads to a contradiction of sorts. If economic dependency is behind familial oppression, children are oppressed. If the amount of housework done represents the extent of oppression, parents are oppressed. The suggestion that children enslave their parents might strike a chord with many a weary parent, but cannot be sustained by a closer observation of the power relations as they are negotiated in practice within the family, nor is it consistent with figures concerning youth homelessness and child abuse when compared with parental homelessness and parental abuse. Simply put, the relative share of home keeping that one performs is not in and of itself an accurate measure of immiseration or power inferiority. 15

The related proposition that women sacrifice their desired career opportunities in order to carry out the additional hours of housework makes the assumption that if not required to carry out their homemaking capabilities they would have the choice of a career, and they would pursue these careers. This is a very class specific assumption. Various surveys have shown that women’s career aspirations in large segments of society are not the same as men’s. Many, including full-time workers, report they would rather be involved in the labour market on a part-time basis. 16

15 In chapter eight above I analysed this pattern of unequal exchange between parents and children when discussing the symbolic struggle over capital, and its denial.
16 The polemical way Bittman and Pixley dismiss suggestions to the contrary does not advance the debate much. Consider this thinly veiled putdown: “Recent arguments suggest that upper- and middle-class couples are the most advantaged from their dual-earnings status, on the grounds that most low-income households are one-earner or non-earning units (Jamrozik & Sweeney 1996). This idea is supported by British sociologist Catherine Hakim, who suggests that ‘career women’ are quite different from the majority of women who ‘prefer’ part-time jobs at most, which do not detract from a lifetime of home-making and caring (Hakim 1995; Ginn et al. 1996). Such suggestions are immensely popular among conservative politicians” (Bittman & Pixley 1997, 254). This is the full extent of the authors’ rebuttal of the argument that women and men might sometimes play for different stakes in the family game.
Moreover, a great many working-class men and women may have no access to a “career”, unless several decades in fitting and turning, assembly line work, or the like count as a career. In fact, the working conditions of working-class people might be such that lackluster housekeeping chores might be preferable in that they are less degrading than the experience which the labour market provides. It is instructive to read Bittman and Pixley’s analysis of the relative peculiarities of homemaking compared with waged labour. They do so in the context of criticising “the technological conceptions of the future” (Bittman & Pixley 1997, 120 ff.), and become oblivious to this very analysis when considering the implications of different patterns of involvement in the labour market. “The housewife is the last of the unspecialised workers—the contemporary housewife is a ‘veritable jane-of-all-trades’ at a time when the jacks-of-all-trades have disappeared (Cowan 1985, p.198) [. . .] in this sphere of work ‘the manager and the worker are the same person’. This has meant that the ‘whole point of Taylor’s management science—to concentrate planning and intellectual skills in the management specialists—is necessarily lost in the one-woman kitchen’ (Ehrenreich & English 1979, p.147)” (Bittman & Pixley 1997, 122, 123). Very much in light of Marxist conceptions of alienation and critiques of specialisation, this further undermines the logic of universal disutility attached to hours of labour. For those labourers who work in a highly differentiated environment, under conditions of great alienation, the experience of waged labour might well be worse than the unspecialised, unalienated labour in the domestic domain.

Refusing to accept that the career aspirations of many Australian women might not be the same as those of sociologists, Bittman and Pixley assume that women are helpless victims of arrangements which prevent them from pursuing some fulfilling and profitable career. Consequently the dynamics of family life in their view are reduced to active males and passive females. For example: “there is a persistent pattern showing that, on average, Australian males will transfer indoor housework to their wives upon marriage, and devote any increase in time spent on domestic tasks to traditionally ‘masculine’ outdoor activities. The appearance of infant children will produce a strengthening of the pattern of sex segregation in domestic tasks” (Bittman & Pixley 1997, 152). But what are women doing as their husbands transfer more drudgery to them? One might be forgiven for getting the impression that women’s destiny lies solely in the hands of their exclusively agential husbands. This removal of agency from women is not based on any observational data, but is a reflection of the stereotyped view of the housewife from the fraction of society most committed to seriality and individualism.
Bittman and Pixley’s theoretical commitment to the uniformity of interest calculations across society and their refusal to accept that men and women might have different interests and preferences, blinds them to the implications of some of their very own quantitative data. The question of different standards of cleanliness is a case in point. The argument for different standards is extremely common in accounting for the fact that women ‘spontaneously’ tend to do the bulk of cleaning work without the distribution of housework being formally discussed. Bittman and Pixley argue that men and women do not have different standards of cleanliness. The problem with their argument is that figures they quote in other contexts seem to contradict their contention of uniformity of standards. For example, when discussing the figures on time spent on domestic chores by young men and women who live alone the authors conclude:

The rise in men’s unpaid work on leaving home, is, however, made more dramatic only because it is an increase from a very low base. Whereas at home sons devote 12 minutes in a whole week to laundry, ironing and clothes care (perhaps about the time it takes to dump one’s dirty washing in the laundry basket), this increases to 1 hour 9 minutes per week among men living alone. It is almost half the time spent by women living alone. The same is true of the increase in cleaning and tidying. In relation to cooking, however, men living alone spend a comparable time to their female counterparts, despite the fact that those still at home barely do any cooking (Bittman & Pixley 1997, 104).

In other words, women living alone spend twice as much time on domestic chores than men living alone. The only two explanations I can think of for this are greater efficiency on men’s part, an unlikely explanation, or a difference in standards of cleanliness and housework. The difference in standards along gender lines is further confirmed when considering the situation in shared households.

In the case of shared households, women’s hours spent in indoor work are marginally lower than those spent by women living alone and considerably higher than those of daughters at home. Men in shared households, in contrast, spend substantially less time than men living alone on these indoor tasks and in some cases this represents only a fractional change from their pattern as sons at home. Since these figures about shared households are an average of all shared households regardless of sex composition, it appears that if women share with women, the standards of housework are higher than if men share with men. If women share with men, it would seem that women do a disproportionate share. It is possible to conclude that shared households are not, as was sometimes
believed [...] in the vanguard of the movement to gender equity” (Bittman & Pixley 1997, 104–105).

While the latter conclusion is not, strictly speaking, a necessary conclusion from the preceding summation, it is significant that the standards of all-women households seem to be remarkably higher than those of all-men households.

In light of this, Bittman and Pixley’s denial of the gender differences in standards is astonishing. The contradictions in their own material are hidden by a gap of several chapters. The figures quoted above are in chapter 4, “Working for Nothing”, in which the authors seek to prove that women spend more time on housework than men do. When discussing differing standards in chapter 6, “Pseudomutuality: the Disjunction between Domestic Inequality and the Ideal of Equality” the authors contend that such differences in standards do not exist. This they base solely on a series of phone interviews with 220 Sydney couples in which respondents were asked questions like “When do you think the washing up should be done?” and were offered various set responses like “straight after a meal”, “at the end of the day” etc. Similar questions were asked regarding other tasks. Women and men differed little in their responses. This the authors take to demonstrate that there is no difference in standards of house cleaning between men and women (Bittman & Pixley 1997, 159–164). This argument is extremely weak given the power of evidence stacked in favour of a difference in standards between men and women. Also, the general nature of the interview questions invited general responses. They are totally divorced from the practicalities of concrete behaviour. Differences in standards might be revealed, perhaps, not in the answer to the question of when a particular chore should be done, but by questions more along the lines of “if you are tired and very busy, do you think you might leave the dishes in the sink for later?” Or “how uncomfortable would you feel knowing that the dishes had not been done and are waiting in the sink?” or “How embarrassed would you feel if your next door neighbour walked in and the dishes were stacked up in the kitchen?”

The explanations that the Sydney couples did give to the patterns of division of labour in their home were very instructive, though, and Bittman and Pixley might have taken them a bit more seriously.

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17 Although one recent qualitative study I have come across suggests that this conclusion of Bittman and Pixley’s may well be correct (Lindsay 1999), the question must remain open.

18 The difference in standards between men and women was also reiterated in my interviews with women and focus groups, where it was confirmed to me that social pressure towards high standards of cleanliness was either internalised by women (for example in the form of shame if their homes or children were not up to par in their presentation), or embodied in comments from other women—mothers, mothers-in-law, female friends—but not men, see chapter five.
They write that “the interviews provided further evidence that few people think a male breadwinner and a female home-maker is a sound basis for parity between the sexes. In the couples surveyed, most men used the notions of competence or preference instead: women specialise in doing the housework and childcare because they are better at it or because they like it more than their husbands” (Bittman & Pixley 1997, 164–165). The absence of women’s explanations from Bittman and Pixley’s text is curious, but conforms to their depiction of total passivity on the part of women in families. More importantly, the fact that people experience the social patterns as personal preferences is not a contradiction. Bourdieu’s concept of habitus is but one device which was devised precisely to account for the social organisation of subjectivity which is evident in instances, like this one, in which personal choices are distributed in a socially patterned manner—in this instance in a gendered way. Furthermore, following the lead of Young I have argued above that some activities are incorporated differently by men and women. Bittman and Pixley’s disregard for the natives’ explanations of the way they conduct their lives is therefore not altogether justified. In this context it is interesting to note the finding that “A majority of respondents, both women and men, suggested they had never discussed the allocation of unpaid work” (Bittman & Pixley 1997, 167). In other words, whatever is behind the division of labour in families does not normally include explicit coercion on the part of men. Rather, it would seem that both men and women gravitate spontaneously towards their socially prescribed destinies. This reflects precisely the social conditioning of habitus.

Their misconstruction of women’s practice ultimately drives Bittman and Pixley to wonder why women still marry. After all, they rhetorically ask, “Who would want marriage (or cohabitation) if it is only about male sexual access, or even mutual access, and acrimonious disputes over male demands for domestic servicing?” (Bittman & Pixley 1997, 234). The answer is, of course, probably nobody. But then, this presentation of marriage conforms neither to objective reality nor to the way family life is experienced. I should reiterate here, there are no data to show that men put forth demands for domestic servicing in the book, nor any data to indicate that that is the major source of acrimony in the family. None whatsoever. The source of this muddle is a confused theory of practice, a lack of theoretical reflexivity, and a low regard for the interviewees’ understanding and construction of reality.

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19 The same is true of my informants, Richards’ (Richards 1985, chapter 5), and others.
Much of Bittman and Pixley’s confusion is the result of the distance of the researchers from their subjects. Other lines of sociological research, mostly qualitative, which converge with anthropological research methods are compelled to relate their understanding of practice to the native point of view. Not surprisingly, these studies highlight both the fact that women play an active role in reproducing the gender order, and that many women do not feel victimised by the gendered nature of the division of labour (Dempsey 1997a; Dempsey 1992; Dempsey 1990, 289 ff.; Bryson & Wearing 1985, 363).

Dempsey, in his recent book, ascribed the continuation of the traditional division of labour to the stranglehold that traditional ideologies have over women, especially, and over men. The concept of ideology here is a tool he uses to account for the seemingly irrational recalcitrance of the old division of labour. He runs into some contradiction when he notes that couples are more likely to couch their relationships in terms of partnership, but are still not following through with an egalitarian division of labour. This he resolves by arguing for the continuing influence of the traditional ideologies. To my mind, Dempsey’s analysis makes the original mistake of assuming a uniformity of interests between men and women, which then leads him to account for women’s active role in reproducing the social order in terms of the effect of traditional ideologies; he then makes the secondary mistake of assuming the logic of practice obeys rules of formal logic, a fact which creates a contradiction between the increase in explicit egalitarian discourse on the family on the one hand, and the lack of equality in the division of labour on the other.

In her analysis which is based on in-depth interviews Richards (Richards 1985) was able to express similar concerns to Bittman and Pixley’s about some of the contradictions in the modern family without having to resort to psychologistic mystification in order to sustain an untenable theory of practice. She constructs two ideal types (or “clusters of social norms” as she defines them) of families: the “old”, and the “new”, one representing the traditional, the other the egalitarian model (for a table summary of the two types see “Table C” at Richards 1985, 294–295). Modern families are located on a continuum between those two poles, and therefore contain some confusion. This confusion comes to the fore immediately following the birth of the first child, especially over the role that should be played by the mother (Richards 1985, chapter 16). Interestingly, in the overall analysis here, as in Bittman and Pixley’s work (and many others), the main focus of the confusion in the family is the role of the mothers/wives, and the division of labour. Also in line with Bittman

20 Dempsey’s description of lack of change has been criticised (Gilding 1997), although whether there is little change or no change is not a matter of great significance for my purposes here.
and Pixley (and many others), there is a notion that the confusion rate is greater now than ever before. Both these conclusions do not derive directly from the empirical reality Richards studied. For example, the role of economically dependent young adults in the household is no less a source of confusion in families. Furthermore, the rate of change in the families is not necessarily greater now than before. Surely the transition from the Great Depression years to the post-WWII suburban rush must have entailed a great deal of confusion, too. The legendary increase in Valium consumption and similar drug use by housewives might attest to that fact. Similarly, the transition from the Roaring 20s to the Great Depression must have produced some confusion. In fact, what Richards describes as an “old” family is in fact the ‘traditional family’ of the 1950s and not a fixed traditional form. Ultimately, social agents have always been able to incorporate contradictions (or at least what might formally be seen as contradictions) in their practice, and always did.

While writing from a similar perspective to Bittman and Pixley's, Lois Bryson (Bryson 1996) was able to give a much more useful account of the practice of social agents (Bryson 1985). Bryson sought to approach the practice of women by a closer understanding of the logic of their practice, rather than by pre-judging whether their practice is logical. Bryson argued that women exercise power within the domestic sphere by virtue of their autonomy. A more egalitarian division of labour does not appeal to many women because it would mean that they would be giving away some autonomy, and getting in return a marginalised position in the labour market (Bryson 1985, 96–99).

Bryson's approach is indeed a great improvement over Bittman and Pixley's in that she is willing to examine the actual consequences of alternative practices of social agents rather than project her own circumstances on to society at large. Rather than view all social agents as essentially the same, she allows for interests to vary systemically so that men and women might differ in their interests. Where I disagree with her approach is that she is still committed to a rationalist theory of practice in which the logic of practice is the pursuit of relative power. This then acts as a rationalisation, rather than an explanation, of practice. Thus Bryson's analysis relies on the fact that the access that women might gain to the public domain is restricted, and therefore not worth the losses in reduced autonomy which will accompany the greater participation of the husband in the household. But this does not seem to account for the fact that even women who participate in the labour market on a full-time basis retain the major responsibility for household tasks (Bryson 1996, 214). Moreover, this analysis begs the question of why most women do not make full use of the lifting of formal restrictions on their labour-force participation to try to seek non-marginal positions in the
marketplace. Furthermore, given that in dominated-class settings the access of men to the economy is also marginal—they are workers, and not capitalists—Bryson’s analysis runs the risk of constituting as irrational men’s attachment to the labour market, and their disinclination to seek equality in the division of labour within the household.

In my heuristic approach I have proceeded the opposite way from Bryson. The fact that my female informants tended to spontaneously seek control over the domestic domain while my male informants tended to spontaneously dominate the household’s access to the labour market suggest that there is something in the constitution of the subjectivity of men and women that, within the prevailing social circumstances, incline women and men towards somewhat different goals. This conclusion seems to be borne out by a recent survey of women’s attitudes to work—most prefer to work only part-time and remain main caregivers (see above chapter two, and Wolcott 1997; Baxter 2000; Baxter & Western 1998; Baxter et al. 1996). The resilience of the division of responsibility over the past decades, and the relative fixity of the division of actual labour over the same time, would suggest that this pattern is the result of internalised dispositions rather than external conditions. In other words, while I am persuaded by Bryson’s argument that women’s reluctance to break down the gendered division of labour might well have the effect of securing their grip over the domestic domain, and while this might or might not motivate their reluctance to equalise the division of labour, this is not the reason that women specialise in the domestic domain, but rather the result of that specialisation. In other words, the domestic division of labour is part of a broader gendered division of social labour, and predicated upon it (even as it reproduces it).

In general, I think that most of the confusion in the conceptualisation of practice derives from the fact that in their haste to quantify and measure, scholars are often reluctant to turn the logic of practice into an object of investigation in its own right. Above I advocated a heuristic approach which aims precisely at teasing out the logic of practice in the field of kinship and family.

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21 In her analysis of Norwegian women’s emotional investment in daily cooking, Fürst argued that cooking is incorporated into the feminine identity. She then proceeded to analyse the rationality of the practice which derives from this (Fürst 1997). Fürst’s approach exemplifies the kind of approach that I am advocating here.
Appendix A

Acronyms, Abbreviations and Australianisms

ABC—Australian Broadcasting Corporation
ABS—Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACT—Australian Capital Territory
AIFS—Australian Institute of Family Studies
ALP—Australian Labor [sic.] Party
AMEU—Automotive, Metals and Engineering Union
AWU-FIME—the AWU-FIME Amalgamated Union (the Australian Workers Union)
ANZAC—Australian and New Zealand Army Corps
AUSTUDY—A federal program providing financial support to students.
Baby-farm—“A derogatory term for a place where the lodging and care of babies is undertaken for profit. Hence baby-farming vbl. n., the keeping of such a place; also ppl. a.; baby-farmed ppl. a.; baby-farmer.” (Oxford English Dictionary, Second Edition, s.v. “baby-farm”).
Buckley’s, or Buckley’s and None—No chance whatsoever
The Bush—the rural sector of society or the economy
CEPU—Communications, Electrical and Plumbing Union
Cuppa—a cup of tea
Digger—a soldier, especially an ANZAC soldier in World War I
Appendix A

Dunny—“an outside toilet found in unsewered areas, usu. At some distance from the house it serves and consisting of a small shed furnished with a lavatory seat placed over a sanitary can” *(Macquarie Dictionary of Australian English, Second Revision, s.v. “dunny”).*

DSS—Department of Social Security


Lounge room—living room

Nappy, Nappies—diaper

NSW—New South Wales

P&C (PCA)—Parents and Citizens Association

Penalty rate—“a rate of pay determined by an award, higher than the usual rate, in compensation for working outside the normal spread of hours.” *(Macquarie Dictionary of Australian English, Second Revision, s.v. “penalty rate”).*

TLC—Trades and Labour Council
Bibliography


1 In transliteration from non-European languages I preferred to give a close phonetic approximation rather than adhere to a strict system of transliteration. Otherwise, this bibliography is based on Man style. I have nonetheless included some data which are not normally part of the Man style, such as dates of original publication of various works.
Bibliography


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