

# INTERTWINED REFRACTIONS: THE MUTUAL CONSTITUTION OF GENDER STYLE AND CLASS FRACTION IN A DE-INDUSTRIALIZING AUSTRALIAN TOWN

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Based on fieldwork among urban working-class Australians, I divide the dominated class into two fractions, dominated and dominant, and use this as a basis for analysis of the multiple gender styles which have been observed in working-class Australia. I argue that masculine style and class-fraction location are mutually constitutive. I also explain why feminine style is not as diverse as masculine style, nor is the location of women within working-class fractions as definite as that of men. Finally, I suggest that not only within the working class, but also between classes, gender style and class location are mutually constitutive.

Recently, Bourdieu (1990; 1994; 1996-7; 1998) has developed his analysis of masculine domination as an instance of symbolic domination *par excellence*. He argues that masculine domination is doxic, and is incorporated into the very subjectivity of social agents.

Bourdieu further argues that in class-divided societies, men are drawn to the games of politics, arts, and science – the meaningful games of power in society. Women, on the other hand, are largely kept out of these games by the structures of symbolic violence, that is, by the very preferences and dispositions inscribed into their bodies. Thus, even where no formal rules or informal practices purposefully exclude them from the games of power, women exclude themselves because it is in the internalized structures of habitus that their dominated position is rooted. Further, it is these dispositions which hinder women from effectively mobilizing against exclusory rules and practices where they do exist (with the conspicuous exception of the feminist movement) (Bourdieu 1998).

When he launched his recent analytical foray into the gender order, Bourdieu (1990) developed his analysis of male domination in the Kabyle classless society. From there he (1998) sought to elaborate an analysis of the deep Mediterranean structure of masculine domination that still underlies the modern European gender order. When considering classed European society, he focused on the males of the dominant class, identifying politics, arts, and sciences as the masculine games. He is, of course, correct to point out that women are largely excluded from this domain. He does not point out in this

context, though, that the males of the dominated class are no less excluded from the dominant-class males' games. This is the result of his attempt to distil that which is constant across society. Here, I seek to break with the focus on the societal constant, and re-situate masculine domination within social space.

My analysis is based on my familiarity with Australian society as an observant participant since 1989, but mostly on my formal ethnographic fieldwork from late 1994 until early 1996 among workers and their families in Newcastle, NSW, Australia, and on some later follow-up research. My informants came predominately from the shrinking, traditional industrial working class. They included tradesmen, semi-professionals, foremen, mid-level clerical workers, trade unionists, and their families. They were mostly of Northern and Western European extraction, or at least identified with the 'non-ethnic' or 'true-blue' mainstream society. In total I had rather close and continuous contact with around fifteen informants, I ran four focus groups (two with men, two with women), and conducted interviews (both formal and informal) with many more.

### *Masculine domination in the working class*

One thing the working class and the employing class do have in common is the domination of the masculine perspective. This, however, is complicated by class location. Working-class genderedness is intimately linked with the genderedness of the labour market. Despite substantial exceptions, the Australian labour market has been masculinized in a process that reached its peak in the early years of the twentieth century, being institutionalized, among other ways, in the family wage (Game & Pringle 1983; Gilding 1991; Grimshaw 1983; Reiger 1985; 1991). The labouring male and his body, which is 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, Blackley (1996; cf. Hobsbawm 1978; Rose 1992) demonstrated that the iconography of the labour movement from the 1920s through at least the 1970s celebrated the body of the male manual labourer.

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 signifies those classes as a synecdoche, and stands 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 both male and female working-class informants had in mind. Similarly, when referring to the ruling class, the males of that class were what my interlocutors would normally imagine.<sup>1</sup>

Working-class gender practice is, of course, no more uniform than the working class itself. Within the working class, different fractions stand in an antagonistic relation to one another. Here, too, much of the symbolic struggle centres on styles of masculinity. In order to interpret the social logic of their practical structures of gender, my informants' social position needs to be clarified.

In what follows, I will contextualize the manifestations of the gender order, and analyse the mutually constitutive relationship between the gender order and the prevailing class structure among my informants. First, I will consider the internal structure of the working class, and the contradictions among its fractions as they appear among my informants. I will then discuss different gender styles within the working class, and relate those to the structure of the working class. I will 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 will 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 will conclude by suggesting that gender style and class location are mutually constitutive not only within the working class, but also across classes. However, because my substantive analysis here is confined to the symbolic aspects of working-class gender style, I will not explore this latter theme here.

### *The internal structure of the working class*

Adapting Bourdieu's (1984) relational terminology, 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. The Australian labour market, like all modern capitalist labour markets, is segmented (Boreham & Hall 1993). The distinction I am drawing between the dominant and dominated fractions of the dominated class relates to the distinction often drawn in various studies between the primary and the secondary labour markets. The secondary labour market offers casual employment and dead-end jobs, is characterized 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 and without promotion, accompanied by high levels of unemployment. By contrast, the primary labour market, which is largely organized around large corporate employers' internal labour markets, provides workers with better working conditions and greater job security.

Positions that are filled 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 unionization, 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 deindustrialization in Newcastle. All those whom I encountered who 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. Members of the dominant fraction of the dominated class directly dominate the dominated fraction in various contexts, which I will illustrate drawing on 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 organizations such as lay church groups, unions, Australian Labor Party branches, single-issue organizations, or parental mobilization around schools, those in leadership positions were much more likely to be members of the dominant fraction of the dominated class. 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 main 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 tenants on such properties were very likely to be members of the dominated fraction 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 fraction. 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 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 fraction. 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.

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 unionized workplaces, continuously put the dominant fraction and its style in opposition to that of the dominated fraction and its style. Nevertheless, both fractions shared their basic 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 Newcastle, mostly to offshore locations,

the most common mobility was downwards through retrenchment and unemployment, from the dominant fraction to the dominated. 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.<sup>2</sup> 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 in the fact that siblings 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, specializing in education, and very much in the dominated fraction of the dominant class.

### *Class structure and masculinity in the dominated class*

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. Metcalfe (1988: 73–125), following E.P. Thompson, distinguished between two kinds of Australian working-class masculinity, ‘larrikin’ and ‘respectable’. He associated the respectable with mature, settled, breadwinning males; and the larrikin with young, rough-around-the-edges, unruly males. 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 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’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 *Mn(m)*,<sup>3</sup> in his 30s, who recounted how, as an adolescent, he had very little interest in school, performed badly there, and was often in trouble with teachers. He left after Year 10, 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. At the time of my fieldwork he had become a salaried staff member. Having his current family responsibilities meant that he lost his flexibility in moving in and out of jobs. He resented that loss of flexibility and 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 adopted other aspects of respectable masculinity too. He cut down on his drinking (although he is no teetotaler 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.

At the time of my fieldwork 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. 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 dropped, as has the quality of the labour experience. Further, general awareness of the harmful effects of smoking and excessive drinking has also become more widespread. In other words, that which informants like *Mu(m)* might experience as a personal change in style may be partially a reflection of a broader social change around them. Still, the fact that informants identify the process of ageing with transformations in gender style, and the fact that similar findings have been made in earlier periods (e.g. that covered by Metcalfe), 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 (1991: 17 ff.) 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. In other words, in 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 (on the different types of capital see, among others, Bourdieu 1986; on physical capital see Wacquant 1995). The other is a shift from *larrikin* style to respectable style of masculinity.

Metcalfe observed the transition in masculinity style over individual lifespans. Donaldson related this 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 will allow me to generalize the association of the relative weight of cultural capital with respectable masculinity. I am arguing that this is a general link that 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 a recent work on masculinities 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 (1995: 109 ff.) associates protest masculinity with the most disempowered segment of the working class, 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, exemplifies 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 held 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 men 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.

*Mf(m)* was the brother of one of the two nominal residents 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 toilet outside and urinated from the window onto the driveway. He and his friends also broke into the video shop around the corner (which landed *Mf(m)* in gaol for a short period of time), broke into the second-hand store across the road, and nicked a fuel cap and an electric shaver from an impoverished graduate student of anthropology. It was the conduct of *Mf(m)* and his male comrades that ultimately brought about the eviction of the whole group.

*CC(m)*, also from Islington, provides another example of the association of masculinity style with class fraction. Throughout his life *CC(m)* 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. *CC(m)* was born into the dominated fraction of the dominated class in 1927. He grew up in a shanty town on the outskirts of Sydney during the Great Depression, where he and his family were 'living like hillbillies'.<sup>4</sup> His parents were 'virtually illiterate' and 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. *CC(m)*'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 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'. *CC(m)*, both in his biography and in his self-presentation, exemplifies the association of class fraction and larrikin masculine style.

*CC(m)*, and *Mf(m)* and his friends, can be opposed to *Mn(m)*, who exemplifies the respectable style of the dominant fraction and its reliance on cultural capital (*Mn(m)*'s training) to secure its position (in this instance *Mn(m)*'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 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. 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 of a particular fraction is not predetermined. Young males, at least of the ethnic mainstream, occupy a liminal space, and are yet to develop both a clear masculine style and the cultural capital that 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 (for a seminal analysis of these issues in England, see Willis 1977).

### *Masculinity and social reproduction*

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. This is another important way in which class fraction becomes linked to particular gender styles. Dominant-fraction parents attempted to instil various respectable-masculine skills and dispositions in their sons. One such skill was work ethic: in one dominant-fraction family 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 long 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 characterized 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. My dominant-fraction informants 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.

Both the clash of interests and the differences in masculinity style combined in daily life to produce a measure of social segregation along fraction lines within the dominated class. This is one way that gender style contributes to the making of Australian working-class fractions. Among my informants, at least, primary labour-market workers tended to associate with other primary labour-market workers both within and without 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 information which is significant for social reproduction. This process might also help account for the fact that in the transition from blue-collar to white-collar labour, there seems to be 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 organizers, who most contributed 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 they persisted in folklore.<sup>5</sup> In their own independent social networks, wives of primary labour-market workers and women who were themselves primary labour-market workers tended to socialize within their fraction rather than with women whose access, whether direct or indirect, was restricted to the secondary labour market. Immediate social 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 *Mn(m)* and his partner, *Ts(f)*, was typical in that it was virtually restricted to the dominant fraction, although it was much larger than most couples' networks. *Mn(m)* was a salaried staff member of a heavy-industry corporation, *Ts(f)* 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 *Mn(m)* and *Ts(f)* 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 *An(f)*, who was a training officer in the Public Service, and *Cy(m)*, who was employed in retail on a casual basis and otherwise worked on their property investment 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 organizer, a fellow worker in heavy industries (who was completing a postgraduate degree in cultural studies at the time), *Mn(m)*'s sister 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), or for a 'cuppa' and a 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. *Mn(m)* and *Ts(f)* and their friends (a group of ten to 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 *Mn(m)* and *Ts(f)*'s 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 backyard afforded enough space for the whole event. In 1995 there was one unusual feature to the event. The couple had been drinking a week or so before at the bar of a local club. *Mn(m)* got a bit tipsy, and ended up inviting all the people at the pub to the event. The turn-out 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 dominant-fraction friends tended to sit in one area. Another area was occupied by the guests who quite clearly 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 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 *Ts(f)* 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. *Ts(f)*, 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.

### *Working-class femininity*

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 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' properly to 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. 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. Consequently, 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 internalized structures of femininity, which incorporated an element of responsibility and self-sacrifice.

This internalized structure both adapted women to their social role as major care-givers, 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. The moral dividends of martyrdom were a major stake in many symbolic struggles between parents and offspring, as well as 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 that women are 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 with larrikin tendencies of their male partners, tendencies which might spell disaster to the household's income. All this makes 'respectable' femininity

common in the dominated fraction as well as in the dominant fraction of the dominated class. Something resembling the larrikin or protest styles 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 fraction than men were, especially if they had custody over dependent children (Wolcott, Weston & Winter 1997). 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 location. 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.

### *Beyond the internal gendered divisions of the dominated class*

The difference in gender styles within the dominated class should not be overemphasized. As I pointed out above, the material basis for the distinction between the fractions and their gender styles is hardly fixed. Mobility across the fractions is sufficient to undermine the solidification of the different fractions into distinct groups with clearly divergent class styles. Moreover, both fractions share a common position in the broad political economy. Thus, while

foremen and staff might be in explicit or implicit daily conflict with ordinary workers, they all share a similar position and fate in the larger scheme of things, because of their common total dependence on the labour market. When Newcastle's largest employer, BHP, wound down its operations there, workers of all fractions were laid off.

This common structural destiny of the working class is an important reason why the manifestations of gender style are often camouflaged by an internalized 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 with a local union organizer to a meeting with workers. In private discussions with me, the man adopted a respectable style of self-presentation and could eloquently recite the Australian Council of Trade Unions' firm policy on gender equity. When meeting with male workers at a steel plant, he resorted to a totally different style. His accent broadened, he would slap people on their backs 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 overcharged or having his car mischievously damaged.

More significantly, perhaps, the common structural destiny of the dominated class and its structural conflict with the dominant class lend themselves to the emergence of some unifying features of style across the dominated class, which are distinct from those of the dominant class. By the same token, the distribution of different styles of masculinity and femininity in the dominant and dominated classes, and the gender order more generally, profoundly affect the Australian class structure. Exactly how the structural conflict between the dominant and dominated class is refracted through the prism of the distribution of gender style, and how the structure of the distribution of gender styles affects the class structure, are critical questions to a social analysis of the distribution of gender style.

### *Conclusion*

In the preceding sections I argued that gender and class fissures are not entirely independent, nor is one an epiphenomenon of the other. Rather, the two motivate and refract one another.

In the process of pursuing this argument I refined Bourdieu's analytical scheme of class structure to encompass the contradictions within the dominated class. I identified two fractions, one dominant and the other dominated, whose positions are based primarily on their association with the segmented labour market of contemporary Australia. I related the internal class structure to the distribution of gender style by focusing on how the two intertwine in my informants' practice. I focused specifically on the process of accumulation of capital, and linked the accumulation and distribution of cultural and social capital, both as cause and as effect, to the constitution and distribution of

respectable and larrikin masculine styles. I also highlighted the identification of the male as the prototype of the class and class fractions, and the relative similarity in feminine style across the dominated class, as opposed to the more stark differences in masculine style. I related the relative homogeneity of feminine style to the comparatively ambiguous fraction location of women in the dominated class.

In relating gender styles to class fractions, and focusing on the connection between the accumulation of capital and gender style, I was able to use Bourdieu's terminology to go beyond his own analysis of gender. While in his own analysis he focused on a universal element of a cultural subconsciousness, I focused on practice to show how gender style and class-fraction association constitute one another.

Such a focus on practice may advance recent reformulations of the cultural constructionist approaches to gender in anthropology (e.g. Keeler 1990; Meigs 1990; Strathern 1981; for a brief review, see Moore 1994), by carrying these reformulations beyond some fundamental methodological limitations of cultural constructionism.

One such limitation is a deficient theory of practice which tends to construct humans as dupes of a purposive agent which is embodied in Society or in Culture. For example, Meigs's (1990) explanation of how, among the Hua of New Guinea, different gender ideologies come to be associated with different life-cycle stages reads like a functionally motivated trick which Hua culture plays on Hua people.<sup>6</sup> By contrast, my focus on style has accounted for an equivalent process among my male informants, a tendency to shift from larrikin to respectable masculinity with adulthood, by integrating a social logic (the distribution of capital) with the agential nature of social practitioners.

Another problem of cultural constructionism stems from a common focus on the behaviour and constructions that fall within the anthropologist's pre-conceived category of gender (e.g. relationships between men and women, and reproduction). By shifting the focus to internalized style, all aspects of practice can be analysed for their genderedness, including practices which vary in a gendered way without being explicitly gendered, such as manners of verbal expression (see above, and cf. Keeler 1990; Uhlmann 2000). This broad understanding of gender style that I have pursued can also be contrasted with the currently popular, narrow focus on explicit gender identity in anthropology (for a critical review, see Moore 1999: 160-9).

More generally, shifting the analytical focus to practice can turn both the agency of social agents, and its limits, into objects of social analysis. This will take us beyond the current realization that cultural constructs as distilled by anthropologists correlate badly with social practice (e.g. Keeler 1990; Moore 1994; Strathern 1981).

In highlighting practice I am following a line of researchers who studied gender practice in non-elite segments of class societies (e.g. Metcalfe 1988; Willis 1977). I have, however, differed from those researchers who have constructed marginal gender practice against a mainstream benchmark, while oscillating between social constructivism and psychologism. Connell (1996), for example, sees the process by which some men come to acquire hegemonic masculinity as a straightforward internalization of a gender ideology. But when

he approaches protest masculinity he sees it as a product of the psychological reaction of socially marginalized individual men to the oppressive conditions in which they live. Specifically, he argues that due to their marginalization, these men find it impossible to cash in on the patriarchal dividend – the economic benefits which normally accrue to men as a result of their dominance in the gender order – and consequently they develop the distinctive traits of protest masculinity. In other words, hegemonic masculinity is initially analysed from a cultural constructionist angle. Protest masculinity – in effect, a warped version of hegemonic masculinity – is then approached from a psychologistic angle.

Similarly, Bourgois's (1996: 354) recent ethnography of crack cocaine culture 'strives to uncover the linkages between individual pathology and social-structural oppression'. His methodology privileges the ethnographer's own segment of society as the source of things natural, and the ultimate benchmark for all other modes of behaviour. It then effectively reduces the subjects' styles to those ways in which the subjects differ from the benchmark. Those differences are then constituted, rather mechanistically, as the direct product of social-structural inequality. At the heart of Bourgois's theory of practice is a conviction that social agents are universally driven by a search for respect. It is the frustration of this search for respect which is the mechanism through which social disadvantage translates into the peculiarities of style (i.e. the pathologies) of Bourgois's subjects. In other words, their marginal socio-economic status subverts his subjects' existential search for respect, and in response to this they develop their idiosyncratic styles.<sup>7</sup> This deprivation of symbolic capital fulfils the same explanatory function in Bourgois's approach that the deprivation of material capital, the patriarchal dividend, fulfils in Connell's.

Here I have approached gender practice differently. Primarily, I have taken the total gender styles of my informants as phenomena to be explained without constituting the problematic as their deviation from a putative mainstream style. I used a relational scheme to focus on various aspects of gender style which appear to vary in a socially meaningful way. Moreover, by positing the different class fractions and their styles in relation to one another, I sought to highlight the systemic logic of the distribution of gender style, and its entanglement with the construction of class. In so doing I sought to avoid positing a unidirectional causal link from social inequality to gender style. Further, rather than rely on a psychologistic theory of practice, I used Bourdieu's heuristic economy of practice: I associated the variation in gender style with the distribution of social and cultural capital and with the ensuing class struggle of everyday life. This goes beyond the scope of some earlier works (e.g. Donaldson 1991; Metcalfe 1988), which had highlighted the relevance of the location of agents within the broader political-economic structure to the interpretation of their gender style, but which none the less stopped short of exploring the logic of this association in more detail, and of highlighting how style and social location become mutually constitutive.

Moreover, while there is definite analytical merit in provisionally bracketing gender for analytical purposes, it is critical to bear in mind that distinct domains of social relations do not exist in practice. In this, too, I differ from Connell (1996: 157) who insists that gender is a distinct domain of social

relations. The mutual constitution of gender style and class location means that a full understanding of either the gender order or the class structure can only be achieved by including both in a broader analytical framework of the reproduction of social space and the distribution of power across society. In this view the gender order should not be seen as ordering masculinity and femininity, but rather as ordering multiple styles – some feminine, others masculine, and possibly still others – according to the distribution of capital, both material and symbolic.

#### NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> I discuss the cognitive basis for this aspect of masculine domination in Uhlmann (2000).

<sup>2</sup> I write 'many others' and not 'all those who ended up in the dominated fraction', because this statement applies only to the working-class members of the dominant ethnic group (people of Western and Northern European origin), 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 ethnic minorities.

<sup>3</sup> In designating informants I use a two-letter code in italics to identify their names, and add (m) or (f) to indicate male or female.

<sup>4</sup> The quotations in this paragraph are from interviews I conducted with CC(m).

<sup>5</sup> In their lack of independent social networks, my male informants resemble working-class males from Britain (Allan 1979).

<sup>6</sup> Thus, Meigs (1990: 103) writes: 'This ideological transformation [between male youths who adhere to a "chauvinistic" gender ideology, and middle-aged men who hold an "egalitarian" gender ideology] is orchestrated by Hua society in order to achieve the satisfaction of competing needs for defense and reproduction'. And also (1990: 104): 'In addition to cycling diverse ideologies to different ages ... Hua culture assigns different gender ideologies to different relationships'. The Hua themselves are not explicitly aware of these processes which Hua society and culture orchestrate, as it were.

<sup>7</sup> While a search for respect, and its frustration, may well be significant elements of style among Bourgeois's male informants, the search for respect cannot be taken as a given psychological drive, nor can its frustration be taken as a straightforward explanation for social phenomena. Rather, the way the search for respect and its frustration are produced, experienced, and construed, should be analysed as social phenomena.

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## Réfractions entrelacées: la constitution réciproque des styles masculins et féminins et des fractions de classes dans une ville australienne en cours de désindustrialisation

### Résumé

Sur la base d'un travail sur le terrain parmi des Australiens urbains de classe ouvrière, je divise la classe dominée en deux fractions, dominée et dominante, et j'utilise cette division comme fondement pour l'analyse des styles masculins et féminins multiples qui ont été observés dans la classe ouvrière en Australie. Je soutiens qu'un style masculin et l'emplacement de la fraction de classe sont mutuellement constitutifs. J'explique aussi pourquoi le style féminin n'est pas aussi diversifié que le style masculin et pourquoi l'emplacement des femmes dans les frac-

tions de la classe ouvrière n'est pas aussi bien définie que celle des hommes. En conclusion, je suggère que les styles masculins et féminins se constituent mutuellement, non seulement au sein de la classe ouvrière mais aussi entre les classes.

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