

UHLMANN, ALLON J. *Family, gender and kinship in Australia: the social and cultural logic of practice and subjectivity*. xii, 198 pp., tables, bibliogr. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006. £55.00 (cloth)

Allon Uhlmann's account of family and kinship relations in de-industrializing Newcastle, New South Wales, represents the first published book-length study of (Anglo-Celtic) Australian kinship. The book has several aims: to provide an ethnographic report into kinship, family, and gender practices among the 'shrinking traditional industrial working class', based on fieldwork in the 1990s; to provide a critical exposition of the current social scientific understanding; and to provide a theoretical and methodological treatise on practice.

Based on work for a Ph.D in anthropology at the Australian National University, the book relies heavily on a theoretical framework drawn from the work of Bourdieu in order to analyse the logic of kinship practice. The study population was derived mainly from Anglo-Celtic members of what Uhlmann terms the dominant fractions of the working class: tradesmen, semi-professionals, foremen, mid-level clerical

workers, trade unionists, and their families. The study provides a useful exploration of studies of family and kinship in Australia past and present, and of the theoretical debates about family of the last few decades (chap. 3), arguing convincingly that the pervasive sense of recent cataclysmic crises and shifts in the family is unjustified. Uhlmann stresses instead the historical continuity and resilience of kinship and family practices, although there have been important changes like the lengthening liminal phase of youth and deferrals of childbearing. He analyses the underlying logic of kinship, focusing on terminology and associated etiquette, with reproduction and filiation seen as the significant principle structuring relatedness and extended kin organized and mobilized as social categories of the ego-centred kindred. His rigorous application of Bourdieusian schemes, which may not be to the taste of everyone, leads him to a persuasive core argument about the realized category of the prototypical nuclear family (chap. 4), and of the doxic, orthodox, and heterodox family. This schema works well to account for the variability of contemporary family forms in Australia and their relationship to the prototypical family.

The book's lengthy exploration of the gender order and embodied subjectivities argues that kinship, family, and gender practices have conditioned the very structure of capitalism, with the power relationship between home and the marketplace being fundamental to this (p. 141). There are convincing accounts, within the preferred frame, of the prototypical family as a cognitive paradigm for gender practice, of masculinity as symbolic violence, and of the workings of the doxic association of women with the domestic domain, which inverts masculine domination. There is also an interesting section on mateship, a prevailing theme in the sometimes nationalistic anthropology of the Australian family, with some writers even seeing the (male) mate as part of the family. Uhlmann, like his informants, is sceptical of the importance of such homosociality, seeing it as an essential but anachronistic part of Australian mythology, rather than Australian social practice (p. 65).

While Uhlmann does note, as others have before him, that women do much of the kin-work, the account could have returned to some earlier feminist complexifications of the arguments about domestic labour, which took issue with more functionalist accounts of the capitalist system and its relationships with domestic labour. The Bourdieusian approach, with its emphasis on reproduction, can tend to

over-emphasize the 'fit' between the prevailing order and domestic labour. French feminists, for one, were critical of Bourdieu for ignoring their work, and indeed there are continuing issues around the relationship of Bourdieusian analysis and feminist analysis, which might profitably have been explored a little more. Similarly, greater discussion of the many debates about the highly unstable categories of 'public' and 'private' and their character in modern society, as well as the role of long-term migration and transnational family relations in shaping contemporary Australian urban kinship patterns, would have been worthwhile.

Uhlmann's study is none the less a very welcome departure from what he has elsewhere convincingly characterized as the besetting sin of Australian family sociology, an over-emphasis on practical policy. His theoretically rigorous and richly detailed analysis of the structures and logic of Australian family and kinship within a Bourdieusian frame provides an innovative addition to the existing literature on Australia.

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