

INCORPORATING MASCULINE DOMINATION: Theoretical and Ethnographic Elaborations

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In a series of recent publications (Bourdieu 1990; Bourdieu 1994; Bourdieu 1996-1997; Bourdieu 1998), Pierre 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 (psychosomatic) dispositions (tastes, modes of action and so forth). Consequently, both gender differences in style, and their consequences, are naturalized. In specific instances, they appear to derive from peculiar life choices of particular individuals. The social systemic differences between men and women are construed as expressions of innate, pre-social tendencies that distinguish males from females.

In this paper I will take up the second process Bourdieu discusses, and focus on some gender-specific aspects of habitus. My analysis here is based on my ethnographic fieldwork from late 1994 until early 1996 among workers and their families in Newcastle, NSW, Australia, and some later follow-up research. My informants came mostly 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 from Northern and Western European extraction, or at least identified with the “non-ethnic” “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.

Among my informants the feminisation of the domestic domain, and masculinisation of the marketplace, are incorporated into both male and female habitus. 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 George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in their exploration of the cognitive basis of meaning (Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Johnson 1987; Lakoff 1987). There were several reasons for this analytical shift. My informants’ worldview was too fractured, contradictory and unsystematic to be summarized in a neat,

overarching chart like that which Bourdieu used for Kabyle cosmology (see, for example, 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 realized category of the family, which Bourdieu himself has recently analysed (Bourdieu 1996), 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. Familial structures like single-parent families, on the other hand, 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. 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).

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 (cf. 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 conceptualize 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 and 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 agents subsequently apply 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. Lakoff argues that motivation is a central phenomenon in cognition (Lakoff 1987:96, 346). This principle of motivation 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).

The prototypical family is central to my informants' gender order. Materially, the link between femininity and the domestic domain in societies like my informants' means that the political-economic role of the domestic domain and the political-economic standing of women are mutually constitutive. This anthropological truism begs the question of how femininity and the domestic domain remain attached. I will not discuss here the historical evolution of the separation of the domestic domain from the marketplace, and the emergence of the modern political economy (see Zaretsky 1982 for one influential account). Rather, I will focus here on what keeps women and men, femininity and masculinity, differently related to the domestic domain and the marketplace. The gender differences, I argue, are internalized into habitus, and organized in line with the different functions prototypical men and prototypical women fulfil in the prototypical family.

The prototypical family provides a concrete experiential paradigm for being man or woman, a paradigm that helps organize behaviour in other contexts too. Specifically, it is the 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 relations¹. 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 (cf. Yanagisako and 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 notions of masculinity and femininity. This was most apparent when my informants were called to task 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 naturalized and attributed to some maternal instinct or similar predisposition of females and males to fulfil their usual reproductive and familial roles. (Significantly, my informants' term of preference for gender was sex, with its clear biologicistic implication.) 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 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 think about gender differences, they very often envisage males and females in their prototypical reproductive, emotional and domestic roles. These roles are immediately accessible, and mediate the way gender in other contexts, and gender in general, is experienced.

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, does not necessarily indicate that conceptions of gender are different among those who organize 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.

Quite a few of the non-traditional divisions of labour resulted from the transformation of the labour market — most importantly the collapse of the traditional heavy industries which formed the backbone of the labour market for males in Newcastle. 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 was an occupational therapist. Her husband had been retrenched several years before, and was working casually as a taxi driver. In another instance the wife was employed at middle level HRD in the public service, while her husband, 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.

Remarkably, in both instances the discrepancy between the common practice and the standard division of labour was explained 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 internalized dispositions of the members of such heterodox couples led them to adopt strategies which reproduced the dominant forms of gender, organized as they are around a prototypical division of productive, reproductive and social labour.

Both women took great care to continue breastfeeding their children as long as possible. For example, the occupational therapist met her husband 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. The other woman 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. Another man among my informants who shared most of the caregiving tasks with his wife (both were employed full time) admitted that the bond between his wife and the children was greater than his, precisely because she “carried them” and nursed them. In other words, 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 is on the basis of their primary roles as mothers that my women informants exercised greater authority in matters pertaining to childcare. With both couples, when, in my presence, the full-time working mothers would meet their partners for lunch or after a day’s work, the husband 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, the husband sheepishly reported that the child was out of order and he smacked him. This annoyed the woman who was opposed to corporeal punishment. She reproached her husband, clarified to him that this was unacceptable, and that they would discuss it later. Never was her position on final authority in relation to the child questioned.

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. There was also a measure of discrimination against men in women-dominated networks of primary caregivers. It was the wife of one

of the male primary caregivers who complained to me that the mothers of children in playgroups 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 getting together with the "girls" to gossip and "bitch" about men, and feared that the presence of the male would spoil the dynamics of their interaction. Some women expressed concern that other women might also denigrate male caregivers, challenging both the latter's capacity as carers, and their manliness.

The internalized 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 males' increase in hours of work was seen as the equivalent familial contribution to the women's decreased participation in the labour market and greater expenditure of time at home.

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 (eg. 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 and English 1979:286).

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. It 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. In one couple with a "traditional" division of labour, the woman 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. He 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 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 accidentally 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. The child was born in the year after I left the field. 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 organize the world in many different contexts². This division of productive, reproductive, and social labour is organized around the ideology of reproduction which forms the very basis of the cognitive structuring of gender. It is experienced as life choice 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 material structure of masculine domination — the subordination of the domestic domain to the marketplace — is paralleled by internalized structures of masculine domination, some of which I will discuss in this section. Specifically, I will argue that the adult-infant juxtaposition acts as a practical metaphor for male domination and plays a role in structuring that domination: 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. 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 that 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 is 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. I can approximate gender constructions (and adult-infant constructions) by the use of dichotomies because among my informants, those gender constructions are largely organized 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. Cases that 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' internalized gender structures tend to reify the prototype and downplay the variation within the categories. This should be born 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 in this paper.)

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.

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' ethnopsychology. 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 ran the home and dealt with the children on a regular basis. At times, however, the father would make his forays into the mundane familial arena. The mother did not normally like the intervention of the father. 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, according to the mother, 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 the father to avoid excess conflict. On the other hand, when she felt like her children needed a particularly stern reproach she would enlist her husband 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 organize 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 use 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 1990 [1980]: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 1990)) 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 versus curved also typifies some basic, internalized 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 couldn’t just 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.

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 internalized 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 (cf. 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 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” (sic) 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 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, one of my informants 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's of seeing [... X — 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 organizer, the role which social structure has allotted to them anyway. Men's dispositions are similarly attuned to their roles.

To recapitulate briefly, by and large my informants' practice tends to reproduce the following homologous dichotomies: man:woman::hirsute:smooth-skin::muscle:flesh::strength:flexibility::hard:soft::straight:curved. 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 similar 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 do with men. Presenting oneself in such terms would be 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 of 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 muscularity and strength by reference to the difference in frequency and intensity of physical activity among boys and girls.

Moreover, even though the mean muscularity, 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 two; Connell 1987)³. 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.

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 are 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 comprize a shorter man and a taller woman. This was not so among my informants. Couples in which the woman is 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.⁴

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.⁵

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 than men, among my informants at least, is that feminine adulthood is more infantile than masculine adulthood.⁶

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. (In this I differ from Bourdieu, who considers masculine domination per se to be symbolic violence par excellence (Bourdieu 1998)). 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,⁷ as well as to other instances of symbolic violence, 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 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.

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. You need to let them do their share and not let them “get away with not doing it”. She pointed out that like the children her partner was often oblivious to mess and would take longer to recognize 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 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.

The last section of this paper completes the cycle returning the focus of the discussion to the feminisation of the domestic sphere and the domestication of femininity. In this paper I considered some aspects of the internalisation of masculine domination by both men and women. I showed that the internalized attachment of women to the domestic domain goes beyond considerations of economic rationalism, as does the attachment of men to the marketplace. The prototypical family, which includes a prototypical model of reproduction, forms the basis upon which gender is 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 constitution of infancy to adulthood. 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 is pre-conceptual, concrete, and universal.

While elaborating on the structures of my informants’ habitus, I tried to go beyond the cultural constructionism that inheres in some anthropological writings. I demonstrated ways in which the “real world” which is independent of cultural construction affects the internalized structure.

In a fundamental way, my argument here comes close to Shelly 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 organized 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 construct, without sliding to a position which denies the existence or the relevance of the material world outside its cultural construction.⁸

I have sought to add some further dimensions to the link of cultural construction with the material world. I focussed on differences which are normally accentuated by cultural construction, although are not fully arbitrarily used by cultural construction. Given the nature of our material world, it is more likely that hairiness would distinguish male from female, and not vice versa, and that tallness would distinguish male from female, too. Likely, but not necessary. There is nothing which makes hairiness as such a necessary criterion to distinguish men from women, nor is it entirely inconceivable that techniques of the body should be used in such a way that hairiness would distinguish female from male. More fundamentally, there is nothing inherent in the nature of things which demands that gender should be conceptualized as two mutually exclusive and mutually constitutive categories of person.

Another way I sought to incorporate our material existence in the analysis of cultural structures is by analysing the internal patterns of these structures. That to which I refer by my culturally loaded designation as “pre-conceptual dependence of young on parents” is part of the universal real world which motivates the internal patterns of habitus. Its universal, concrete, immediate, unmediated nature make it an ideal candidate for culture “to use” to structure the more general and abstract structures of masculine domination.

An interesting point that emerges from the foregoing is the conservatism of the internalized 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 one 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 Errington’s terms), 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 realized 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 organized. 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 masculine domination by both men and women is doxic and exerts a conservative influence on social relationships.

NOTES

1. Synecdoche is very common in the cognitive organisation of the world, when a concrete and well-structured aspect of something serves to cognitively organize the whole thing (Lakoff 1987:77). Johnson and Lakoff class synecdoche with metonymy (Lakoff and Johnson 1980). Metonymy represents the use of one entity to *refer to* another that is related to it, and thereby includes synecdoche. Metonymic concepts refer to other concepts, as opposed to metaphoric concepts which *stand for* the other (Lakoff and Johnson 1980:35–44).

2. 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. 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.

3. My usage of negation here follows Connell 1987. But while Connell reduces cultural construction to negation, 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 the 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.

4. I found no quantitative studies of the stature bias in mate selection in Australia. Regarding age preferences, the Australian Bureau of Statistics 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 pairing 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, Williams and McDonald 1986).

5. 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 (eg Connell 1987:92, 97). This assumes that the socialized human being is preceded by a non-socialized 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 (eg. Grosz 1994:187-192) should also be avoided. If culture was the sole active producer of habitus, there would be no sexual heterodoxy in the strongly heterosexual European world.

6. 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 (Stargardt 1995) and Anne E. Gorsuch's discussion of early Soviet gender culture (Gorsuch 1996).

7. 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 summarized by Connell 1995:16, based on Adler 1928, 1956, 1992 [1927]). It should be noted that Adler sees the feminine:male dichotomy as the basic one which structures the child:adult dichotomy. This is a reflection of his particular set of psychoanalytic premises.

8. In a different context, Terence Turner has aptly characterized post-structuralist cultural-constructionist theorists of embodiment as antibodies, for denying the extra-cultural material nature of the body (Turner 1994). I think his point holds for Connell's concept of negation (see above) as well as for theorists like Judith Butler, who discusses materialisation in which causality flows unilaterally from independent cultural construction to the seemingly material world (Butler 1993); or, even more so, to Henrietta Moore who criticizes Butler for allowing the existence of a pre-cultural slate on which cultural content is inscribed (Moore 1994b:18). Moore argued against Errington that "there is a fundamental sense in which, outside the parameters and spheres of influence of this biomedical discourse, sex [in Errington's sense] does not exist" (Moore 1994a:819). But as Errington points out, the fact that biomedical scientific constructions of sex are culturally specific, does not mean that the reality they construct are but a figment of culture's imagination (Errington 1990:26-27). The problem, at least in Moore's case, is that she attempts to transcend the cultural specificity of anthropological discourse — as if cultural non-specificity is a possibility — by collapsing reality into the cultural construction of reality. But then, in the same fundamental sense that sex does not exist outside biomedical discourse, culture, cultural constructions, gender, or any other term, does not exist outside the discourse of anthropology. This fundamental sense is very limited indeed. I share her view that "it is the pre-existing categorization of sex — that somehow, in the hands of theorists, transmutes itself first into sexual difference and thence into gender — which is the stumbling block" (Moore 1994b:23). But I do not think that this means we should retreat from discourse about reality other than its signification and meaning, which is what Moore seems to suggest.

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