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Embodiment below discourse: The internalized domination of the masculine perspective

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Synopsis

This paper focuses on the embodied experience of gender. It draws upon Bourdieu's sociology of practice, cognitive sciences, and feminist phenomenology to highlight instances of non-discursive, cultural conditioning of embodied experience. Specifically, the paper focuses on the internalization by both men and women of the masculine perspective. It does so by discussing regular patterns of word ordering in English, comportment and motility, and orientation to the body. These patterns are cultural in that they are acquired through social interaction. They are non-discursive, though, in that they are not encoded in any system of representations and are not generally transmitted through discourse. Rather, they are infra-discursive, in that they exist below discourse.

It emerges that, in general, the prototypical perspective adopted by male and female European social agents is distinctly more masculine than feminine. However, in restricted contexts, such as parenthood, this prototypicality is inverted. In this, we see how internalized structures match the broad overarching social structures. In the course of the discussion, we seek to further develop and contextualize some further analyses, such as Iris Young's phenomenology of corporeal experience and Cooper and Ross's analysis of word ordering. We ultimately hope to demonstrate the critical analytical importance of the embodied reality which is clearly culturally variable, yet not, strictly speaking, discursively constituted.

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Introduction

Feminism has been critical in forcing social sciences to engage with the body as a social and cultural reality. Since the late 1980s, the dominant voices in the feminist theorization of the body have

been post-structuralist. Such theorists (e.g., [Butler, 1993](#); [Grosz, 1994](#); [Bordo, 1987](#); [Walker, 1998](#)) seek to understand how the discursive gender order—a political and symbolic reality—produces, or in the very least, shapes the corporeal, gendered reality. One of the tensions that run through the literature is whether matter and material bodies can be said to exist outside of discourse (or outside of cultural constructions of matter and bodies) and if so, how to

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theorize such extra-discursive aspects of material reality.

Post-structuralist feminists generally rely on Foucauldian and similar notions of what discourse is. When relating the material reality to its discursive conceptualization, writers in this tradition from Butler to Bordo think of this conceptualization as a series of ideas and categories, and the gaps among them. Such discourses are deconstructed by the feminist analysts in order to explore their immanent constructions of gendered, embodied subjectivities. Through such deconstruction, post-structuralists seek to lay bare the constructs that effect the physical world as experienced by social agents.

In this paper, we seek to go beyond post-structuralist notions of discourse and conceptualization in order to broaden the account of the way the lived material reality, in general, and the corporeal experience, in particular, are socially and culturally motivated. We will do so by focusing on constructions of the gendered body which are cultural, in that they are internalized via social learning, but which are not discursive constructs.

This paper seeks to address a level of meaning which is below discourse—an infra-conceptual or infra-discursive level of cultural constitution, as it were. We seek here to elaborate the gender logic which inheres in practices that are automatic and unwilled and which normally escape unarticulated, implicit, uncategorized and embodied.

This non-ideational ideology is most powerful because it is transparent, and thereby invisible, to social agents. It is part of the way things are, that is, the natural order of things, what Bourdieu has called *doxa*. It is because at this level things come without notice, that they go without saying.

This paper engages with feminist phenomenology of embodiment, especially the work of Iris Young who shifts the focus back to the living, physical body, and to the corporeal experience of living agents. While post-structuralists take a bird's eye view of the gender order, analyzing how collectively shared discourses produce physical reality as a collective reality, phenomenologist generally like to ground their observations in the worm's-eye view of the concrete experience of immediately contextualized agents. In this paper, we argue that it is in embodied and concrete reality that the gender order

inheres and that gendered materiality is produced and reproduced.

In order to theorize the lived experience of the body, we draw on Pierre Bourdieu's sociology of practice, along with the cognitive scientific approach to the study of the structure of the cognitive organization of the world.

From Bourdieu, we borrow his notion of *habitus* as the site of social reproduction. In essence, Bourdieu approaches agency as the product of the social structures that produced it. People are born into worlds that are already culturally organized, and they come to incorporate this organization of the world into the way they are and the way they act upon the world. Thus, in their action on the world, people—as agents—reproduce, albeit with modifications, the structured world that produced them. This principle of agency that at one and the same time is structured by the world, and structures the world in return, is what Bourdieu has called *habitus*.

But what is the structure of the lived world? Here, we think the analytical position of what is generally classed as cognitive sciences is invaluable (for a detailed discussion, see Uhlmann, 2000). Cognitive scientists in linguistics and anthropology generally prefer not to represent the agent's worldview in abstract ways that are necessarily consistent with formal logic. Rather, they seek to find the structures, illogical and contradictory though they may be, of the way social agents, whether consciously or not, organize the world they inhabit. All this should become much clearer in what follows.

This paper focuses specifically on the issue of the ubiquitous male point of view. It builds on the observation that women internalize a self-objectifying gaze (e.g., Bartky, 1990). Bourdieu hypothesized that the domination of the male point of view—that is, the constitution of male as subject, and female as object—is experienced as an integral element of the natural order of things. The way the world is. It is, in fact, inscribed into *habitus*: the very way men and women are (Bourdieu, 1990, 1994, 1996–1997, 1998).

The discussion that follows analyzes some concrete contexts in which femininity is objectified, and others in which it is not. We begin by invoking cognitive studies of automatic patterns of speech

organization. We use those to demonstrate the genderedness of subject position. We argue that, in general, the subject position of both women and men is prototypically more masculine than feminine, although in domestic contexts, this is reversed.

We then move to discuss practices which are essentially corporeal—patterns of body movement and management and orientation to the body—in order to further expose the gendered logic of embodiment at this infra-discursive level. We give specific consideration to women's orientation to their own bodies. We show that, in general contexts, women's bodies are, indeed, objectified as objects, although there are sociologically significant areas in which they are objectified as subject. We then relate this contextualization of orientation to the body to earlier work on the cognitive structure of masculine domination and to the sociology of gender and the family.

Ultimately, the paper analyses some practical constructions of the body that are not ideational discourses that somehow precede the material world. Rather, in these instances, corporeal reality and its construction in practice are enmeshed within the lived experience of the gendered body. The construction is neither abstract nor neatly conceptual. It is rather practical and infra-discursive. At the end of the paper, we will discuss the significance of this.

The analysis in this paper was developed during ethnographic fieldwork in Newcastle, NSW, Australia, and in the period of analysis that followed this fieldwork. The fieldwork was conducted from late 1994 to early 1996 and included participant observation, interviews, and focus groups. We intensively studied some 15 White Australian informants and had more superficial contact with many more. However, this is not an ethnographic report. The reality that this paper tries to capture is not unique to our White working-class Novocastrian informants. It would be familiar to readers throughout the anglophone world.¹

The gendered order of conjuncts

The domination of the male point of view inheres in some common non-conscious, habitual speech

practices. We will explore one such example. Where English syntax does not impose a particular order among words, English speakers seem to order some words in a rather fixed manner. William E. Cooper and John Robert Ross (Cooper & Ross, 1975) set out to analyze what determines the order of such conjuncts as the following:

Usual	Unusual
up and down	down and up
front and back	back and front
active and passive	passive and active
good and bad	bad and good
here and there	there and here
now and then	then and now

Cooper and Ross identified both phonological and semantic factors involved in ordering these words. The semantic factors are relevant to the current discussion. The researchers developed an essentially cognitive explanation of the semantic constraint on conjunct ordering: "First conjuncts refer to those factors which describe the prototypical speaker (whom we sometimes refer to as 'me')" (Cooper & Ross, 1975, 67). There are two particular exceptions to this "me first" principle, namely, Divine (e.g., God and man) and Plant (e.g., flora and fauna) (Cooper & Ross, 1975, 67), but these are of little consequence for the current discussion.

Keeping in mind Cooper and Ross's findings, here is a small list of some habitual word orders among our informants and in English usage more generally.

Usual	Unusual
male and female	female and male
man and woman	woman and man
men and women	women and men
boys and girls	girls and boys
brothers and sisters	sisters and brothers
husband and wife	wife and husband
husbands and wives	wives and husbands
father and son	son and father
mother and son	son and mother
father and daughter	daughter and father
mother and daughter	daughter and mother
women and children	children and women

This list, which accords with Cooper and Ross's US data (Cooper & Ross, 1975, 65),² suggests that men are more prototypical than women, and women more so than children. This pattern seems to hold across many different contexts of speech acts. The agreement between Cooper and Ross's findings, on the one hand, and ours on the other, supports their observation that the emergent linguistic picture they discovered is typical of the English language, and its native speakers, as a whole.

However, Cooper and Ross's findings need some conceptual refinement. The existence of a concrete, rich image, which is more a man than a woman and more a woman than a child is impossible in a universe, like our informants', where man and woman are qualitatively different and mutually exclusive categories. Since Cooper and Ross published their paper, the theory of cognitive prototypes has developed in a way that makes it possible to resolve this difficulty and incorporate their findings into the general framework we are developing here. Prototypes are no longer thought to be concrete, rich images, but rather abstract concepts or scales of sorts—a prototype effect which describes the product of cognitive processes rather than their actual structure (Rosch, 1978; Lakoff, 1987, 136 ff.).³ In the matter at hand, one can say that men rank higher than women, and both rank higher than children on a scale of prototypicality, even though the physical way this scale is embedded in agents' consciousness is unclear.

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

There are exceptions to this, though, which, unless accounted for, threaten to undermine the entire analysis. The following instances are derived from our informants' discourse:⁴

Usual	Unusual
mum and dad	dad and mum
mother and father	father and mother
mothers and fathers	fathers and mothers
grandma and grandpa	grandpa and grandma
nanna and pop	pop and nanna

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

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

Apart from this ambiguity, the embodied, non-conscious speech constructions of our informants delineate clearly the gendering of dominance in different contexts. The male perspective is dominant in general, non-familial contexts, while the female

perspective is dominant in the contexts of parenthood and reproduction. These patterns of linguistic practice conform to the general configurations of the division of power and the genderedness of social practice.⁵

In other words, there emerges a correlation between social structure, on the one hand, and regularities in linguistic practice, on the other. This correlation is a manifestation of the doxic relationship, that is, the fit between, on the one hand, the internalized structures (expressed, among other things, in speech practices), and on the other hand, social structure (as emerges from sociological surveys, field notes, and other social–scientific products).⁶

We will now move to explore the gendered patterning of orientation to the body. We will focus on a specific social milieu, that of the White working-class Australians in the mid-1990s. This is important to keep in mind, because unlike conjunct ordering, much of the techniques of the body we will discuss below differ across anglophone societies (cf. Uhlmann, 2001 for some intra-class variation in gender style). In exploring how corporeal orientation varies across social contexts, we will seek to further explore the sociology of the infra-discursive level of embodiment.

Corporeal orientation

Echoing two decades of feminist work, Bourdieu observes that one of the crucial aspects which make up the domination of the masculine perspective is a profound difference in the orientations of males and females towards their own bodies. Women's bodies are experienced as objects, while men's are experienced as subjects. As Bourdieu points out, there are exceptions to this. For example, female athletes learn in the process of their training to become more attuned to their bodies' needs and experience their bodies as subjects rather than as objects (Bourdieu, 1994, 103–104; cf. Young, 1990 [1980], fn. 10). In order to account for our informants' experience, we will elaborate the process of the objectification of bodies both male and female. The overall picture that emerges supports Bourdieu's analysis of masculine domination, although here, too, parenthood forms a sociologically significant context which reverses these relations of domination.

The analysis of concrete bodily comportment and motility, and their relation to the gender order, has been carried out before. Most significant is Iris Young's exploration of the embodiment of gender, especially the act of throwing (Young, 1990 [1980]). Young uses the typical way girls throw as a basis for the analysis of feminine bodily comportment and motility. She links this feminine style of motion to the embodiment of restrictions which are placed on the female body in modern societies. Briefly, she sees in the distinct feminine throwing style an expression of a distinct tripartite modality of feminine motility. Feminine motility exhibits, in her words, ambiguous transcendence, an inhibited intentionality, and a discontinuous unity with its surroundings (Young, 1990 [1980], 147). Ambiguous transcendence means that women's bodies do not give women the same capacity to negotiate the world that men's bodies give men, but rather limit and inhibit their scope of action. Thus, a woman typically refrains from throwing her whole body into a motion and rather concentrates motion in one part of the body alone. Inhibited intentionality reflects the fact that women do not perceive their environment as potentialities for their action, but rather as potentialities for action which someone, but not they, can carry out. Discontinuous unity reflects again the concentration of motion in one isolated part of the body, which thereby becomes discontinuous with the rest of the body, which remains immobile. All three elements are self-contradictory, reflecting the fact that woman experiences her body not only as subject, but also as object (Young, 1990 [1980]).⁷

Young draws her inspiration from the work of de Beauvoir (1972) and Merleau-Ponty (1962), to create a blend of existential phenomenology which she brings to bear on the subject of her analysis. We are taking a sociological approach here, which leads us to a somewhat different interpretation of her findings. We will return to Young's conclusions after developing some of our analysis.

Among our informants, male bodies were no less objectified than were female bodies. There were definite images of what male bodies should be like. Over-developed breasts in boys or high-pitched voices in late teenagers might be a source of great anxiety and social difficulty. Still, there was a qualitative difference in the types of standards which were used

to objectify male and female bodies, in line with Bourdieu's analysis. Among our informants, who are not unique in that way, the criteria used to objectify and judge male bodies had to do with action and an active orientation towards the world, indicators of strength and power being the most obvious. On the other hand, the criteria used to evaluate the female body stressed passive attraction: they focused on the aesthetic value of the female body and suppressed its functioning. Thus, the odour of sweat might be conceived of as masculine and, up to a point, attractive on a male body, but would normally be experienced as unacceptably repellent on a female body. Our female informants were much more likely to buy and use scented shampoos, perfumes, anti-perspirants and deodorants, compared with their male counterparts.

This gender differentiation is part of a broader gender differentiation in the construction of desire in modern consumerist society. Ann Game and Rosemary Pringle observe that desire is articulated differently for men and women, and that "masculinity builds on aggressiveness, activity, a desire to control; while femininity builds on passivity, narcissism, and receptiveness" (Game & Pringle, 1983, 94). This is more than a description of the construction of gender in mass media. Woman's objectification as object, and man's objectification as subject, are both internalized. Thus, a woman who had cosmetic surgery to her breasts explained that she did not do it for men, but so that she could feel good about herself, and that following the surgery she did. Other women gave a similar rationale to various other behaviours which on the face of it might appear as conformity to an externally imposed regime of objectification. Sexy attire, provocative make-up, and various other elements of their appearance were explained to us neither as an attempt to attract men nor as an attempt to please men. Being attractive was, first and foremost, about "feeling good about yourself."

Among our informants, then, both male and female bodies were objectified, males as subjects and females as objects. The intensity of such differences between males and females was age related. These differences were most pronounced in adolescents and in young adults who were actively involved in the trade, as it were, on the first-marriage market. Older informants seem to have undergone an attenuation in the urgency

of these differences in orientation towards the body. Once settled in a long-lasting conjugal relationship, both men and women tended to spend less effort on managing their physical appearance.

This seems to be part and parcel of the general process of ageing, in which the relative value of physical capital diminishes. Mike Donaldson pointed out that as blue-collar workers grow older, their skills and experience become more important than their diminishing physical strength (Donaldson, 1991). This applied to our informants, too. Moreover, among our informants, the physiological marks of ageing detracted from the physical attraction of women. One woman we spoke with expressed concern about breast-feeding because she feared it might make her breasts sag, and she wanted to keep them as firm as possible for as long as possible.

Significantly, among our informants, there were contexts in which it was the female body which was objectified as subject. A major change in bodily orientation among women—equivalent to the shift that occurs in women athletes under the influence of training and competition—occurred during pregnancy and childbirth. It is at these times that the needs of the female body would come to the fore. Cravings in particular and "capricious" behaviour in general were pandered to and acceptable among pregnant women among our informants and were often attributed to the pregnancy. In interviews and conversations, women construed pregnancies as times when they could take leave from normal requirements of societal bodily control—they could eat what they liked when they liked. (For a different account, rooted in US experience, of pregnancy as a sense of power, see Young, 1990 [1984], especially 166–167). Many, in fact, experienced pregnancy as the demise of the waistline and liberation from many bodily restrictions. In focus groups, some took delight in recounting how they "terrorized" their male partners, for example, by repeatedly sending them at ungodly hours to buy some peculiar, craved-after foods, or by being physically and emotionally very demanding and volatile. The functions of the female body remained in the fore following the birth, too, breast-feeding and its requirements being a case in point. Whereas normally, women would be reluctant to expose their breasts in public, breast-feeding women would readily breast-feed in public. Breast-

feeding was sought after by the mothers among our informants as personally rewarding. In fact, to our female informants, breast-feeding in public constituted an essential right, an all-but-won political battle against those who consider it inappropriate.

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

Young points out that there are very clear norms governing the presentation of non-lactating (and hence, sexual) breasts. They should be firm, round, upright, and the presence of the nipples should be repressed (Young, 1990, 190–192). This mode of presentation also held among our informants. We mentioned earlier the woman who was concerned that breast-feeding might make her breasts sag. The counter-argument that women put forward to such a position was that breast-feeding was important for both mother and child. Women who did or intended to breast-feed did not dispute the disadvantage of sagging breasts. Rather, they constituted it as a worthwhile sacrifice, part of the act of giving which defines maternity. Whatever their position on breast-feeding, women informants concurred that sagging breasts were less attractive than firm breasts. Young interprets this mode of presentation as an objectification of the breasts, an interpretation which agrees with our earlier presentation of women's self-objectification through the suppression of their bodily functioning in their presentation of self. "To be understood as sexual, the feeding function of the breasts must be suppressed, and when the breasts are nursing they are desexualized" (Young, 1990, 199).

There are no equivalent specific norms to govern the presentation of lactating breasts. In other words, by Young's own account, sexual breasts are objectified the same way the sexualized feminine body is—as an object. Once the functions of the female body parts are highlighted, they cease to be sexual objects. Our informants, too, did not regard the exposed breast of a breast-feeding woman as sexual. Breast-feeding altogether was generally construed as non-sexual. In the very least, breast-feeding was construed as an illegitimate source of sexual titillation to the observer. In one instance when discussing some objection to breast-feeding in public, a group of women expressed disgust at "sick" men who might be turned on by such practices. While women among our informants were quite open about breast-feeding being rewarding, they stopped short of elaborating the physically gratifying erotic aspect of breast-feeding (cf. Young, 1990, 199–200). This may be attributed to several causes. One is a reluctance of our female informants to discuss sexual affairs in public, or with a male researcher (virtually all of the formal interviews were conducted by the male author). Another is a reluctance on the part of our informants to acknowledge erotic sensations in an activity which is construed as non-sexual, "pure" and maternal. Construing breast-feeding as an erotic act on the mother's part might evoke a sense of incest and challenge one of the most fundamental aspects of familial relationships.⁸

In short, contrary to Young's own conclusions, we would interpret both Young's description of breast-feeding experience and the double modality of the presentation of breasts among our informants in line with the division between, on the one hand, spheres of bodily orientation which objectify the female body as a subject—maternity in this instance—and, on the other hand, spheres in which the female body is objectified as an object, as in the instance of the sexual objectification of women's breasts.

This is not to say that in the course of everyday symbolic struggle, women do not construe their maternal efforts as selfless giving. At least among our informants, they often did. But adopting such a position must be seen within its strategic context in the symbolic struggle of everyday life—being the martyr carries with it a high symbolic premium. Women are not unique in this regard. Quite often, men construed their own involvement in the labour market

as selfless giving to the family, in a similar symbolic strategy (cf. Uhlmann, 2001). While both men and women may genuinely experience their contributions as selfless, it would be wrong to mistake these constructions for expressions of direct structural subordination of women to men in maternity and of men to women in the labour market.

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

Modalities of motility

We would like to return now briefly to Young's modality of self-contradictory feminine motility (see above). It seems to us that she indeed describes a specific modality of motility, but that feminine is the wrong term for it. Rather, it should be considered subordinate motility to distinguish it from dominant motility. This motility is typified by a measure of self-consciousness and lack of confidence and typically occurs when agents operate in spheres where they are not dominant, that is, when people are "out of their

depth" or are like "fish out of water." In fact, this modality appears to be feminine because of Young's focus on the act of throwing. Throwing a ball is an activity which is quintessentially masculine in the prevailing gender order in the European cultural sphere. Indeed, in distinctly masculine spheres, women's bodily orientation may well exhibit the quality of self-awareness and lack of confidence. However, were Young to write a sequel to her paper along the lines of "holding a baby like a man," "changing nappies like a man," or "feeding a doll like a boy," she might have been able to reverse her analyses of masculine and feminine modalities of motility.

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

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

their speech practices which we analyzed above, assume a masculine perspective as the prototypical perspective in general spheres of practice, while the feminine perspective becomes dominant in the restricted context of parenthood.

Conclusion

This paper focused on the way corporeal reality is lived. We investigated several concrete manifestations of the internalization of the masculine perspective. They included habitual, non-conscious word order choices, orientations to the body, and modalities of motility. There emerged, though, a sociologically meaningful and remarkably consistent exception—namely, the domain of parenthood and reproduction, where it was the feminine perspective that dominated.

In the course of the discussion of corporeality, we sought to reinterpret and incorporate Young's work on the embodiment of gender (Young, 1990 [1980], 1990 [1984], 1990) into our analytical framework. What she identified as feminine modalities of bodily comportment and motility, we reformulated as subordinate modalities which typify women in the masculine spheres, but would equally typify men in feminine spheres. In fact, this distribution of motility is a further instance in which internalized and social structures agree. Further, our reformulation of Young's analysis of the experience of breasts by women echoes the division into spheres of feminine domination, in which women experience themselves as subjects, and the more general spheres of masculine domination, in which women experience themselves as objects. Incidentally, if our analysis is correct, and Young has identified a subordinate rather than a strictly feminine modality of motility, her analysis might be generalized and extended to other contexts of social domination. For example, in bourgeois contexts, we might expect working-class agents to exhibit a subordinate modality of motility, and similarly in working-class contexts, we might expect bourgeois agents to exhibit such a modality.

The division into spheres of feminine dominance and spheres of masculine dominance—the former restricted and the latter generalized—is obviously deeply incorporated into our informants' habitus. The aspects we discussed in this paper are not the

only internalized structures to conform to this particular division into masculine and feminine spheres. In an earlier paper (Uhlmann, 2000), it has been shown that, in general contexts, masculinity among our informants was juxtaposed with femininity in a homologous way to the juxtaposition of adult to infant, with the exception of the domestic sphere in which this homology was reversed, so that femininity was contrasted with masculinity in a homologous way to the contrast of adulthood with infancy. These juxtapositions inhered in techniques of the body and modes of self-presentation and conformed to the pattern according to which the domestic domain was the one in which femininity was dominant, while in general domains, masculinity predominated. Those findings further attest to the profundity of the incorporation of this pattern into the very subjectivity of social agents.

It is an integral aspect of the gender order that the spheres in which the female perspective dominates are subordinate to those in which the male perspective dominates. This is clearly expressed in the power relationship between the home and the marketplace, a relationship which is fundamental to capitalism. The association of women with the domestic domain is a sociological truism. That women derive power from their dominance in this circumscribed area has also been acknowledged in the literature (e.g., Bryson, 1985; Rapp, 1992, cf. Uhlmann, 2004). The overlap between these areas and the spheres in which the feminine perspective dominates demonstrates the extent to which the division into male and female spheres, and the subordination of the latter to the former, have been incorporated into social agents' habitus and is reproduced by agents in their daily practice. Significantly, this hierarchical division is internalized by both men and women and is largely doxic—it does not depend on any conscious decision of social agents and is embedded into the nature of things both at the systemic level (in the form of the overall gendered structure of the political economy) and at the localized level (in the form of particular preferences and characteristics of particular social agents).

The gender order as it emerges will not come as a surprise to any observer of gender in European societies. But what we hope to have highlighted above is the significance of the infra-discursive level

of inscription of the gender logic into the subjectivity of social agents. We are using the notion of infra-discursive rather suggestively, in order to argue that the logic that directs the corporeal experience of gender does not necessarily inhere in formal discourses. Rather, the structures that guide the constant production and reproduction of the gendered body are inscribed into habitus and are by no means purely ideational. Most importantly, such lived discourses, as it were, do not exist apart from a non-discursive physical reality.

Endnotes

¹ Focus groups were conducted with single-gender groups. The focus groups were conducted jointly by both of us. So was the participant observation, an inevitable situation as we entered the field as a married couple. The interviews were virtually exclusively conducted by the first author, who is male.

² The expression “ladies and gentlemen” is a politeness convention which is by its very nature contrary to the prevalent tendencies (Cooper & Ross, 1975, 65, en 3).

³ Significantly, this is one instance in which we see that practical logic violates formal Aristotelian logicians’ sensibilities. The prototype effect and the notion of radial categorization organized around a central category is but one way that cognitive scientists seek to approximate in formal presentation inherent formal contradictions in practical logic.

⁴ Nanna and Pop are terms used for Grandmother and Grandfather, respectively. They imply greater familiarity, and less formality, than do their equivalent Grandma and Grandpa. There is a greater tendency to attach them to one’s mother’s mother and father. (On the term Nanna see Goody, 1962.)

⁵ It is significant that the patterns here are shared by both men and women. Feminist linguistic research tends to be preoccupied with the differences between the ways men and women use language (Cameron, 1998). Here, by contrast, are patterns that are shared across genders and betray a shared masculinist perspective.

⁶ For the relevant sociology of Australian practices, see, inter alia, Game & Pringle (1983), Grimshaw (1983), Reiger (1985), Bryson (1985), Gilding (1991); for a broader purview, see Zaretsky (1982) and Rapp (1992); some of this is discussed in relation to our specific field site in Uhlmann (2000).

⁷ Focussing more narrowly on the experience of women in interaction with institutionalized medicine, Emily Martin (Martin, 1987) describes the body image of women in similar terms to Young’s, although Young goes much further in bringing non-discursive practice such as motility into the analysis. Furthermore, Martin’s general description of the significance of birthing might seem to contradict our interpretation of parenthood, in that she construes birthing as alienating to the mothers. The difference between her understanding and ours is due mostly to her focus on women’s interaction with institutionalized medicine (as opposed to

the focus here on women within their regular social environments) and to her focus on labour and childbirth (as opposed to the focus in this paper on pregnancy and maternity).

⁸ An indication of the possible strength of the anxiety over the erotic aspect of breast-feeding can be gleaned from some recent court cases in the USA. In the early 1990s, a panicking woman phoned a local hotline in Syracuse to report she had sensed some arousal while lactating her baby daughter. She was immediately located and apprehended by the police, interrogated, and briefly locked up. In mid-2000, a babysitter reported to authorities that a 5-year-old boy she looked after said that he was still being breast-fed, and wanted to be weaned, but that his mother wanted it to continue. The mother admitted to still breast-feeding the child, and said she intended to wean him whenever he wanted to stop, and that he had not expressed such a wish. A (female) judge had the child immediately removed from his mother because extended breast-feeding had “enormous potential for emotional harm” to the child (obviously, in the judge’s view, greater than an immediate separation from his mother). Seven months later, custody over the child was returned to the mother on the proviso that she should undergo counselling and parenting classes. This very anxiety even afflicts some who support mothers’ breast-feeding rights who feel compelled to stress that the arousal caused by breast-feeding is qualitatively different from erotic arousal. (For details of these incidents, and reactions to them, see Lewin, 2001).

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