GENDER, CLASS AND FAMILY: THE SOCIAL STRUCTURING OF MOTHERS' AND FATHERS' EVERYDAY LIVES

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For Marion, who was born at the start of the research, and assisted with several interviews, in her own way.

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ABSTRACT

In a study of 16 dual-earner two-parent families, parents of young children were asked to describe and give reasons for their daily domestic labour practices and childcare arrangements. Their descriptions confirm findings from previous studies, that with few exceptions women in the labour force continue to perform the bulk of domestic labour, and carry responsibility for the organization of housework and childcare.

Analysis of data uncovers the structuring of their family lives by the differing resources available to families, and to men and women within the some family. These resources include not only money, time and household space, but patience and knowledge of various childcare and domestic skills. Reasons parents give for their allocation for domestic labour function as justifications and legitimations of practices based on traditional gender assumptions. These reasons work to confirm mothers as carrying major responsibility for housework and for tasks relating to basic childcare and the preparation of children for school. Parents' talk may construct this work as "naturally" easier for women, or as less valuable to the family than work claimed as performed by their husbands.

Further analysis of this talk reveals four underlying discourses, often contradictory, common to parents' descriptions and reasons. (1) Tasks are freely chosen according to each partner's preference. (2) Domestic labour is easier for women, who are trained to do it. (3) Women and men are socialized into traditional roles. (4) Mothers and children bond together, so are naturally close. The third and fourth of these are traced, through the popular literature parents read, to scientific literature, and link parents' discursive practices with the ideology of a professional establishment.

These underlying discourses structure parents' perceptions of resources, and the meaning they give their practices, and hence the choices available to them. Parents' practices in turn reconstitute gendered and classed power relations. Their discursive practices act to mask the operation of power. However in the inherent contradictions and multiple meanings of parents' practices, there may lie possibilities for change both in these practices and in power relations within the family.

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I. INTRODUCTION

> Sorry, kids, but we don't like the way you like your moms
>
> Mothers take care of the family, made cakes, go shopping, take us places and help us when we get sick. These are but five of the 14 things the primary class at Bel Ayr school in east end Dartmouth listed when asked by their teacher to describe what Mom did. The class was so proud of their efforts and the drawings they did of Mom that the school used the poster and drawings as the focal point of a bulletin board display it did for the school board administrative offices (Mail Star, 13th November 1990, p. A6).

In the above-quoted article, Halifax newspaper columnist Gloria Kelly explains that four "feminist" school board members objected to the poster. She does not specify their reasons, but implies that these lay in the traditional nature of the mothers' activities shown. But why should anyone object, she asks, to children drawing pictures of their mothers doing things that are important to the children? Should they have drawn "mom" at her "work"?

> So what if the primary kids think of cookies and hugs and kisses before they think of mom heading out the door to go to work each day. The list also shows kids know what their mothers do in the home. And kids being kids, the home is what they know. It's their security (Kelly, p. A6).

But if it is "wrong" for children to show these things or value them, Kelly says,

> one could draw the conclusion the moms were to blame for the kids' attitudes and suggest if we really want to change things women could stop what they are doing with and for their children and become cold, working machines more concerned about business than our children. If and when that ever happens I for one will throw in the towel and say the feminist movement should go back where it came from (p. A6).

This article encapsulates a range of feelings about motherhood. It also indicates the public nature of motherhood in our society. Motherhood is on display, even in school board offices and in newspaper columns.

What about fatherhood? Kelly suggests that if the children had been asked to draw their fathers, they would probably not have shown them at their paid jobs either. The point which Kelly does not address is why the children were asked to draw mothers, not fathers, or indeed any other family members. Further, she does not discuss how these children's drawings, on that subject, were chosen as the ones to adorn the school board offices.

In the article, Kelly counterpoises "natural motherhood", warm and caring, with the idea of women as "cold, working machines", the latter supposedly promulgated by the feminist movement. Kelly therefore not only fosters a particular ideology of motherhood but maintains the view of feminists as against family, against love, against children.

As a feminist, my objection to any such poster would lie not in the children's depictions of their mothers' activities (though I would wonder why the children saw only traditional pursuits as appropriate) but in the objectification and institutionalizing of "mom" conducted by both school and school board in the public presentation of this material, and in the message so conveyed to the children that this was the correct way for them to perceive their mothers. The children are learning a discourse of motherhood. They are learning to position their mothers within it, not as individuals but as "mom", doing all the things that "mom" is supposed to do. This objectification and glorification of "mom" does an injustice to the actual women who do work hard to do these and other things for their children and who feel themselves measured against an ideal, perfect "mom". It does an injustice to the children's own feelings for their mothers. It further is grossly unjust to those fathers who attempt to indicate ways in which they care for the child, but whose attempts are overlooked by the school system, the medical system, and their own employers, and devalued at many turns as incompetence, less good than the mother's baking of cookies, for example.

In this dissertation I examine how some women and men describe their lives as mothers and fathers within families in a Maritime city, and the social constraints and pressures that act to structure their everyday routines and the division of labour in their households. Here I have attempted to look at the concepts "mother" and "father" as problematic and socially constructed. Central to the thesis is the understanding that the work that individual mothers and fathers do, and the meaning this holds for them, is both constituted by and reconstitutive of relations of gender and class that operate within individual families and workplaces.

To do this I carried out in-depth interviews with mothers and fathers in 16 two-parent families with small children, two interviews with both parents together and one with each parent alone. All respondents were in the paid labour force either full-time or part-time. A considerable body of literature points to women's carrying the chief responsibility for housework and childcare even when they have labour-force jobs, and my study bears this out. However, my interest lay not in the statistics of the household division of labour but in how parents talked about this, in the reasons or justifications they gave for their particular practices, and in the ways in which these were voiced. Analysis of these discourses uncovered the operation of structures of class and gender, as relations of power, within their everyday lives.

Parents tell me that their own and other families' division of labour is "just traditional roles". There is an implication that the roles are learnt; some parents discuss "socialization". Another suggestion is simply that mothers do things relating to care of home and children "better" than their husbands, in part because they are in practice, or have been trained by their mothers to do the things; and so they continue to do them. At times it appears that women's performance of domestic labour is "natural", often stemming from "bonding" with their children. At times, however, the same parents tell me that their tasks are freely chosen, or that they perform chores because they like them and their partner does not. A few parents,

mothers and fathers, resist one or more of these ideas, stating that men should be capable caretakers for small children or that it is simply not fair for women to carry a double burden of employment and domestic labour, or even questioning the extent to which choice is free.

I argue that these discourses actively shape parents' experience of their daily lives, and the activities into which they enter. If a woman generally considers that she is "naturally" more qualified for childcare than her spouse, she tends to become the family expert on childcare, "claiming" tasks and expertise as her own. Her husband's less practiced, more tentative attempts become evidence of his natural inability (while showing his willingness to help), and the mother's own lack of confidence and experience become grave matters for concern: she should be competent and is not. Conversely, when her husband successfully performs tasks this may be taken as evidence, not only of his diligence or his ability to "control" the situation, but of her expert tuition and supervision. In any case, the mother becomes further constituted as the one who has final responsibility for childcare things, and value accrues to the father's often sporadic attempts to "help" rather than to the mother's continual performance of daily tasks. The discourse therefore reinforces an uneven division of power within the family. One partner, carrying the responsibility, has to ask the other for assistance, which may or may not be given.

These families are set within a world divided not only by gender but also by class. Class-based discourses are most evident when parents discuss who will stay at home to deal with sick children, which again becomes a question of power: who can take time off, who has to ask, lose pay, or lie to employers, and who determines how people in their own and other families will be affected.

This dissertation is constructed as follows. In Chapter II I discuss some reasons for studying parents, and outline some ways in which this has been done. Chapter III sets out my rationale for a feminist and qualitative approach, giving an

epistemological and methodological framework for the study. Chapter IV is an account of the procedures followed in finding families to study, interviewing parents and analysing data, together with descriptions of problems I expected to find or did find. Chapter V forms a brief introduction to the families studied, outlining parents' occupations and incomes, housing and other resources, and types of childcare used.

Motherhood and fatherhood are subjectively and emotionally experienced by the participants, and in Chapter VI I examine parents' accounts of their motherhood and fatherhood, investigating their expressed areas of enjoyment, irritation and worry, and how they sum up what being a mother, or being a father, means to them.

Chapters VII to IX set out parents' descriptions of their daily practices. First I look at the time organization of typical working days in their lives, and details of formal childcare arrangements to enable the parents to work for pay. That is, I examine the structuring conditions under which daily domestic labour takes place, including class-based differences in resources available to families. Next I turn to the organization of daily domestic labour, focusing on chores, basic childcare, and facilitation for children's activities, asking who does these and who carries the often invisible responsibility for them. Lastly I examine a common break in the patterning of their days, how parents deal with sickness of a child.

As parents describe their practices they give reasons or justifications for these, and in Chapter X I focus on these "explanations", not only of their own practices but on those of mothers, or fathers, in general. While some of these explanations relate to time constraints, many rely on characteristics of women and men, motherhood and fatherhood. I re-evaluate some of their "reasons" for their division of labour, viewing the explanations as justifications or legitimations of their practices, along the lines of "coping mechanisms" and "family myths" discussed by other researchers. In Chapter XI I take this further by examining the construction of

parents' descriptions of practices, and their justifications and legitimations for these. I identify four major discourses which constitute their practices, while being themselves reconstituted by the practices and the circumstances of resource availability in which these occur. I indicate how some aspects of the constitution of parents' daily lives, and their subjective experiences of parenthood, are maintained by these discourses.

Finally in Chapter XII I summarize my findings on the structuring of everyday life, and examine possibilities for social transformation in parents' lives.

The daily practices of parents have ramifications beyond the walls of the house. Children at five years of age, in Nova Scotia, enter the public school system. There they "meet with schooling practices that assume a universal class and gender neutral 'child'" (Walkerdine, 1985: 224). But these children have had five years of experience of the social world and its construction upon which to draw, and most of their school-age life is not spent in school. In discussing how female and male children, working-class and middle-class children, enter school already positioned within discourse as gendered subjects, Walkerdine points to conflicts between this positioning and the assumptions — that all children have need for the same types of elementary education, for instance — that are made within the school.

In the present work I do not focus on children but on their parents. The implications of this work for educators are threefold.

First, teachers, along with health professionals, social workers and all others who deal on a regular basis with families, have a need for an understanding not only of ways in which families differ one from another, but of the operation of social processes — gender, class, race — which structure both differences and similarities In Sociology of Education classes, I hear teachers — good teachers, caring teachers — say again and again of particular students' positions, "You know, I blame the family", or "I feel the family is responsible for this", where "this" may be

children's failure or success and "families" come in two kinds: good and inadequate. The present work, therefore, is an examination of how these social processes are carried, through discourse, through the particular practices of individual mothers and father, to the presentation of "family" which is visible to the teacher.

Secondly, I believe that educators — teachers, academics — carry some responsibility for the particular practices discussed here. The discourses used by the parents I study have come from somewhere. Participants are merging, changing, modifying their discursive practices, but these did have a genesis. One dominant discourse stems directly from sociological gender-role theory of the 1950s. Another is the current psychological talk of "bonding". Present-day educational practices, whether formal family life teaching with its talk of "roles" and "bonding", elementary classroom talk of parents and families, or assumptions made throughout schools from principals to teachers and even class-parents, position mothers and fathers differently with respect to their children and the childcare tasks they perform, and children are learning these discourses and practices. Academics and researchers are to some extent creators and purveyors of ideology and discourse: and teachers at every level are discourse-brokers.

Third, progressive ideology suggests that teachers have some responsibility to help eradicate "sexism" from our society, by giving attention to equality of males and females within the school system and emerging into the adult world. Career counselling which directs young men to some types of occupation, young women to others, is seen as misguided. But can even the most well-intentioned counselling for non-traditional jobs succeed when girls have been taught that their "family role" will be the most important aspect of their lives, and boys have been taught otherwise? I believe that teachers require material like that given in this study, which treats the content of "parenting" as work, so that both young women and young men can be

honestly presented with real choices which give them the opportunity to create a society more just, and more equal, than the one we have today.

In calling for the creation of a sociology for women, Smith (1986: 6) said that this "must be able to disclose to women how their own social situation, their everyday world is organized and determined by social processes which are not knowable through the ordinary means through which we find out our everyday world." In examining the ways in which both mothers and fathers talk of their everyday lives as parents, I am seeking to uncover something of this organization.

II. RESEARCH ON PARENTS

WHY STUDY WHAT PARENTS DO?

There appears to be a distinct lack of consensus in our society as to what constitute "appropriate parenting roles"[1] for men and women, and furthermore as to whether these are changing. This is complicated by a confusion over terminology: "parent" is often used to mean "mother", and "parenting" similarly may imply "mothering". This use of the word "parent" may act to conceal the real work of mothering in our society, and who on balance does this work. (It may also, paradoxically, mask the real abilities of fathers to perform this work of "mothering".)[2]

Various popular magazines, television programs and the like, however, imply from time to time that fathers are playing a more active part in the lives of young children than "before", sometimes with suggestions that this activity might be restricted to certain socioeconomic groups. These popular media, though providing

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[1] Quotation marks " " placed around single words or phrases are used in this dissertation in two ways: firstly to simply mark off the phrase or word; secondly to indicate that I wish to question a particular usage or meaning, considering it problematic. In the present instance I am drawing the reader's attention to the phrase "appropriate parenting roles", indicating that it comes from a discourse which is not mine.

In quoted material, punctuation within the quotation marks should be considered as part of the quotation itself. Punctuation outside quotation marks is mine.

[2] While listening to the CBC radio programme "Day Shift" at 2.30 p.m. on 23 November, 1987, during the period when I was drafting the proposal for the present research, I was struck by the way a discussion was introduced: "Daycare — the never-ending problem for any working parent." A little reflection indicates that while for many "working parents", women and men who hold labour-force jobs, daycare is indeed a problem, for many it is not. Specifically, for those with a spouse (usually a wife) at home it is not. "Working parents" in this phrase implies "mothers in the labour force". It also implies that parents who are at home giving primary care to their children are not "working", and that in the minority of two-parent families where one parent is at home, the other in the workforce, this other ceases to be a "parent". These meanings in turn reconstitute childcare largely as the mother's responsibility, but do so in a way that becomes hard to argue against.

little evidence, do raise certain important questions. Is mothering very different from fathering? What did parents do in the past, and what do they do now? Was there indeed ever a time when "parenting roles" were so clearly demarcated as the emphasis on "change" in the popular press — and indeed earlier sociological models of the family outlined in this chapter — would suggest? Is the concept of "role" itself a useful one, or a valid one, for the study of what parents do and the construction of motherhood and fatherhood today? Where does it come from, and why does it continue to be used?

Some of my reasons for choosing to look at families and parents are personal. I am a mother of three children. My partner and I have views on how we wish to organize our lives as parents, but we find certain constraints on our ability to construct our own parenting style. A commitment to the idea of equality and shared parenting is not necessarily easy to maintain in the face of social pressures such as expectations of different availability of mother and father to do things with and for the children, either outside or inside the home.[3]

Individual people construct their own practice of parenting, but, as in Marx's comment that people "make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please" (Marx, 1969/1869: 15), they do not have a totally free hand in this construction. Their daily practices are built out of what is available to them: the material circumstances of their lives, its perception filtered through prevailing discourses, cultural suppositions, and assumptions of which the builders may not be conscious. Within the family situation, conventional wisdom has it that men and

[3] For instance, there is the assumption that my husband will not find it a problem to go to an evening meeting at short notice. Day-care staff and teachers, or school parent representatives, feel that they should call the mother first when a child is sick (despite our instructions to the contrary) or when asking for a volunteer to help take children on an outing. A mother, particularly one who is "at home" (e.g. writing a dissertation) is fair game, but when I invite them to call my husband regarding school trips, at his work, or at home in the evening, they generally do not do so.

women, boys and girls, will behave, should behave somewhat differently. In what they do and say, and what they do not do and say, parents are in a sense both the initiators of the gender-construction process and the end-product of it. But "parenting" does not exist in a social vacuum: it has implications, for instance, for early childhood education, for schooling, for adult education, for the work world, and all these in turn have implications for parenting.

Where we live, in Halifax, N.S., my children are expected to have somewhere to go outside the school at lunchtime, and to have someone there to provide them with more-or-less nutritious food. Though this fits with a system in which mothers are at home during the day, the actuality facing many Halifax students and their teachers is very different. Children may go home to a parent, to a housekeeper, to an empty house; or go to a neighbour's house, a parent's office, a daycare centre; or to a park bench or street corner, or to McDonald's. Where there is a parent at home, she, or more rarely he, may have rushed there, perhaps taking a part-time job because of the difficulty of fitting in full-time paid work around lunch-time and after-school care.

Yet a large and increasing majority of Canadian women with children are employed outside their homes. According to Status of Women, Canada[4], 61% of mothers with children aged zero to five were in the paid labour force. For women whose children were six and over, the figure was 73%. This represents an increase even since April, 1986, when 69% of Canadian married women with children aged six to 15 were in the paid labour force. (The figure for all married women with children under 15 was 64%.)[5]

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[4] These 1989 figures are from a Status of Women poster, which derives them from Women in Canada — A Statistical Report, second edition, Statistics Canada catalogue number 89503E.

[5] 1986 figures supplied by Statistics Canada personnel.

These figures do not include, as "employed", women who were unofficial wage earners (e.g. supervising other families' children in their homes, performing domestic work for others) or who were students. Further, the figures for 1986 are based only on married women. Those who have never been married, but have a child, do not appear. Are they more or less likely to be employed? Such figures do not tell the whole story of Canadian women's employment and childcare.

However, clearly the majority of women in Canada today are not living in a "traditional" nuclear family arrangement with father as sole breadwinner representing the household to the outside world and mother as sole nurturer and child-rearer. The extent to which such a pattern should be seen as traditional for the western world is of course debatable: historically both men and women may have been responsible for both subsistence and nurturance (Giveans and Robinson, 1985), but the overwhelming characteristic of "the" Western family, according to Anderson (1980a), was its diversity, along ethnic, class and geographic lines.[6] The industrial revolution, affecting as it did both the situating of the workplace (Oakley, 1974; Cowan, 1983) and the eventual categorization of young, and increasingly older children as non-workers, with women responsible for their care, represented a profound alteration to older patterns. The extent to which women were in the home, however, continued to vary according to geographical location and the prevailing industry, and whether older children by making financial contribution could free their mothers' time for the valuable work of coordinating domestic resources (Scott and Tilley, 1975). Not all women even in the early twentieth century were full-time child-rearers (Cowan, 1983; Luxton, 1980), although the present proportion of women with children in the paid workforce is higher than has been previously officially

[6] Anderson states bluntly that "there is not, nor ever has been, a single family system. The West has always been characterized by diversity of family forms, by diversity of family functions and by diversity in attitudes to family relationships not only over time but at any one point in time. There is, except at the most trivial level, no Western family type" (1980a: 14).

recorded, in Canada, the U.S., the U.K., and other Western countries.

However, as we shall see in Chapters IX and XII, most of the parents I studied had no doubts about the "traditional" form of the family, and the "roles" assigned to men and women within it.

MOTHERHOOD AND FATHERHOOD AS THEY APPEAR IN THE LITERATURE

Sociological research on parenthood has until recently relied on a set of assumptions that categorized what mothers and fathers do as roles which were somehow "natural" and inherently "right", as discussed below. Recently these assumptions have been questioned. Robert Fein's (1978) categorization of research on the father into traditional, modern and emergent perspectives indicates some of the ways in which research on the father other than as a relatively distant breadwinner has begun to make an appearance. A body of explicitly feminist work on mothers is attaining sizable proportions. A small amount of research looks at both mothers and fathers within families: Rubin (1976) interviewed working-class men and women about their lives, but not specifically about gender and parenting; Luxton (1986) examined recent changes in the division of labour in some working-class households, interviewing women and several men; Russell (1982a, 1982b, 1983), whose main interest was in men as primary caregivers, interviewed both husbands and wives; Backett's (1982) study of middle-class families examined family interactions, and employed extensive interviewing of spouses jointly and separately. Most recently, Hochschild (1989) examined the "gender strategies" adopted by couples to reconcile demands of home and employment. Below I shall attempt to outline some of the major strands within sociological research on parents, and then locate my own work with respect to these.

Approaches to Family Studies

Until quite recently, Parsons' functionalist dichotomy of instrumental breadwinning father/expressive homemaking mother (Parsons and Bales, 1955) appeared so basic to sociological family studies as to go unquestioned. This model was in turn based on assumptions of motherhood and fatherhood as biologically given and based on innate traits (nurturance, aggression), and as necessary not only for society but for the satisfaction and mental health of women and men (Ehrenreich and English, 1979). The work of John Bowlby (e.g. 1965) and other followers of Kleinian psychoanalysis fitted into this model, strengthening the idea that children required one caretaker — the mother or her substitute (Dally, 1982; Ehrenreich and English, 1979).

Parsons recognized problems and tensions within his family model. In particular, the organization of labour by gender placed strain on women (Parsons and Bales, 1955; Rapoport et al, 1980). However, many researchers who followed him in assuming a gendered division of labour regarded this division as unproblematic. The perspective tended to de-emphasize the actual experience and meaning of being a mother or a father. For instance, the Newsons' descriptions of child care (Newson and Newson, 1963, 1968), while giving some information on how some parental activities differed from the procedures recommended by nurses, social workers and so forth, do not tell us much about actually being a mother or father in the society they describe.

This model has been categorized by some more recent researchers as conservative, monolithic, and undeniably sexist (Eichler, 1983), conventional, (Rapoport et al, 1980), and relying heavily on a traditional view of gender roles (Lamb, 1981, 1984).

Much family research has tended to look at "adjustment" to the family model on

the part of individuals, lack of adjustment being viewed as a personality problem. The development of family systems theory led to an emphasis on viewing, and treating, the family as a whole, but this model retains much of its functionalist heritage and tends to conceptualize the family in isolation from the rest of the world. Further, like all functionalist models, it appears to its users as "gender-neutral" in the sense that they assume that an essentially male perspective is appropriate to the study of females as well as males, and that "the family" has a similar impact on the male and female persons within it (Eichler, 1983). Some sociologists, notably Blood and Wolfe, have focused on "conjugal power" within a model of the family as a site of equal bargaining (Brinkerhoff and Lupri, 1983). By means of equating power with decision-making, and equating the buying of children's clothes with the buying of cars or houses, they have demonstrated approximate equality of "power" within the household. Needless to say, they did not examine the use of physical force (Eichler, 1983). Only recently have sociologists begun to examine violence against women and children in the home, and to see such violence as stemming from gendered power relations (Johnson, 1985).[7]

The language of functionalism is still very much present. Sociological discourse retains the notion of "gender roles", with the idea of interchangeability expressed in Michael Banton's (1965) work on role theory (Henriques et al, 1984; Stacey and Thorne, 1985). Elshtain (1982) describes how liberal feminists continue to view family life in terms of "roles" — seemingly interchangeable, which can be put off and on — and continues that

> Motherhood is not a role on a par with being a file clerk, a scientist, or a member of the air force. Mothering is a complicated, rich, ambivalent, vexing, joyous activity which is biological, natural, social, symbolic, and emotional. It carries profoundly resonant emotional and sexual imperatives . . . (Yet negating all this,) women . . . are frequently urged to change roles in order to solve their problems (p. 612).

[7] Feminist psychologists have been attempting to deal with gendered violence in the home on practical and theoretical bases since at least the mid-seventies.

Only by stepping outside the functionalist usage of "role" can we examine how this language has become part of psychological, medical, "expert" and popular discourse and how it reconstitutes family life.[8] In Chapter XI of this thesis I reconsider "roles", examining some of the underlying assumptions of Parson's formulation, and how mothers and fathers themselves use this discourse.

However, although much research on family life has been guided by the Parsonian model, there are other ways of viewing families. One possible mode, which I use here, is to focus on men as fathers and mother as mothers, seeing both of these locations as problematic and as constituted by social relations of gender and class. However, although there is a large and growing body of work on mothers that has been undertaken from a feminist position of attention to gender, similar studies of fathers have been few.

Research on Men as Fathers

In discussing the course of research on fathers, Fein (1978) outlined three research paradigms which he termed "traditional", "modern" and "emergent", of which the first, essentially that of functionalism, saw fathers only in their instrumental role, removed from the magic circle of mother and children. The second paradigm, based on a psychological model of sex-role development, but relying on functionalist images of the complete family, viewed the father's presence as essential for the formation of "appropriate" personality traits in children. Part of his "role" was to be "there" for his daughters to turn to for flattery to gain a feeling of "femininity", and for his sons to identify with during the resolution of the Oedipus

[8] We can see how ideas of the instrumental father and the expressive mother may act to construct situations in which the mother "feels guilty" about leaving her child at daycare, and continues to worry during the day, concerned that she must remain contactable by teachers in case of problems arising. The father, on the other hand, may find himself constrained to "forget" about family matters and concentrate on the business of making money.

complex or simply as a sex-role-model. Ideas of father-presence as normal, absence as deviant, pervaded this approach.

Underlying both these paradigms were assumptions about the "male sex role" and how men identified with it. A detailed discussion and critique of "the male sex-role perspective" is given by Pleck (1987).[9] Male sex role identity theory, dominant in American psychology for much of the present century, is based, Pleck says, in the treating of masculinity as a commodity. A man could have enough masculinity (a stable family man, a "good provider" — Bernard, 1981/89), not enough (resulting in homosexuality, effeminacy) or too much (hypermasculinity).

According to Fein, the third perspective which he saw as "emergent" in the late 1970s was an attempt to investigate the actual behaviour of fathers and its meaning and effect on both the father and his children, and sometimes on the mother. During the 1970s, questioning of sex-appropriate characteristics by the women's movement led to research which suggested that straightforward "presence" of the father might not always automatically have positive consequences, especially for daughters (e.g. Hunt and Hunt, 1977), and there was increasing awareness that not all "present" fathers behaved according to the book, some playing a highly participant part in their children's lives, some being completely unsupportive of both mother and child in a material or psychological sense, or abusive. Further, a new emphasis within social research on "meaning" led to a realisation that fatherhood "meant" different things to different men, just as did motherhood to different women. Pleck's (1981) work proposing in place of the male sex role identity paradigm a "sex role strain" paradigm, suggesting that the contradictory demands of the "male sex

[9] Pleck (1981, 1987) traces the development of male sex-role theory from the publication of Lewis Terman and Catherine Miles' Sex and Personality, in 1936, to the present, beginning with the conceptualization of masculinity/femininity as a dichotomy, and later incorporating the psychoanalytic concept of the male child's identification with the father, which Parsons and his colleagues incorporated as part of their socialization theory.

role" itself were highly problematic for men, should be mentioned in this context.

However, until the mid-80s this perspective and its development did not generate a great deal of research. Michael Lamb and his associates in the United States were reexamining the psychology of fatherhood and similarity in parenting abilities of men and women, combining this with various forms of psychological research on non-traditional families, one-parent families included (Frodi and Lamb, 1978; Goldberg et al, 1985; Lamb, 1981, 1982a). Other research emphasized "outcomes" of different fatherhood styles in terms of their effect on children (Lamb, 1982b; Radin and Sagi, 1982, Russell 1978). In Britain, psychological research tended to concentrate on "describing the field, investigating the nature and involvement of father in the family . . . as well as the effects that children may have on their fathers and vice versa" (Beail, 1983: 312). Benokraitis' (1985) attempted summary of sociological research on men as fathers in the U.S. found little to summarize; he produced instead a series of suggestions of how such research might be conducted, should it occur. In Australia, Russell (1982a, 1982b, 1983, 1987) in his study of families with "caregiving" fathers attempted to combine ideas about the meaning of fatherhood with social structural variables, but without a theory of social structuring: nevertheless his work does give a sociological account of the lives of participant fathers, comparing these to other fathers. (He categorizes one to two percent of fathers as highly participant.) Much of this work, especially the more psychologically oriented research, retained a positivistic methodology.

Recently, however, more theorists and researchers have begun to apply insights generated by feminist principles to research on men, including men as fathers. (See e.g. Carrigan et al, 1987, Connell, 1987, Kaufman, 1987, Rotundo, 1987.)[10] What these researchers are saying, basically, is that the lives and

[10] Much of this work is perceived as attached to the anti-sexist "men's movement" and hence may be somewhat marginal to sociology and social theory. See Chapter III for comments on the marginality of feminist research within sociology.

experiences of men in western society, like those of women, are gendered, and cannot be understood except as constructed by gender, within society and history.

Research on Women as Mothers

By contrast, work on mothers is not in short supply, and stems from a wider range of discourses. However, such work does not necessarily reflect the experience of being a mother. The extreme emphasis on mothers as the central and significant figures in the lives of young children is of fairly recent origin, dating from the mid to late 19th century. From that time to the present day a flood of prescriptive literature has advised women on their importance, while for much of the time implying that they are in need of expert assistance to carry out their childrearing task. Watson in 1926 told mothers that they had no idea of how to raise a child (Ehrenreich and English, 1979), and it was not until the middle years of this century that Spock assured mothers that "You know more than you think you do" (cited in Dally, 1982:83).

The "motherhood" studied by social scientists in the latter part of the twentieth century had therefore undergone almost a century of prescription by "experts". But while present-day feminist research (Dally, 1982; New and David, 1985; Riley, 1983) recognizes and examines this deliberate ideological construction, earlier sociological studies by and large did not do so. Parson's (1955) formulation implies that the "roles" of mother and father, sets of behaviour associated with these statuses, had arisen because they were functional for society, "society" as consensus, that is, not that they, and particularly the "mother's role", were prescribed by a particular, and largely male, group of psychologists.

In Parsons' formulation, "roles" are socially created. They are, however, learned in early childhood through socialization and to explain this Parsons draws on psychoanalytic theory and the internalization of the role in early childhood. But

psychoanalytic theory [11] deals in the construction of the personality, and hence the early childhood period, for Parsons, was one of the production of what Frank (1990) terms "gender personalities". In speaking of "the masculine personality" and "the feminine personality" Parsons implies that "good" socialization and mothering (i.e. that which is functional for society) will produce people of two very different kinds, with different interests and talents, so that automatically

> men would assume more technical, executive and judicial roles, women more supportive, integrative and tension-managing roles (Parsons and Bales, 1953: 101).

As Frank (1990) points out, Parsons' and Bales' model is normative rather than descriptive. It defines both normalcy and deviance.

> (I)n the "normal" case, it is both true that <u>every adult</u> is a member of a nuclear family and that every child must begin his process of socialization in a nuclear family (Parsons, 1955/ /1980: 193).

Of course many adults in 1955 were not members of "nuclear families". Similarly many men and many women diverged from Parsons' "male role" and "female role",[12] but the normative nature of the model meant that they did not have to be accounted for.

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[11] Whereas Parsons emphasized the social nature of the construction of his "roles", the psychoanalytic model of internalization may connote a biological root to sex-differentiated behaviour. From the psychoanalytic model come the assumptions found by Oakley (1974) and Rapoport <u>et al</u> (1980) to underlie much usage of Parsons' sex-roles model, and indicated in this thesis in Chapter XII.

[12] After saying that it is the father's breadwinning role that results in his demarcation as "instrumental" leader, Parsons admits that "The presence of large numbers of women in the American workforce must not be overlooked. Nevertheless there can be no question of symmetry between the sexes in this respect, and, we argue, no serious tendency in this direction." (1980/1955:189). He goes on to say that very few of these women are mothers of small children, and where they are, they are not engaged in real breadwinning jobs. "It seems quite safe in general to say that the adult feminine role has not ceased to be anchored primarily in the internal affairs of the family, as wife, mother and manager of the household" (p.191). In short, he proceeds to overlook the large number of women in the workforce.

Within families, anything other than "normal" mothering was doubly deviant. Not only was a woman failing to fulfil her proper role, but she was jeopardizing her child's mental, physical and emotional health, creating a form a social pathology. The psychological and psychoanalytic schools associated with Bowlby, Winnicot and their followers (see Dally, 1982; New and David, 1985; Riley, 1983, for a feminist discussion of this work), prescribing the mother-child relationship, have left their effect in the popular images of motherhood and in the discourse of maternal "guilt" as on the later sociological and psychological literature. I shall return to this point in Chapter XI.

By the 1970s the joint effect of such prescriptive work with Parsonian functionalism was a situation where sociological and psychological research started from the presumption of a monolithic nuclear family as natural, anything else as deviant (Eichler, 1983; Thorne, 1982). Within the domestic sphere, the mother was conceptualized as having almost unlimited power over her children (resulting in criticisms of "overmothering") and research tended to focus on "styles" of mothering (critiqued by Rich, 1976), especially presumed adverse effects of "bad" mothering, including outcomes of mother's employment outside the home (critiqued by Lamb, 1982a). Even in the eighties, research on day-care centres, for instance, was still based on a model which assumed the "normal" situation to be that of the mother-at-home-with-young-child (New and David, 1985). Belsky's focus on "insecure" attachment of the children to their mothers, and his attempts (e.g. 1989) to demonstrate that this insecurity is more common in day-care children, is a latter-day continuance of such work.

Recent theory and research inspired by the women's movement has attacked the "sex-roles" model of motherhood as not describing the reality of women's lives, as assuming a consensual model of "normal" society, and as ignoring questions of power. Much radical feminist research initially tended, paradoxically, to obscure

women's experiences as mothers (Chodorow and Contratto, 1982, Thorne 1982), by viewing motherhood solely in terms of oppression. (See e.g. Firestone, 1972.) Later Rich (1976) dealt with motherhood as an area in which male-constructed social constraints resulted in the oppression of women as potential or actual mothers. O'Brien's (1981, 1982) theorizing of different reproductive experiences of women and men is an attempt to provide a materialist grounding for an understanding of the historic and continuing oppression of women. Various accounts modify psychoanalytic theory to speculate on the nature of patriarchy and its link with female mothering (Chodorow, 1974, 1978; Dinnerstein, 1976; Flax, 1983; for criticism of this work Bart, 1984; Young, 1984). From a socialist feminist perspective, Barrett and McIntosh (1982) have theorized the nuclear family as an institution of women's oppression, and many others have discussed the shape and form of the nuclear family and its constitution by both patriarchy and capitalism.[13]

Other researchers have emphasized what mothers do and the ways in which they cope with their social world, investigating different aspects of women's motherhood. These aspects include childbirth (Kitzinger, 1978; Oakley, 1980) and the history of change to this process (Dye, 1980; Oakley, 1986). They include the meaning of motherhood to its practitioners (Boulton, 1983; Gieve, 1989; Rich, 1976). Some researchers have focussed on the construction of that meaning, examining the ideology of motherhood (Dally, 1982; Wearing, 1984); the discourse of "mothering" (Griffith and Smith, 1987; Urwin, 1985); and incorporating the idea that "mothering" is not necessarily women's work but that structural features act to keep men out of it (New and David, 1985, Polatnick, 1984), even as they act to keep

[13] Many researchers have taken part in the "domestic labour" debate on the relationship between patriarchy and capitalism and the household as a focal point of their interaction. Is domestic labour "productive", in the sense that paid labour is "productive"? Do women as household workers form a class? See e.g. Fox, 1980; Hartmann, 1981; Seccombe, 1980; Young, 1981. For a more general and extended treatment of capitalism and patriarchy, see Barrett, 1980, Burton, 1985.

women in the home. Further, these aspects include women's work in the home (e.g. Luxton, 1980, 1986, stemming from a socialist-feminist approach to housework and childcare as domestic labour), and pressures on mothers in the labour force (Rapoport and Rapoport, 1976) and the different labour-market solutions they adopt (Duffy, Mandel and Pupo, 1989).

What these later authors mentioned here have in common is that they see mothering as socially constructed and as work that women do, which can be made harder, or eased by the circumstances, material or ideological, in which it is done. This therefore represents a break with the functionalist and popular definitions of mothering both as natural and as "not really work".

Research on Mothers and Fathers

There seems, however, to be very little research grounded in experiences of both mothers and fathers. Few researchers have followed the examples of Backett (1982), Edgell (1980), Rubin (1976) and Russell (1983) in interviewing both partners in a two-parent household, Hochschild (1989) being a notable exception. Further, of the examples named here, only Edgell, Rubin and Hochschild have attempted to analyse their couples' experiences in a way that examines their location within the social structure (and Edgell looks at middle-class partners, Rubin at working-class ones, as couples, rather than as parents). Backett's fascinating study of parents in Edinburgh uses an interactionist approach to describe the way couples jointly and severally interpret their experiences, and how parents deal with differences of interpretation in terms of "coping strategies", but does not go beyond to an analysis of the ways in which these experiences are structured, for the couples, by their location as middle-class men and women in a gendered society, which would require a historical and materialist consideration of that location.

More recently, Hochschild (1989) has attempted to examine domestic labour,

the "second shift" of her title, in terms of the "gender strategies" adopted by individual men and women. Her work bears many similarities with that of Backett, but Hochschild goes further in her interpretation of gender strategies as structured by social and personal events and pressures. Aspects of Backett's and Hochschild's work are discussed in Chapter X.

In focussing my research on women and men as parents, therefore, I am attempting to address a perceived lack of material in this area, from a critical perspective, by applying the kind of consideration which has been given to mothers' family lives also to that of fathers and to the interaction between the parents.

Historical research on families

The study of the history of families and childhood only really emerged some time after the publication of Aries' Centuries of Childhood (1962), with much of the work of the 1970s following Aries in taking an idealistic approach towards family change, and tending to pursue the linear development of "the family", for good or ill. (Shorter, 1975, and Stone, 1968, for example, saw change as progress, where Aries saw many changes in ideas of the family and childhood as regressive.) The more psychoanalytically oriented school associated with De Mause (see e.g. Fox and Quitt, 1980) also viewed change as progress. There is a sense here of movement, or evolution, toward a modern sentimental view of parenthood, particularly motherhood, as nurturant, caring and self-sacrificing. The emphasis on ideals and sentiments led to an upsurge of "objective" material based on demographic data, such as that associated with Peter Lazlett (Anderson, 1980a).

Recent developments have lain in an increasing awareness of complexity and diversity (for example in the work of Anderson, 1980b; Greven, 1977; Pollock, 1983) and the appearance of explicitly feminist material aiming to counteract not only previous preoccupations with male behaviour and images, but the still-prevalent

view of the family past or present as neutral or even-handed in its differential effects on men and on women. Much feminist research uses a specifically materialist analysis (Cowan, 1983; Lewis, 1986; Scott and Tilley, 1975; Tilley and Scott, 1978) to investigate the experiences of women of previous generations and to point to historical changes in the construction and implications of gender.

The importance of this material for my work is in the sense of change which emerges from even the most functionalist of the historical studies. Present-day ideological forms of the nuclear family and of motherhood have not been constant, but have arisen over time. The discourse of "sex-roles", as I have earlier indicated, has a traceable history. In this thesis I attempt to focus on the reconstitution of these ideological forms, through discursive practices, within actual families, and examine their use in the construction of experiences of women and men.

THE PRESENT STUDY IN PERSPECTIVE

In my research, therefore, I am endeavouring to examine families (not "the family") in terms of the construction of daily lives of individual women and men, by treating as problematic what was so long taken for granted, the behaviours and practices associated with fatherhood and motherhood. Further I regard these sets of behaviours and practices as created by the participants out of the assumptions surrounding the concepts "mother" and "father". In doing this I am indebted to those authors who have brought a feminist and historical perspective to the study of both women as mothers and men as fathers and who have endeavoured to trace the developments of institutions and practices affecting women's and men's experience of family life today. It is their deconstruction of the Parsonian concepts of instrumental and expressive roles and the ideology of motherhood purveyed by psychological and psychoanalytic "experts" that has enabled me to appreciate the extent to which these concepts and the terminology of roles and socialization today

structure the lives of the ordinary people whom I have interviewed, as I suggest in Chapter XII.

However, while the work briefly reviewed here indicates the substantive area of my research, it indicates neither how I have approached my study of parents nor the sociological and analytic framework of the study. I therefore turn in Chapter III to a consideration of the methodological and epistemological underpinnings of my research.

III. DOING QUALITATIVE FEMINIST RESEARCH: A METHODOLOGICAL AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL DISCUSSION

INTRODUCTION

It follows from any consideration of the literature on parents, particularly on mothers, that the results of attempts to discover "what parents do", let alone the meaning of parenting for them, will be dependent not only on the particular mothers and fathers under study but on the approach of the researcher. In this chapter I endeavour to present a rationale for my use of a feminist and qualitative paradigm.

I begin by focusing on qualitative research and what Bredo and Feinberg (1982) term the interpretive[1] paradigm: research that describes the action of participants in terms of their own frameworks of reference or their own perspectives. This to me represents a first stage in examining what it is parents do. However, several social theorists have criticized interpretative work as having the potential to become infinitely relative, without uncovering how participants' own perspectives have themselves arisen. I indicate how assumptions behind interpretative work can be modified to enable the researcher to locate participants and their practices within a social structure that these practices in turn reconstitute. Here I draw on the work of Giddens (1984) on the structuring of society through rules and resources and their operation on daily practice, Henriques et al (1984) on the structuring of subjectivity through discourse, and Smith's (1979) concept of a "sociology for women" and the uncovering of systematic reorganization of daily experience to reveal the operation of power and oppression.

[1] Giddens uses "interpretative". This is one example of transatlantic confusion over terms and spellings. The Gage Canadian Dictionary (Avis et al, 1983) allows both versions, but defines the U.S. "interpretive" by referring to "interpretative". I shall use the British spelling unless referring to an American author (as here). In general my policy on spellings is to refer to Gage, and if two are given, to use the British version, which I grew up with.

Many of the points I deal with in this chapter are indicated by Cook and Fonow (1986), who discuss in detail five basic epistemological principles relating to feminist methodology, these being:

a. continuous attention to gender, including during the research process;

b. the centrality of consciousness raising as method;

c. the necessity of challenging "objectivity" as a concept that implies an unwarranted separation of the researcher from the researched and from the research process;

d. a concern for ethical questions, not necessarily those of conventional "ethics"; and

e. the idea that the research should have a liberatory aim, focussed against patriarchy and its institutions.

They point out that not all research described as "feminist" will show all of these: but all in part demonstrate some: that is, there is no one unique "feminist methodology" but there are many related methodologies that can and do claim to be feminist.

In this chapter I deal with the first three of their points. The potential for research as liberatory is not directly addressed here, although in a sense it is implicit in the idea of the interview as potentially consciousness-raising (for both researched and researcher). However, the basic aim of my research was not only to produce knowledge for its own sake. My study of families was initiated because of what I saw as a linked series of problems relating to oppression based on gender and around the concept of "the family", and I share with many researchers the hope that at some point our work will have practical application in the alleviation of these problems. Indeed, as I suggest in Chapter I, I see my conclusions as having direct relevance for educators both in increasing their understanding of the classed and

gendered practices of families from which schoolchildren come, and in developing ways in which teachers' own practices may challenge patriarchy.

USING A QUALITATIVE PARADIGM

Magoon (1977: 652) points to three assumptions underlying much qualitative research. The people studied are knowing beings; they control their behaviour knowingly, as autonomous actors, within the constraints of society; and they, as human beings, have evolved in such a way that they can attend to deep rather than surface meanings, rapidly organize the complexity of the work around them into "knowledge", and take on and reconstruct elaborate social roles. From these assumptions we can make some hypothetical statements about the social world and how we can study it. According to Wilson (1977) and Owens (1982), human behaviour is context and situationally influenced, and hence must be studied in context, within the subjective reality of the everyday world of the respondent (Berger and Luckmann, 1967). Furthermore, to understand and describe human behaviour, it is necessary to understand the framework through which the people studied interpret their environment, that is, the meanings of the situation to them, which can best be done "through understanding their thoughts, feelings, values, perceptions, and their actions" (Owens, 1982: 5).

The knowledge of others is both made possible and limited by the subjective reality we share with them (Berger and Luckmann, 1967), the everyday world in which both observer and observed have their being. This everyday, commonsense reality, the common stock of knowledge and its language are in daily life accepted as unproblematic; the background to one's "reality" is not generally examined, and remains opaque. The task of the researcher using qualitative methods becomes that of minimizing this opacity, or in Smith's phrase of "taking the everyday world as

problematic" (Smith, 1986:12).

According to Schutz (1967) we cannot directly "know" the experiences and subjective meanings of others. However, we can perceive these subjective meanings, in the sense of external perception. People give indices of their subjective processes, which may be deliberate signs (e.g. by using language) (Berger and Luckmann, 1967), but may also be non-deliberate on their part. This concept of signitive perception of another's subjective knowledge makes possible sociological interpretation of meanings, through perception of either the bodily movements of the other or "some cultural artifact he has produced as a 'field of expression' for these experiences" (Schutz, 1967: 100).

There are certain problems with this concept as outlined so far. Attempts to uncover the subjective meanings of participants are dependent on the researcher's own perceptions, and lay open the researcher to charges of misinterpretation and bias: in my case, feminist "bias", and the charge of looking for oppression where according to anti-feminists it has no existence. Some adherents of a qualitative methodology claim that misinterpretation of events can be countered by inviting respondents to read accounts of scenes witnessed by the observer, or transcripts of interviews, and hence to validate the data.

Charges of bias in interpretation must, however, be considered on a more theoretical level. This concerns "objectivity" of data. The researcher, like the informant, is a participant in a social scene, involved in the construction of reality. According to one school of thought, the researcher can facilitate the uncovering of the reality of participants by "bracketing" her assumptions about the way the world works, by somehow setting aside her own view of the world in order to let the "facts" emerge from the data. Schwartz and Jacob (1979: 28) describe this as "to <u>minimize</u> explicit preconceptions — for example, by <u>not</u> familiarizing yourself with the literature in advance, and just 'hanging out' in the field for a while" (emphasis in

original). This approach runs into problems when we consider the interactive nature of research. The researcher's contribution to the interview and to the selection of data to record must be guided by something. Assuming that one can minimize preconceptions means that they become implicit, and their guiding effect on observation becomes hard to uncover and remove at a later date.

An alternative way is to declare, so far as possible, one's preconceptions and to use them as "sensitizing concepts", ideas which can be examined and modified through the research. This forms part of the approach suggested by Glaser and Strauss (1967).

Mehan, in outlining a method for developing "constitutive ethnography" (1979), suggested a four-part schema: retrievability of data, so that data can be constantly referred to and be available to others also; comprehensive treatment of data, so that all items are viewed as important; a requirement to validate both data and their treatment by means of a convergence in perspective between researcher and participant; and a requirement that the level of analysis be interactional, dealing with the actions and talk of the participants and not with imputed motivation. Of these, data retrievability may be hard to achieve in practice (for instance, if interviews are audio-taped the visual component is forever lost), and could pose ethical problems regarding identifiability of respondents. Comprehensiveness of data treatment, if taken to mean inclusion of all items in analysis, could never be achieved in practice, but it can be taken to mean that the researcher should be aware of which items were being omitted from analysis, and the reason for their omission. However, both these points imply that what constitutes a datum is self-evident.

The concept of participant validation is an important one when applied to data: the researcher has an opportunity to check, after an interview, that she and the informant have the same perceptions of the content of the interview. But Mehan

appears to suggest that the researcher should not go beyond a faithful description of interactions and their meanings to participants. Edwards and Furlong (1985) recognize both strengths and weaknesses in this technique.

> Mehan's insistence on a convergence of view between researcher and researched recognizes the danger that researchers may impose their own frame of references on participants who are given no chance to talk back, or may use selected aspects of the situation they are studying to illustrate their own prior concerns . . . But is not respondent validation necessarily limited where the concerns of researcher and researched only partly overlap, and where the researcher may wish to do something other than simply confirm and be confirmed by professional commonsense? (p.28, the professional commonsense being that of teachers.)

Similarly, a concentration on interaction may constrain the researcher to look only at the immediate reality of the participants without being able to embed it in any wider framework.

In studying families, my main purpose was not to reflect commonsense views of parenthood, but to examine how the practices and opinions of parents are constituted by and constitute a gendered society. This I could not do if my analysis was to be bound by the participants' views of "gender-roles". Mothers and fathers have their existence within families, but "the family" has social meaning, as do the terms "mother" and "father": all have a place, for instance, within discourses of "parenting" and "parenting roles", and those social meanings, with other resources available to parents, structure the actual lived experience of the individual women and men who in turn re-create the meanings.

Examination of this structuring and re-creation requires a consideration of the relation of the individual to the social world, and how this has been theorized by feminists and others. Accordingly it is to this that I turn next.

SOCIAL AND INDIVIDUAL, STRUCTURE AND AGENCY: DUALISMS IN RESEARCH

My problems of "seeing" family life as socially structured, both in terms of relating families and structure, and of inserting my own viewpoint rather than reflecting participants' meanings, are part of two larger questions: how to reconcile "the social" and "the individual", or the structure of the social world and human experience and agency; and the relation of the social scientist to the observed social world. The latter can encompass two aspects: in what sense can the social world be "known", and where does the knower stand to make the observation?

Critical theory and structuration

Many of these debates are evident in the work of the Frankfurt School, most recently of Jurgen Habermas (see McCarthy, 1978). Central to this work is the idea that knowledge is always based in human interest: Habermas identifies three cognitive "interests"[2] , of which the third, the emancipatory interest, constitutes critical theory. According to Habermas the emancipatory interest arises in response to "systematically distorted communication and thinly legitimated repression" (McCarthy, 1978: 93). These in turn are found where domination, of some form, is institutionalized.

The important aspects of Habermas's critical theory for feminist researchers appear to me as: its emphasis on theory as liberatory; its critique of positivism and

[2] The three interests are technical, practical and emancipatory. Positivistic science is the knowledge form associated with the technical interest and the desire to predict and control the natural world, depending for its success on available technology. Interpretative social science is constituted by the practical interest, based in the search for understanding of the intersubjective world. The third cognitive interest, the emancipatory, constitutes the critical sciences such as psychoanalysis and the critique of ideology, including critical social theory (Bredo and Feinberg, 1982; McCarthy, 1978).

positivistic methodology (including the separation of the knower from the known) as inappropriate for the development of critical theory; its emphasis on the systematic distortion of communication, or distortion of experience, by some form of institutionalized structuring process; the idea that the distorting process can be uncovered through self-reflection, both on the "general presuppositions and conditions of valid knowledge and action" (McCarthy, 1978:94), and on the researcher's own situation, historical location and thought pattern; and the attempt to use some form of theory of the production of subjectivity (for Habermas, Freudian theory) to uncover distortion.

Anthony Giddens, in developing his theory of structuration (Giddens, 1979, 1982, 1984), uses some concepts similar to those of the Frankfurt School. In reconceptualizing the dualism of structure and agency as a duality, Giddens is responding to a debate between humanist and structuralist thinking, the first tending to stress individual agency, the second social structure. This debate was in turn a response to functionalist descriptions of a consensual society and orthodox marxist descriptions of class conflict. Giddens has been considerably influenced by structuralists such as Althusser, and post-structuralists, notably Foucault. He draws directly, if critically, on the work of Karl Marx.

In functionalist thought, structure is visualized as rigid, like the girders of a building, or as a "patterning" of social relations or social phenomena; external to the individual, placing physical constraint on the individual's actions. At once an opposition of subject and structure has been instituted, and remains inherent in all social theory which utilizes this kind of view (Giddens, 1984). Structuralist and post-structuralist conceptualizations of structure are, says Giddens,

> more interesting. Here [structure] is characteristically thought of not as a patterning of presences but as an intersection of presence and absence; underlying codes have to be inferred from surface manifestation (p. 16).

Giddens uses both structuralist and earlier ideas about structure, differentiating between "structure" and "social system". Social systems he describes as essentially the patterning of human social relations within societies, "reproduced relations between actors or collectivities, organized as regular social practices" (1984: 25). He conceptualizes structures as "rules and resources, or sets of transformational relations, organized as properties of social systems", and structuration implies "conditions governing the continuity or transmutation of structures, and therefore the reproduction of social systems" (p.25).

Thus instead of structure implying a rigid framework we now have a set of rules of signification, domination and legitimation,[3] a "virtual order" capable of being changed and with no existence independent of the social system of which these rules are properties. Structure in this sense, says Giddens, has "duality" in that it both reconstitutes and is reconstituted by the actions and relations of individuals within the system.

This affects the question of how the observer can view society. If structure is not a thing in itself but a process, both modifying and re-created by the actions and relations of individual agents, the social scientist must look to the experiences and intentions of the agents for information. Giddens therefore inclines towards an interpretative or hermeneutical/phenomenological methodology, but refers to problems of subjectivity or relativism inherent in reflecting the views of participants in the research: such a subjectivist understanding of meanings of individuals alone may lead to a very conservative world view (Giddens, 1982; Farganis, 1986). The social world is not "the plastic creation of human subjects", as suggested by hermeneutic approaches (Giddens, 1984:26). Structuring rules and resources have

[3] By that, Giddens means rules setting how meaning is conveyed, the direction and nature of power relations, and how both meaning and power appear "natural" or "right".

developed socially, over time, and not always intentionally. Actions have unanticipated consequences, and these consequences, with intended ones, constitute and reconstitute structure and system. For Giddens, social research requires an understanding of the meaning of participants (including their understanding of structure), embedded in a further understanding of the nature of structure and system, including the historical development of the institutions within which actions have their being and including the institution and ideology of social science itself.

Giddens, however, gives little direction to the researcher on how to proceed (Connell, 1987), or where in this the researcher is herself located. The structuring processes operate on lived experience, which acquires historically specific meaning for the participants, and to understand both this operation and these meanings requires an examination of the production of subjectivities of both respondents and researcher. Accordingly, I will turn to Henriques et al (1984) and their theorizing of subjectivity.

Subjectivity and Power

"Subjectivity"[4] refers to how people interact with their world: their motivations, their emotions, their thought processes. Clearly these relate to their perceptions of the world, and these perceptions are always ideological. Put simply, people think about what they are doing, and that thinking is based on what they already know or believe. These beliefs are not always (or ever?) coherent or rational ones. Although

[4] Simon (1987: 157) describes subjectivity as including :

> both conceptually organized articulated knowledge and elements that move us without being consciously expressed . . . both pre-conscious taken-for-granted knowledge and the radical and sedimented needs and desires that are expressed in our demands on ourselves and others . . . Subjectivity reflects both objective conditions and a socially constructed representation of everyday life (p. 157).

ideology is often considered as central to the oppression of women, this tends to be taken for granted rather than clearly demonstrated. Ideology "remains inadequately theorized in both Marxist and feminist theory", according to Barrett (1980: 84). In orthodox marxist theory ideology is subordinate to production. Much feminist theorizing has been built on the later work of Althusser, who in part "rescued" ideology from this material determinism by attributing relative autonomy to ideological state apparatuses (Althusser, 1970; Balbus, 1982; Barrett, 1980; Henriques et al, 1984), though still retaining the economic base as a last resort of determination. Later post-structuralist work has reinterpreted these ideological apparatuses in terms of multiple discourses[5], in part as a response to dissatisfaction with the "functionalist elements remaining in post-Althusserian Marxist theory; for instance to ideas about the functions of patriarchy for capitalism" (Barrett, 1980).

Discourse analysis, particularly as outlined by Henriques et al (1984), can provide a vehicle for the examination of the operation of structuration. Discourse theory, based on the work of Michel Foucault (e.g. 1978), departs from the idea of a material base on which an ideological superstructure depends. Sue Lees says (1986: 159) in discussing her study of adolescent girls,

> There is no 'base' or 'material substratum' of which the language of 'slags' and 'drags' is the verbal and mental reflection of the 'superstructure'. All sorts of people are continually engaging in practices through which the language is used and perpetuated . . .There is no hidden reality of power of which [these practices] are the appearance. Rather they are the material practices, the discourses of sexist power (emphasis in original).

[5] A discourse can be appropriately defined as "an identifiable array of terms and statements which refer to a single object, in the widest sense of object or, indeed, arguably constitute that object themselves" (Riley, 1983: 13). Hollway's (1984) identification of three different discourses regarding male-female sex relations constitutes a very clear example of the use of discourse analysis.

Henriques et al (1984) deconstruct the notion of the "individual subject"[6] of traditional psychological and social theory, and demonstrate "psychology's part in the practices of social regulation and administration and how the very notion of 'individual' is a product of discourses which have developed through these practices" (Henriques et al, 1984: 1). Thus they state that

> the subject itself is the effect of a production, caught in the mutually constitutive web of social practices, discourses and subjectivity; its reality is the tissue of social relations (1984: 117).

Henriques et al build on Althusser's use of Lacanian psychoanalysis to bridge the gap between ideas and subjectivity, but go beyond his later concept of the relative autonomy of ideological state apparatuses (Althusser, 1970) which privilege the role of the state, by turning instead to the concept of the various and varied discourses available within any one area and their relationship to each other and to social networks and practices, to "bring to the forefront the relation of knowledge and power" (Henriques et al, 1984: 115).

There are problems with too heavy a reliance on discourse. It can lead to a type of discourse determinism, with discourses appearing to maintain or create power relations almost haphazardly. If both power and resistance are seen as generalized, inherent in many diverse discourses, then the origins of both power and resistance strategies are obscured Riley (1983). The concept of the human as purposeful agent tends once again to disappear (Giddens, 1982).

As a partial solution to the drift into further discourse determinism, Henriques et al reconsider how the subject is inserted into discourse, and what constitutes that "subject" — not, surely, the unitary, "male, European, rational individual" of orthodox psychology (Venn, 1984: 130). Henriques et al (1984) state that we require some

[6] See Henriques' (1984) discussion of the ways in which racism becomes, in the psychological discourse around prejudice, an attribute of the personality of individual police officers, "caused" by the presence of blacks.

account of initial formation of subjectivity, and they proffer a psychoanalytic explanation derived from that of Lacan, by reworking his account to give a less masculist, more historically specific reading. [7]

For my purposes, the importance of this is to see my respondents as social beings who come to their motherhood or fatherhood already positioned within changing discourses, the effect of which is to constitute them as subjectivities. They have ways of perceiving the world and the resources available to them that impute meaning to that world and these resources. As they engage with the social and material world, they modify their practices according to this meaning. But though the discourses are many, and though they may take new forms, they are not haphazard. Particular discursive practices act to reinforce, or sometimes to challenge or resist, power relations of gender, class and race within society. Discourses are created or given validity in a number of ways, and in many cases authorized by what we might call, following Smith (1987), the "ruling apparatus".

Such an approach does not resolve all problems associated with discourse analysis. Women are oppressed virtually everywhere (Barrett, 1980). A concentration on "discourse" tends to obscure this. If all dominant discourses, at least in the Western world, carry and maintain this oppression so that, in MacKinnon's words (1982: 533) "sexuality . . . is a form of power", it may at some point be necessary to go beyond the individual's insertion into particular discourses to examine the conditions of capitalism and patriarchy within which some discourses become dominant, while others remain vehicles of resistance or are ultimately suppressed.

[7] Urwin (1984) describes children as entering into particular, specific discourses rather than a vague, general "symbolic order", through engaging in various social practices, initially by identifying with some "Other" (often the mother) and thus being able to take up positions within a "discursive frame of reference". The discourses within which that "Other" is positioned imply and reconstitute power-knowledge relations, and thus along with language, the child is learning about power.

Power may be discursively maintained, but the power of an army to pillage, rape and torture is not, to the oppressed, experienced at the level of discourse. Furthermore, an emphasis only on discourse can suggest that all discourses have the potential to become dominant. But the ideology of male dominance is in some sense a cohesive whole. Attempts have been made to root it in women's mothering (Chodorow, 1978; Balbus, 1982) and in men's uncertain fatherhood, relating to the different female and male experiences of reproduction (O'Brien, 1981, 1982).

However, this thesis is an examination of the everyday lives of women and men. Arguing the primacy of capitalism or patriarchy is beyond its scope, and not required in order to understand these parents' positioning. I do not here trace discourses to their origin (if that is possible). What I do, in Chapter XI, is to examine some prevalent discourses parents use and to trace, for the two that seem to me paramount, how they come to be part of my respondents' practice. Both of these ("roles" and "bonding" discourses) arrive by way of advice to parents, and are modified and simplified forms of academic discourses. The effect of both is to constitute women as responsible for housework and childcare, while distancing men from their small children; and to aid in the construction of unequal value of male and female contributions to the home, and ultimately to maintain or create a power imbalance both in the house and outside it.

Objectivity/Subjectivity and a Feminist Standpoint

The debates surrounding theory/practice and objective/subjective dualisms address the question of the relation of the social observer to the observed social world, which form part of the Frankfurt School's critique of positivism. Giddens implies (1984) that the knower's relation to the known is not "objective", in the sense that the researcher is a participant in the situation of the research process. Feminist social theorists have examined both the theory/practice and subjective/objective

dualisms. Sandra Harding, among others, discusses how dualisms are inherent in Western society and thinking. The dichotomy that sets culture (masculine) against nature (feminine) —

> reappears in complex and ambiguous ways in a number of other oppositions . . . reason versus the passions and emotions; objectivity versus subjectivity; mind versus the body and physical matter; abstract versus concrete; public versus private — to name but a few . . . In each case, the latter is perceived as an immensely powerful threat that will rise up and overwhelm the former unless the former exerts severe controls over the latter (Harding, 1987: 299).

These dichotomies are so much a part of Western thinking that the tendency toward them ideologically "structures public policy, institutional and social practices, the organization of the disciplines . . . indeed the very way we see the world around us" (p.299). While feminists criticise these dichotomies, we are forced to live and think within them.

Members of the Frankfurt School have examined the western idea of the use of science to control the threat of "nature" resulting in the objectification of nature as a collection of "natural laws" (Leiss, 1974: 151). This objectification extends to people (as part of the natural world), thus legitimating their subjugation and control by ruling groups (Held, 1980). Feminists also see the objectification of the natural world as linked to the interest of ruling groups within society, but point out that these ruling groups have been male.[8]

> Dualism, along with the dominance of one side of the dichotomy over the other, marks phallocentric society and social theory" (Hartsock 1983:297).

Feminist critique of social theory includes a discussion of whether women, because of their subordinate status, may be able to bring a different kind of approach to the study of both social and natural worlds.[9] This leads towards the

[8] And women have been seen by members of ruling groups, and others, as closer to "nature", i.e. in need of control.

[9] See Keller, 1985, in particular her paper on Barbara McClintock.

question of where the observer would stand, in such an approach, to make her observations of the social world. Both the "subjects" of observation and the observer are located, spatially, temporally, and socially within this world (Smith, 1972, 1979, 1981; Morgan, 1981). What the observer sees and records will be interpreted through her location and her relation to the observed. Observation and knowledge have a social construction whereby the experiences of the observed have been discursively organized in entering the researcher's experience, and discursively organized, too, in entering the consciousness of the people researched.

Smith (1979, 1986) in developing her concept of "a sociology for women" indicates that by beginning with the everyday experience of people, ourselves included, we can uncover the systematic reorganization of this experience, by institutional practices, including discourse practices, and by networks of social relations reconstituted by these discourses. This view of experience as systematically structured allows for the possibility of what Smith has called a "bifurcation of consciousness" (Smith, 1979: 170). There may be a conflict or disjunction between a woman's experience and the verbal and other conceptual apparatus she has available to think about it: these latter being derived from dominant (male) ideology (Kasper, 1986). This disjunction represents a point of entry for a feminist analysis, from a woman's standpoint, of both experience and structuring ideology. From the viewpoint of the dominant ideology, the disjunction is not visible.

Such examination of the structuring of experience, by researcher, researched or both, is essentially a consciousness-raising process. MacKinnon (1982) has argued that central to feminist theory and practice is consciousness-raising, whereby women can examine the oppressions of other women through their own experiences. Stanley and Wise (1983) point out that feminist theory relates not only to "the research" but to their own daily existence and practice as women in a

gendered society. There is no separation of "theory" from "practice". This is essentially a corollary of feminism's status as political strategy as well as theory. Conversely, Stanley and Wise believe that theory must have its roots in daily experience.

I will not here engage the debate between "standpoint" and "postmodernist" feminist theorists (see e.g. Harding, 1983, 1986, 1987; Stanley and Wise, 1990; Walby, 1990). While I have considerable sympathy for the post-modernist feminist argument (that women's oppression differs according to, for instance, locality, race, sexual orientation, and cannot be accounted for by one sweeping theory), I see problems of a pragmatic nature inherent in this approach. Harding (1987) suggests there is a certain luxury in being able to take up the position of post-modern relativism, a sense in which such positions are for dominant discourses only. As marginalized feminists[10], if we are to attempt to place gender as central to sociological thinking we must emphasize the similarities, though not the sameness, of women's experiences of oppression[11]. Pragmatically, therefore, a standpoint

[10] For accounts of the marginalization of feminism within social science disciplines, see Acker (1989), Smith (1989) and Stacey and Thorne (1985).

[11] I must here note a difference between (for instance) Hartsock's use of a "feminist standpoint" (1983) and Smith's "standpoint of women". While Hartsock's appears as a theoretical standpoint, an analytical tool both embedded in and critical of a particular male dominant set of social relations, Smith recommends the particular methodological approach of starting "where women actually are" (1987: 47; emphasis in original), in their everyday lives and work, in order to explore the social relations to which they are party. While this remains a standpoint approach, it does not postulate that all women share the same location. In Hartsock's formulation "women" or "women's labour" is easily abstracted, and indeed Hartsock recognizes the dangers in her "attempt to move beyond a theory of the extraction and appropriation of women's activity and women themselves", saying,

> I adopt this strategy with some reluctance, since it contains the danger of making invisible the experience of lesbians or women of color. At the same time, I recognize that the effort to uncover a feminist standpoint assumes that there are some things common to all women's lives in Western class societies (1983: 290).

approach may be essential; and here I must agree with the recent statement of Stanley and Wise (1990) that:

> We ally ourselves with a deconstructed and reconstructed feminist standpoint epistemology, one which rejects the 'successor-science' label and insists on the existence of feminist standpoints (p. 47, emphasis in original).

Though "the material forms of our oppression" may differ (Stanley and Wise, 1983: 172) through our insertions into specific historical discursive practices of gender, race, and class, it is possible to find ways in which these different, specific discourses are articulated by commonalities of structuring to particular directions of the operation of power. "Gender and race, or more precisely, patriarchy and racism, remain potent social forces, and neither has capitalism withered away" (Walby, 1990). The wielding of patriarchal power against women can be traced back at least as far as the supposedly "reformist" laws of Hammurapi (Smith, 1970).

DOING "STANDPOINT" QUALITATIVE RESEARCH: ASSUMPTIONS BEHIND THE RESEARCH

In the previous section I have reviewed ideas about the social world and the location within it of both researched and researcher. It is time, now, to indicate how these formed a basis for my research. To do this I shall return to Magoon's (1977) model of three assumptions about the nature of the social world underlying qualitative research, and modify this. My modified model therefore becomes:

a. People are knowing beings.

b. They control their behaviour knowingly, as autonomous actors within constraints which they perceive as those of society.

c. Their knowledge is discursively constituted: the world they perceive includes themselves and their positioning within a discursive frame of reference.

d. This positioning assigns power to them and value to their practices, in their own eyes and those of others who share the discourse.

e. The resources and practices, including discursive practices, which structure their social world and their positioning within it have come from somewhere, i.e. are themselves socially constituted and relate to historical power structures of gender, race and class. The power and value they convey are not haphazardly assigned.

My task as researcher was to attempt to uncover the structuring operation of practices and resources in the everyday lives of the men and women I was studying, to examine how perceptions of these practices and resources were constituted by discourse, and to examine how discursive practices were resisted or modified or reconstituted by the participants. This required me to not only reflect the "meanings" of the participants but to examine the construction of these, i.e. to go beyond an interpretative approach to a critical approach that had as its basis an idea of differentially-exercised power of men and women in our society. The question was not <u>whether</u> power relations were unequal, but <u>how</u> inequality was maintained or resisted within family settings, and in links between families and the institutions of society.

My plan therefore was to begin with women's and men's accounts of their lived experience, and to analyse these accounts, first treating them as "factual" observation of the conditions, resources and practices of family life, then considering the accounts themselves as problematic and examining their constitution, and hence the constitution of the meanings parents ascribed to their family life. In Chapter IV I indicate how this plan was translated into a particular set of research methods pertaining to the gathering and analysis of data.

IV. CONDUCTING THE STUDY: WHAT I DID, AND HOW I DID IT

In Chapter II I indicated why I intended to study families and parenthood by talking to both mothers and fathers. In Chapter III I examined methodological and epistemological concepts which seemed to me important in framing such a study. In this chapter I outline what I did in conducting my research, and explain how the theoretical concerns previously indicated translate into the particular methods that I used.

During 1988 and 1989 I conducted a total of 64 interviews with adult members of 16 two-parent families. I interviewed first the two parents together, then after some time had elapsed the mother and father alone, and finally, after another time lapse, the two together again. Interview times ranged from 40 minutes to two and a half hours, but most were between one and a half and two hours long. Interviews took place in the respondents' homes, their offices (two interviews) or my office (two interviews).

The decision to use interview data rather than attempting to observe parents' behaviour directly was taken at an early stage in planning the research project, and at that time was based largely on practicality. As a parent myself, I knew I would not be comfortable with having an observer in my household, and I felt that having to deal with an observer at certain times of day — the morning and evening "rush hours" — would place an extra burden on the lives of already overburdened people. As the study progressed, theoretical reasons for using interview data came into view, as I indicate later in this chapter.

Below I describe how families were selected for interviewing, and why I used the particular selection criteria that I did.

SELECTION OF FAMILIES TO INTERVIEW

As outlined in Chapter III, my interest lay in the structuring of parents' everyday lives. I was not trying to describe a population. Consequently, the families do not form a representative sample of the Halifax area population. I used a type of theoretical convenience sampling, setting up various selection criteria and seeking families which met these criteria.

Through this study I was attempting to understand the structuring of parents' daily practices by resources and material conditions. I therefore sought families that differed according to income, type of work, and work hours. I was attempting to study the effect of gender on these practices. I therefore sought families where mother and father were living together, so that I could investigate the division of labour in each household. To ease comparisons across families, I specified that both parents should be in the labour force, either full-time or part-time; that they should have at least two children, at least one of whom was not yet of school age; and that they should be willing to be interviewed in their homes. In locating sixteen families I leafletted five daycare centres, a community centre, and a doctor's office, approached people in supermarkets, shopping malls, and parks, tried "snowball" tactics, and asked people I knew in different walks of life for referrals to likely candidates. A friend who was a "class mother" for her daughter's school was particularly helpful. I initially set the minimum number of families at 12, in order to have sufficient variation in the resources available to parents. However several of my early contacts were with professional couples who had fairly similar lifestyles. I continued to contact and interview couples until I considered I had a reasonable range of variation, between couples, not only in financial resources and types of occupations, but in hours worked and types of childcare used. At this point I had 16 couples.

Finding professional families was fairly easy, and professional participation had to be restricted. Non-professionals had to be much more actively sought out. (See Chapter V for description of professionals and non-professionals.) Many people did not want to be interviewed. They said they were too busy, did not see the point, did not like social scientists, or did not feel comfortable with the idea. Several middle-class women told me that they would like to be in the study, but their husband would not participate as he was too busy (four couples) or did not think much of sociologists (one couple). One of these women consented to ask her husband, and this couple did in fact participate. Any middle-class men who turned down the interviews did so on the basis of their own preferences. However, I found it easy to be referred to professionals who met the criteria, and soon found myself with eight professional couples participating.

Most of my leafletting was unproductive. Several professional couples responded to a leaflet left in daycare lockers or given by a teacher, and of these two were in the final sample. One non-professional couple similarly responded to a leaflet given by a daycare teacher, and were in the final sample. Contacting a local union resulted in five telephone calls being made to me during the course of one afternoon, with offers to participate, but four had only one child, and the fifth was in fact professional, and I reluctantly had to reject the offers.

In all, most families were found through a referral, either from an acquaintance of my own, from another family in the study, or in one case from a father met in a park when I was collecting my son. Most of the people I approached directly in shopping malls did not meet the criteria for the study, or were too busy. Several working-class parents appeared reluctant to let me into their homes: a father met while he was delivering a parcel as part of his job was typical of this group. He was quite happy to tell me who was in his family and give me his phone number, and when I telephoned him he was prepared to answer questions, at length, but only on

the telephone. As soon as I mentioned coming to his house, he refused to participate. Three working-class women met in malls gave similar reactions. All families participating were asked to recommend other families for the study, but working class couples found it hard to think of other working-class couples who met the criteria: often only one parent was in employment, or children were too old, or there was only one child. Almost all references given me by participants were to professionals.

Two of the women in the study, and none of the men, were known to me before its outset. Of these, one agreed with her husband to help pretest the study, and they ended up as complete participants. With the other I had only a slight acquaintance. Meeting again by chance, I asked her to participate.

Table 1 indicates how participants were found.

Table 1

How participant families were located.

	Professional (8 families)	Non-professional and working class (8 families)
one partner was an acquaintance	1	1
leafletting	2	1
referral from friend	2	2
referral from another family in study	2	2
met in shopping mall		1
referral from a teacher		1
referral from father met in park	1	

Class allocation of families, and the concept of "class" as defined for this study, is highly problematic, and will be more fully discussed in describing the families and their life styles (Chapter V).

In most cases, the initial contact was by telephone, and I did not know the race or ethnicity of potential participants until I met them for the first interview. However, all respondents were white. There is a sizeable Black community in the Halifax region, but my convenience sampling methods did not locate contacts here, and although several black families undoubtedly received my leaflets none chose to participate. In a study such as this one, where there are specific selection criteria and particularly when it is evident that the interview procedure will be a lengthy one,[1] referral from a person known to the potential participant seems to be the most productive way of finding people who are both willing to participate and who fit the criteria.

INTERVIEWING

Scheduling interviews

Interviews were conducted between May, 1988 and September, 1989, with one final interview postponed beyond this period for a variety of reasons. Interviews with each family were conducted over several months. For most families, around two months elapsed between initial joint interviews and those with mothers and fathers alone, although this period was longer for the first families interviewed. Individual interviews with mothers and fathers were carried out close together, usually from two days to two weeks apart. The final interview was conducted after approximately

[1] From the start I made it clear that I was not talking about taking up "only a few minutes of your time", but that the interview process would involve four interviews, and these would be long, over an hour each. This undoubtedly resulted in a number of refusals from people who would have participated had I been less honest about time. Several people would have done one interview, but not four. However I considered, and still consider, this potential course of action unethical.

a further three months. Setting up each interview required, usually, at least one telephone call, although with some families it was possible during an earlier interview to fix a date and time for a later one. Once scheduled, most interviews went ahead as planned. A few had to be rescheduled, for a number of reasons. [2]

Content of interviews

Interviews in practice took the form of linked, extended conversations on topics generally initiated or suggested by me. In terms of traditional sociological research interviews came closest in type to the semistructured or "focussed" interviews described by Bailey (1987: 190-192). The four interviews with each family are identified in this dissertation by Roman numerals. In Interview I parents were asked to outline a typical working day in their lives, and to describe the actual events of the previous day, with special reference to the home and children and the organization of domestic labour. I sought details of childcare arrangements, and what happened when these broke down, if, for instance, a child was sick. In Interview II I had mothers tell me about their families of origin, and about their jobs, to describe for me the highs and lows of being a mother, and to tell me more about looking after their children and who carried responsibility for this in their household, asking them to

[2] The most problematic interviews to schedule involved a working-class family where the father had two jobs (daytime and evening) and was on occasion asked to work overtime at very short notice. The mother was at work several evenings a week, and could be called in on other evenings, again at short notice, to replace a sick colleague. In addition, the elder child had after-school activities (cubs, and so on) so that on some evenings he had to be fetched to and from these. Towards the end of the study this family was trying to sell their house, and several dates for the final interview were cancelled because of visits from prospective buyers. In all 18 dates were scheduled with this family, in order to obtain four interviews.

Several other interviews were postponed owing to illness, conflicts with children's activities, and an emergency school parents' meeting. Seventy-three percent of all interviews (47 out of 64) went ahead as first scheduled, with eight dates requiring one postponement, five two postponements, aside from those of the family discussed above.

describe the work processes involved. Interview III covered the same material with fathers. Finally in Interview IV I obtained some information about the house itself, the neighbourhood, and the family income. I also discussed with the two parents some findings from the earlier parts of the study, asking them for their opinions on these.

In conducting these interviews I used guides, given in Appendix A. In practice these represented lists of topics that were addressed at some point during the interview. Mothers and fathers often raised new topics in discussing old ones, so that interviews did not necessarily follow a prearranged pattern. As I have suggested, I drew on my own experience as a mother in an attempt to elicit their experiences and meanings. For instance, interviewing one father on February 15th I asked about the production of Valentine cards for his four-year-old to take to daycare, and received a detailed account of his looking-on while his wife assisted this child in writing cards.

Guides for Interviews II and III were drafted prior to the commencement of the research, and revised before use in line with preliminary analysis of the Interview I material. The guide for Interview IV was drafted shortly before it was used, taking into account previous responses and patterns emerging from earlier interviews.

All interviews were audio-taped. [3] After completing Interview I with each family I transcribed it, and returned a copy of the transcript to the couple before conducting further interviews. This transcript was discussed briefly at the start of Interviews II and III, giving respondents an opportunity to validate, as individuals, data which had been gathered from them as couples. Did the transcript contain, in their perceptions, an accurate account of their daily life and division of labour? One man reported that

[3] I used a Realistic minisette-9 cassette tape recorder and a Realistic ultra-thin omnidirectional microphone, which worked fairly well. It took me several interviews to find this combination, and the sound quality of the first three interviews conducted suffered, resulting in difficulties in transcription. In one interview some data were lost owing to a combination of an inferior-quality microphone and the echoes of a high-ceilinged living-room in an older house.

he had not read the transcript. All other respondents said they had. No-one wished to add substantially to the material of the first transcript, all considering that it gave a reasonably accurate account of their daily practices.

Gender and class relations in the interview process

At the start of the second interview, I asked parents whether the transcript was a fair account of their own views, and whether they felt both partners had participated in the discussion and been heard on the tape. All felt that they had contributed, but two men added that they had been disturbed by the extent to which they "talked over" their wives' comments, interrupting and generally holding the floor. In neither case had this been intentional, they said. For one of these I had also noticed the dominance of the male voice.[4] The other husband I had construed as talkative and somewhat prone to interrupt, but had not thought of him as dominating the conversation although he did say more. With a third family I felt the woman's voice to be more present during the initial interview; this was not commented on by either parent, but during Interview IV the man took a greater part in the conversation, and at times indeed appeared to dominate it.

Gender relations, then, were present in the interviews themselves. During joint interviews partners not only contributed to my information, but were actively debating points, working out solutions, and informing each other of how they felt about particular occurrences and practices. They did this in ways that minimized tension, "bearing in mind" each other's weaknesses, not provoking each other. Particularly in the first interview, parents tended to concentrate on "facts" of their daily routine, debating points of timing but not criticizing the other partner's

[4] I thought this dominance had been slightly incremented on the transcript by the inadequacy of the early recording equipment, as the female voice had tended to be more inaudible than the male, on the tape: however during the Interview I had indeed felt that the husband was dominating the conversation.

performance of duties. Their ways of interacting with each other had been arrived at over the course of several years, and did not appear to be substantially changed for the purposes of the interviews.[5]

The interview situation is gendered in another way also. I, as a woman and as a mother, was interviewing both women and men about their family life. I had committed myself to an analytic framework that involved starting with the activities and talk of my respondents, and interpreting their experiences through my own experiences, as a woman, in a world structured by gender. But half of my respondents were men. Much writing about feminist research implies that the subjects of such research are women. I had some initial doubts about the quality of the data I could collect from men. What if, for instance, they were hostile to the research? Could I gain the same kind of information from men as from women, or would I run into problems relating to uncovering the meanings of men? And how could I assume that my own experiences gave me any basis at all for an analysis of men's lives as fathers?

I believed at least that the attempt could be made, and should be made, for two reasons.

Firstly, I was not seeking to give a definitive account of "the meaning of fatherhood". Rather, I was seeking to uncover patterns and strategies that affected how mother-father couples came to shared definitions of their lives as parents, and I was trying also to demystify the processes by which their experiences as parents were socially constructed. That is, I was not trying to "put myself in the shoes" of the fathers concerned, but to listen sympathetically, and to examine what they told me in an attempt to determine its construction.

Secondly, it is worth remembering that previous views of "the family" have

[5] This perception may of course be incorrect. It is based on my observation of couples during interviews, and the ways in which they took up each other's points, or joked, for instance, about the amount of "help" the man gave.

acted to obscure men's experience as fathers even as they did women's as mothers; and it may be instructive to ask why. Male sociology has tended to neglect gender relations. Brod (1987: 41/42) points out that a sociology which has equated maleness with humanness has acted to obscure what men do as men, and that particularly in areas such as the different parenting experiences of men and women and the possible effects of men's "supposedly essential public roles" on their fatherhood, there has been little examination of what it means to be a man. Traditional sociology has focussed on males and male definitions of what constitute important activities, but it does not examine or question maleness or masculinity, or their construction by gender (Morgan, 1981). Families, however, are sites of gendered interaction and of the daily expression of the power relations that constitute and are constituted by that interaction. To examine that interaction, and these relations, it becomes necessary to consider the operation of structuring on male experience and male subjectivity, the construction of gendered male subjects.

As I said, I had some initial doubts about the quality of information I could collect from men. I found it useful to refer to the experiences of other women who had attempted to interview men, in depth, about their lives as husbands and fathers. Lillian Rubin (1976) and Kathryn Backett (1982), conducting somewhat similar research, seemed not to have encountered specific problems. Though Rubin had expected reluctance from working-class men in talking to a woman about their family life, she found men eager to talk. They were unused to talking about themselves and their lives, particularly their emotional lives, and seemed to welcome the chance to do so. The taboo on emotions as a subject for men-talk meant that they could only talk in this way with a woman, and the topics were literally too close to home to discuss with their wives. However, McKee and O'Brien (1983) did find problems in interviewing some fathers, and at least some of these they found to be structured by contradictions in the power relationship between

themselves and the interviewed father.

If women are commonly seen as less powerful than men, but interviewers as having more power than interviewees, then a woman interviewing a man is in a paradoxical situation. In some of McKee and O'Brien's interviews, men tried to resolve the paradox in various ways: by talking at immense length and making sexist comments; by trying to flirt with the interviewer; or by trying to take control of the interview. In a few instances the interviewer felt directly under physical threat. These techniques were mostly used by single-parent fathers. In general, fathers from two-parent families were more likely to accept the interview situation, although McKee and O'Brien found differences in the ways in which men and women responded to similarly-structured interviews, in that fathers had less to say than mothers (and took less time to say it), the initial interviews with fathers were more formal, less conversational, and the interviewer was less likely to be aware of the specific social and family problems involved in fatherhood.

Clearly the experiences of McKee and O'Brien support David Morgan's (1981) contention that the researcher is always located by gender, and must be constantly aware of this. However they also support the contention that women could interview men and collect useful data, particularly where the interview situation was seen as structured by gender and the data read accordingly.

The style of interviewing used, however, might itself be problematic. Oakley (1981) suggests that for feminists researching women's lives, the type of interview where the interviewer is perceived as in control, asking all the questions, contributing no information for fear of contaminating the data, is inappropriate. Instead she recommends a give and take situation, whereby the interview becomes more of a discussion, and a relationship is established between researcher and respondent that is personal, not impersonal, with the researcher contributing information or helping with activities as needed. The question therefore became:

what model was appropriate for a woman interviewing men, or couples — particularly in view of McKee and O'Brien's finding that the men they interviewed seemed to want to place greater formality on the interview? I decided that this question could be answered only in practice.

Throughout most of the interviews I felt comfortable[6], and it seemed to me that my respondents, both men and women, were at ease. I did not encounter any major problems of the types discussed by McKee and O'Brien (1983). Both men and women seemed eager to tell me about their families and their lives. There were many disagreements between parents during joint interviews, but no major arguments.

I do, however, agree with McKee and O'Brien that interviewing men as fathers was different from interviewing women as mothers. The men were on the whole a little more reserved; the interviews were more formal; there were fewer jokes, although they did joke about children's activities. However I believe that the men may have found themselves able to say things to me they would not have said to other men, or to a woman who did not have children. The shared experience of having children, of knowing the kinds of things that children did, created a bond,

[6] While interviewing one family I did feel slightly uncomfortable. Before the interview commenced, the father, a professional with training in positivistic research, questioned me regarding the study and my hypotheses, and instructed me concerning the scientific method and the need to draw up testable hypotheses before starting a study. Eventually I suggested that in social research it was often necessary to conceal precise hypotheses from "subjects" to avoid biasing the study, and this appeared to reassure him sufficiently for the interview to commence. During all Interviews I, III and IV, however, he sat looking at the television set, (switched on to vision only) and even when he was speaking he engaged in foot-tapping and finger-tapping activities. While these may have been attempts to contain nervousness or embarrassment, they gave an impression of boredom, and of a negative evaluation of the study. However it may also have been that he found the content of interviews threatening to his particular practice of masculinity in their emphasis on childcare and domestic labour generally. On several occasions he diminished or dismissed the importance of housework or child-related activities while emphasizing "other things" such as "lifestyle planning", and indeed in the final interview his wife commented on his defensiveness.

even where my views on what men as parents should do might differ very greatly from those of the respondent.

As an interviewer, however, I was located not only by gender but by social class. As a sociologist I was in a position similar to some professionals in the study, but my earnings, from a scholarship and some teaching, were more similar to those of working-class respondents (though my total family income was considerably higher). I had more education than most of my respondents, but as a student I could be considered in a junior position.

I approached the interviews in the knowledge that at least some of the activities occurring in my family were class-related, as were the discourses that we used to talk about children. As with interviewing men, I was concerned that I might overlook important aspects of working-class motherhood and fatherhood just because of this difference. Would I ask the right questions? Would working-class parents attempt to give me "right" answers, instead of describing their daily practices? During interviews, however, I found that in general parents assumed that my practice of childcare and parenthood was not too different from their own so that they would talk at length about taking children to hockey, problems of lack of space in which to play, the second child's character, or finding a babysitter, on the assumption that I would understand their position. In all interviews I had to work to remember that parents' practices might not be the same as mine, and to draw out detailed descriptions of these practices. I had to probe for information on the resources available to respondents, including not only finances but time, space, health, knowledge, and childrearing skills, and how these were used. In the process I believe I became more aware of resources available to my own family, and of the interplay between my perception of these and my daily practice.

Some respondents, both men and women, were easier to talk to than others. On the whole, women and men with similar education to my own did say most: but

there were exceptions. The longest interviews came from one couple, a waitress and a computer programmer. They talked easily, in depth, at length, and clearly both they and I were comfortable with the situation. A question from me would set them, together or individually, on a train of thought, and they would talk until this was exhausted.

The shortest interviews were those with two cleaners, and with a nurse. I found myself having to use many words, rephrase questions, and probe for detail, to be met often by very short answers. These short interviews were the most work to conduct: yet even there the respondents appeared comfortable with the situation.

Most parents related to me as a parent first, and then as an academic. One couple wanted me to be an "expert" in childrearing. They seemed at times concerned to give me "right" answers, and when they did not "know" the right answer they wanted me to tell it to them. They were anxious to have transcripts of all interviews returned as rapidly as possible so that they could compare answers and, apparently, so become better parents.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Interviews were transcribed during the period June 1988 to October 1989, the bulk during the period within which interviews were taking place. Transcripts of Interview I were returned to respondents preceding second interviews, and during Interviews II and III respondents were invited to add to or comment on the first. (Comments generally referred to the way people talked and how strange it seemed to see speech in print, rather than on the substance of the interviews.) Transcripts of Interviews II, III and IV were returned after the end of interviewing. This delay resulted from the time taken for transcription.

Analysis had three stages: the reconstruction of each family's daily life from their interviews; a broad search for patterns and similarities between families; and

an attempt to examine statements of mothers and fathers for indications of the operation of gender and social class, including resistance or accommodation of parents to ideas about motherhood or fatherhood. This three part analysis (based on that of Connell et al, 1982) however occurred simultaneously rather than sequentially.

During analysis I made use of the computer data-base manager HyperCard, which gave me great flexibility in organizing data. With this I was able to take interviews and perform the computerized equivalent of photocopying, cutting and pasting sections onto cards, and sorting the cards by topic, ending with a series of computer files with names such as "typical day" or "responsibilities and division of labour" or "motherhood comments", consisting of a series of "cards" each pertaining to one interview, which were easily annotated and cross-referenced, and which I could sort and access in various ways or in different orders, such as by income, by social class, or by the type of daycare used, according to the type of analysis I wished to perform. I could program HyperCard to perform various kinds of searches of the data, and made some use of its ability to generate key-word concordances. Some indication of coding is giving in Appendix B.

I used material from all families, categorizing their descriptions of the various practices I discuss in this thesis. I did, however, take decisions to exclude entire categories of data from analysis at this time. There was simply too much data. These data, on specific topics (e.g. how parents described their children's characters) remain to be analysed at some future date. I endeavoured to treat the remaining data comprehensively.[7]

Extracts from transcripts have been edited, with space considerations in mind,

[7] Use of HYPERCARD facilitated this by giving me the ability to refer to all families' descriptions, easily. Early drafts of chapters retained information on the position of all families (e.g. on the major types of domestic labour discussed, and the reasons parents gave for their divisions on these).

in such a way as to preserve parents' meaning. Some information on editorial and transcription conventions is given in Appendix B.

I also drew up charts, manually, indicating the daily routines of each family, and from these compiled conflations of several similar "days", as described in Chapter VII, in an attempt to indicate broad patterns of daily life.

My proposed work had some initial similarity with that of Kathryn Backett (1982) in that having interviewed mothers and fathers from two-parent households, with at least two children, together and separately, I was looking particularly for evidence of how they, as a working mother/father unit, constructed their day, both in terms of the work done and of their shared view of what was to be done. I was interested in evidences of difference between the partners in how the day was viewed, and clues as to how this difference did or did not become problematic for the partners concerned. That is, I was searching for evidence of the operation of what Backett has termed "coping mechanisms" (1982) and Hochschild (1989) "gender strategies" and "family myths".

However, as I discuss in Chapter III, such interpretative research fits the pattern of hermeneutic investigation described by Giddens (1984) and problematized by him and by Farganis, as "presenting a dangerously subjectivist ideology" (Farganis, 1986: 62). My intention was to attempt to go beyond Backett's work[8], to link social structure with everyday family life and subjectivity. To do this I combined a materialist approach, based on an examination of resources available to parents and the use they make of them, with a version of discourse analysis, as outlined by Potter and Wetherell (1987) and Hollway (1989), to examine how parents' perceptions of these resources (and hence their resource-based practices) are

[8] Hochschild's work does link everyday life with material resources available to parents, but her descriptions remain on the level of individual families in particular circumstances, rather than than being used to facilitate an examination of social class effects on daily life.

organized in ways that link the families not only with other families, but with such institutions of society as schools, the academy, and the medical profession.

As the study progressed the concept of parents' talk as discourse became increasingly important. How parents spoke represented ways available to them of analysing and processing their experience as it occurred, and indicated how they perceived their environment and the choices of action available to them. There is a sense in which for a study such as this one the parents' talk is more productive then would be my observation of their actions. However it must be remembered at all times that, for instance, when Lucy says she does twelve washes in a week (Chapter X), this is not an "objective" measure, but her subjective perception of having done many washes, and is reported in a context of an interview jointly constructed by herself, myself, and her husband, who did not contradict the figure. What we can take from this discussion is not the figure twelve, but that it is Lucy who does washes, that there are many of them, that both partners expect that she shall do them, and that both thought this was something that could be understood (and probably shared) by myself, another mother, interviewing them.

When I attempted to analyse the ways mothers and fathers spoke of themselves and their motherhood or fatherhood, I located these in the contexts of material pressures on the family, such as job availability to both partners, earning capability from these jobs, general health of family members, distance of home from school, work and so on, transportation costs and access, and availability of non-family childminders. The discourses which I identified enter parents' practices in many ways. Neighbours or relatives talk in particular ways about aspects of

childcare, and about day-care attendance; parents receive various types of "expert"[9] advice from books, magazines, health-care manuals, television, directly from health-care and other professionals, and even in "junk mail"; and deliberate membership by parents in various social, political or self-help groups may act to reinforce, legitimate or question particular discursive practices.[10]

These particular structuring ideas and practices, like the images mothers and fathers hold of themselves and their children, are not haphazard but are part of an historically sedimented situation which in some ways affects all women and all men in our society. The effects are different for men and women in different locations, the greatest determinants of location being gender — their position in the social world as men and women — race, and social class. By locating myself within the social network within which my subjects are also located (Smith, 1979, 1986) and attempting to trace the development, in part institutional, of the discursive practices which affect their and my awareness of experience, I was seeking to establish ways in which not only do these structuring factors affect lived experiences, but the experiences reconstitute the structuring institutions and discourse.

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[9] The difference in ways in which mothers' and fathers' behaviour is discussed in, for instance, child-care literature can be quite startling. "Dad" is generally now encouraged to participate, and when he does he is a star, even receiving the title role in "Husband-Coached childbirth" (Bradley, 1965). For mother it is rather different. Brazelton exemplifies this when discussing problems single-parents face in his well-received Toddlers and Parents (1979). His single-parent father is shown coping admirably with very difficult circumstances (caused by his wife's breakdown and hospitalization), working out strategies, taking decisions most of which Brazelton approves. A single-parent mother is shown as potentially causing problems for her child and having to be at all times guided by her doctor's wisdom.

[10] For instance, Wearing (1984) suggests that while participation of mothers in feminist organizations tends to make them aware, and critical, of the dominant ideology, membership of other groups such as "mothers' groups" may act to reinforce the ideology of motherhood, by encouraging women to be competitive in their mothering.

SOME QUESTIONS OF ETHICS

Social research involves an intrusion into the lives of people. The basic and traditional justification for social science research is that of utilitarian ethics (Jacobs, 1980): that the needs of humanity or science, for knowledge, require at least a measure of inquiry into the lives of some individuals.

The SSHRC guidelines outline four major sets of "rights" that pertain to the respondent, and that should not casually breached by the researcher. These are:

1. The right to be fully informed about the research project and its purpose. Generally the researcher is required to provide a form for the respondent (or parent, teacher, etc.) to sign which is taken to indicate that "informed consent" has been sought. (Full disclosure may be waived if such disclosure would bias results. Respondents should, however, at least receive after-the-fact debriefing.)

2. The right to be informed of risks or benefits to the participant from participating in the research (even when "full disclosure" is not possible).

3. The right to an assurance of privacy, confidentiality, or anonymity. If confidentiality cannot be guaranteed, participants should know from the outset.

4. The right of cultures or sub-cultures to "accurate and respectful description of their heritage and customs and to the discreet use of information on their daily lives and aspirations" (SSHRC, 1983:1).

.The implication of the SSHRC guidelines, of course, is that the people researched should not be changed by the research. However the question of change does enter into the ethical considerations surrounding my project. I will deal first with points (1) and (2), above.

To my respondents I explained that I was doing research into family life and the social construction of what mothers and fathers do, and attempted to give a realistic presentation of the amount of their time that the research would involve. All respondents signed a standard consent form (see Appendix A). However I realized

that some of the "risks and benefits" associated with my interviews were not necessarily of the kind that could be described to participants in advance. I approached each interview in the knowledge that the questions I would be asking might not be comfortable ones for either the respondents or for myself, in terms of where discussion was likely to lead or the kinds of reflections that might come out of it. In some cases parents' practices did change. One woman (Cindy) said to me that the discussions had caused her to reconsider the sheer amount of work she performed both within and outside the house, and to move towards part-time paid work, a solution that was problematic for her family, and in a different way also for myself as a feminist researcher. Two fathers altered their daily practice of housework to some extent, in part because of the discussions emerging from the interviews.

While there appear to have been no major fallings-out between spouses as a result of interview material, there was always a risk of this occurring. The dilemma here for the researcher is one of the ethics of encouraging people to face discrepancies between their everyday theory and practice, or of not doing this, but failing to provide possibly therapeutic, consciousness-raising discussion sessions in situations which the researcher senses as problematic and exploitative. In adopting a discussion format for my interviews, I accepted that problems might arise.

Point (3) of the SSHRC guidelines is also somewhat problematic for me. I removed names of parents, children and babysitters, and other identifying features, such as names of employers unless parents worked for very large concerns, at the time of transcription. However, some parents' lifestyles make them more identifiable than others. In this thesis some occupations have been changed, to retain the anonymity of respondents.

However there is another sense in which confidentiality is problematic. I interviewed parents both together and separately. I wished to return all transcripts to

the respondents at the end of the study. I therefore had a problem: transcripts of individual interviews contained confidential material which had been given me by one partner. In returning this material to that respondent, I might also be making it available to the other partner. Most parents indicated that this was no problem; indeed they spoke of sharing their transcripts with the other partners, but in a few families I was not comfortable with the idea that the other partner might demand to see this confidential material [11].

With regard to point (4), I have endeavoured to treat sensitively, and with respect, material emerging from the varied cultural and religious traditions of my respondents.

The SSHRC guidelines do not discuss the question of reciprocity within research. Conventional models of qualitative research, expounded, for instance, by Spradley (1979) and Lofland (1971), assume or even prescribe distance between interviewer and respondent, in a situation whereby questioning is a one-way process. The interviewer questions, the respondent replies. For the interviewer to respond to respondent's queries about the subject matter would "contaminate" the data.

I have already indicated that the model of the objectively-aloof interviewer was not appropriate to my research. As interviewer I was involved in the construction of interviews. Parents related to me as another parent, like themselves. While they knew that their practices and opinions were the subject of the interviews, they were often curious about mine. Besides, several respondents said they had agreed to the research in order to find out about other people's practices. To maintain a strictly one-way flow of information would have been neither practical nor ethical. Parents sought, and expected, a fair return for the information they were giving me.

[11] At the time of writing I have not fully resolved this problem, and so not all transcripts have yet been returned.

Here I was not in the situation Oakley (1981) describes of possessing essential knowledge which she felt obligated to share with respondents who in asking displayed ignorance of very basic bodily functions. My participants were competent parents, and though their practices departed at times dramatically from my own they did not describe situations or practices I considered dangerous, or which required outside help or outside information[12] , nor in general did they ask for assistance. One couple did expect me to be an "expert" on the kinds of child-rearing problems discussed by popular magazines, and I resisted this positioning. I did, however, discuss my own opinions and practices, while making it clear that these were the opinions of an educated lay-person, not a specialist in child development. This was in general my mode of response to parents' queries about my own life. Far from "contaminating" the data, this led to further discussion of their own positions, and indeed resulted in richer data than I would otherwise have gathered.

[12] I had made various plans for obtaining information on basic childcare, should parents appear to require it, and if necessary could have directed women or men to counselling facilities. Had their descriptions suggested that abuse of a child was occurring, I should have had to report this.

V. THE FAMILIES

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a brief introduction to the sixteen families studied. I present them in approximate descending order of income, and have grouped them as professional-income, middle-income and lower-income families, as discussed later in this chapter. Ages, and almost all other information given here, refer to the time of the first interview with each family; data on salaries was supplied during the final interview. All names[1] , and in some instances precise occupations, have been changed to protect the identity of participants.

I then give summary information on the participants and their material living conditions, with an explanation of the income groupings used, the health of their children, and the childcare strategies they employed. This chapter thus serves as a background to the parents' descriptions of their daily routines and division of labour, childcare strategies, and problems occasioned by children's health, discussed in detail in subsequent chapters.

DESCRIPTION OF FAMILIES

The professional-income families

Berthe and Vince

Vince, 38, is a lawyer with a government department. Berthe, 36, is a resource teacher in an elementary school. They have three children, aged 6, 3 and just 1 at the time of the first interview, looked after during the day by a full-time housekeeper.

[1] I have changed names of parents and of their housekeeper. I have not substituted other names for those of children, as this would become too confusing. instead I indicate which child is being spoken of, with "girl", "younger boy", etc.

The eldest is in school, and the middle child attends a nursery-school programme[2] two mornings a week. The eldest child is asthmatic.

Their income is in the $80,000+ bracket, the highest in the study, divided roughly two-thirds, one-third with Vince as the higher earner. At the time of the final interview Berthe was taking a year from teaching on "deferred salary", and had started a small business. They own a sizeable house in a residential area of the city.

Sheila and Simon

Both are full-time university teachers and researchers, and have Ph.D.s. Simon, 39, has a considerably more senior position, and Sheila, 37, is overqualified for her job. They have two boys, aged almost 5 and almost 2. Their family income is in the $80,000+ bracket, with Simon earning about 60 to 65% of that.

The elder boy started school soon after the first interview but continued to attend a day-care centre for after-school, lunchtime and vacation care, and the younger, previously looked after at home by a full-time babysitter, moved into the centre as soon as a space became available. The elder child is asthmatic. They own a large house within walking distance of the university and their children's daycare.

[2] Nursery-school and preschool programmes take children from around three-and-a-half up to school age. They generally run for part of the day (mornings only) and part of the year, when schools are in session, and are seen both by parents and by the N.S. provincial government as "educational" rather than constituting childcare, i.e. they may not qualify for child-care tax rebates. The director of a daycare centre which runs both nursery-school and daycare programmes tells me that the content of the programmes is indistinguishable.

Rachel and Pete

Pete, 41, is a university teacher and has a Ph.D, Rachel, 39, with an M.A., is a writer and editor. They have two boys, aged 11 1/2 and 3, the younger attending full-time daycare.

Their family income is in the $70-80,000 bracket, divided roughly one third/two thirds, with Pete the higher earner. They own a sizeable house in a residential area of the city.

Elizabeth and Duncan

Duncan is in private practice as a health professional, and Elizabeth works for the practice as bookkeeper, part-time. He is 33, she 31. Elizabeth attended university for one year, later taking courses leading to her bookkeeping qualification. Their three children are 7, 4 and 2. The parents would not give their family income. "I'd rather, really rather not answer that one", said Elizabeth, though she said it was "substantial — it's a professional income". They said that the division of income was about two to one. From the type of house they live in and the knowledge that it is a professional family, I have listed them as around $70-80,000. If this is put higher, the allocation to Elizabeth, on a part-time basis, of one-third of the income seems unlikely.

Their second child started school during the course of the study. Previously he had attended a part-time daycare. Elizabeth does most of the childcare, combining this with her work from home, but towards the end of the study she had a part-time babysitter coming into the house regularly.

They own a fairly sizable house which they feel is becoming too small. But rather than moving they have bought a property in the country, and are developing this as their weekend and summer home. Duncan does most of the renovation work.

Karen and Robert

Karen, 33, with an M.Sc., is a physiotherapist within a hospital, and Robert, 34, also with a Master's degree, is an architect in private practice. Both do some teaching in addition to their professional responsibilities. They have two daughters, aged 3 and 1, who are looked after during the day by a full-time housekeeper.

Their income is over $70,000, possibly over $80,000. It is divided roughly 50-50, with Karen at present earning slightly more, though with the expectation that Robert's share will increase as his practice develops. They own a fairly large townhouse, part of which is rented as an apartment, and they have a country property, including some farmland, which they go to every weekend, and which Robert describes as his hobby.

Susan and Joachim

Susan, aged 42, is a physician, a consultant in a hospital. Joachim, aged 41, a scientist with an M.Sc.-equivalent degree, combines working "very part-time" from home on a contract basis with being the primary caregiver for their two children, aged four and a half and two and a half. They are European immigrants.

At the time of the first interview, both children were attending a part-time cooperative playgroup. During the course of the study, the older child began attending a nursery-school program, three mornings a week, while the younger one remained with the playgroup.

During the course of the study Susan began studying again, to convert her medical qualifications to their Canadian equivalents, which would now be necessary if she were to seek employment at another hospital. Their income is around $70,000, 95% of which is from her salary. They own a moderately-sized house close to the centre of the city.

Some parts of the first interview with this family, one of the first conducted, were lost owing to poor sound quality.

Donna and Rick

Rick, 37, with a Ph.D and a medical qualification, is a university teacher. Donna, 33, with a master's degree, works as a hospital physiotherapist. They have two children, the elder aged five, the baby six months. This infant is in private daycare. The older moved from full-time non-profit daycare to school during the study, and now goes to the baby's caregiver for after-school care.

The family income is in the $60-70,000 bracket, with Rick earning a little over half, although he says Donna's income is likely to overtake his within a few years. This relative affluence is new to them. Donna has only recently qualified, and their income two years ago was in the $30-40,000 bracket. They own a small house in a relatively low-priced area of the city.

The middle-income families

Lucy and Wayne

Wayne, 33, with two years at university, sells computers to the automotive industry. Lucy, 33, a B.N., works a half-rotation as a nurse. Their two children, 3 years and 15 months, are usually looked after at home, by Lucy on weekdays, by Wayne if she is working weekends or nights, or by a babysitter at their house for the five days each month that parents' work-hours overlap, though for a time Wayne was taking the children to a sitter. The elder child attends a playschool twice a week.

On income, Wayne says,

> Well that, that varies. Since we've had, I would say that where I'd like to be and where we have been is in, you know, bracket nine ($80,000+), but we are probably in bracket six or seven ($50-60,000 or $60-70,000) in the last year or so, due to you know a lot of factors, most of them, all of which really beyond our control. But you know we see ourselves being here in the nine category, that's

sort of the reason and the vehicle by which we would be here (in their house), otherwise we wouldn't. So. (Wayne, IV)

I classified their income as $60,000-$70,000. This income is divided roughly 70%-30%, with Wayne as the higher earner. They own a fairly-large house in a residential suburb.

Brenda and Glen

Brenda, 30, is a registered nurse, full-time, with a two-year qualification, at the same hospital where Glen, 30, a High School graduate, works full-time as an orderly. Their children are eight, three and one. The two younger children go to a family day-care provider during parents' work-hours, if their 12-hour shifts coincide or overlap, and the elder boy goes there also for after-school or before-school care.

They own a moderately sized house in a relatively new lower-priced suburb. Total income is around $50-60,000, with Brenda earning slightly more than 50%. Her hourly rate of pay is higher, but Glen takes overtime when he can get it. Brenda would like to move to part-time work, and may look for someone to job-share with her at the hospital. The two elder children are asthmatic.

Cindy and Paul

Cindy, 32, is a hospital laboratory technologist, Paul, 39, in an accountancy study program, works as a tax accountant with a large firm. He has a commerce degree, she a technologist's diploma. Both are employed full-time. Cindy feels that she is trying to do too much. She would like to work part-time, and has begun looking for someone to share a laboratory job at the hospital.

Their children are aged four years, and 14 months. They have a full-time babysitter who comes to their house, and the 4 year old attends a daycare centre twice-weekly for a preschool program.

Their family income is around $50-60,000, divided approximately 55-45, with Cindy earning more. This will change if she is successful in finding someone to job-share with her. In any case, they see this division changing after Paul becomes qualified as a C.A. They own a house which they feel is becoming too small, in a moderately-priced residential area of the city.

Anna and Hugh

Anna, 36, is a waitress, working part-time, evenings. Hugh, 34, with a bachelor's degree and specialized training, is a computer programmer. Their children are 5 and 2, with the elder in school. Anna cares for the children during the day, Hugh on the nights she works. Previously the children were in daycare, but this did not suit Anna's working hours, and when these were shortened recently they decided to keep the younger child at home. A part-time daycare would be a good solution, but there are none locally.

They own a moderately-sized house, with a basement apartment which they rent out, in a lower-priced residential area. Total family income is around $40-50,000, with Anna earning around 40% of that.

<u>The lower-income families</u>

Kathleen and Douglas

This couple has two children, aged two and a half years and two and a half months. Kathleen, 33 with a Master's degree, was technically on maternity leave at the time of the first interview. She coordinates adult education programmes, part-time, and previously taught school. Douglas, 37, is self-employed in a visual-arts field, although this year he is conducting grant-financed research and employing a manager for his business. Their income is low — usually in the $20-30,000 bracket, which puts them on a par with the lowest-paid working class families in the study,

though this year because of Douglas's grant they are in the $30-40,000 bracket. However, they have chosen their work and the low income, and the extent to which they have control over their work aligns them with professional, not working-class, families. They own their house, in a lower-priced area of the city.

Kathleen's work continued even during her recent maternity leave, in her involvement in plans, meetings and so on. She and Douglas had planned to schedule their work so that one would be with the children, but this became impractical when Douglas began doing research full-time, and the children now attend part-time private (family) daycare.

Cheryl and Mike

Cheryl, 32, is a hair stylist, qualified as a master hairdresser, and during most of the study had a chair part-time in a shopping mall hairdresser's. Mike, 36, works part-time selling life insurance, and does some carpentry. Both have bachelors' degrees. Their four children are aged seven, four, one and a half, and one month, and the parents attempt to organize their work-hours so that they can cover most of the child-care themselves, with occasional hiring of sitters.

Shortly before the final interview Cheryl started her own styling business, full-time, so becoming an employer and small-businessperson. Her work-hours have become "full-time, plus" and they now hire a regular sitter, part-time.

Their income was low this year, $20-30,000, as Cheryl was on maternity leave for some of the time. Usually it would be a little higher. Mike earned around 60-70 percent of this year's income. They rent their house, which they feel is too small with four children, and have rented various houses on the same street for some years.

Sheena and Ted

Sheena, 29, is a cashier, part-time, evenings and Saturdays, at a supermarket; Ted, 29, is a liquor store warehouseman, full-time, and for part of the period of the study also worked as a tavern busboy, part-time.

Their elder child, aged five, is in school, the younger, two and a half, who has Down's syndrome, is at home during the day with his mother. During Sheena's work-hours Ted looks after the children; when both parents are at work a babysitter or Sheena's mother comes in.

Their house actually belongs to Sheena's mother, and they rent it from her. However, they are buying a house in the same neighbourhood as Brenda and Glen, and Sheena's mother will live there too. They are expecting a third child. Their income is in the $20-30,000 bracket, with Sheena earning around 15% percent of that.

Carla and Andy

Carla, 33, is an office cleaner. Andy, 37, also a cleaner, is foreman for his shift. She works days, full-time, he nights, part-time, one looking after the children while the other works. They have two children, aged three and one, the elder being asthmatic.

Total family income is $20-30,000, of which Carla earns just under 75%. They rent a small apartment, with use of a concreted back-yard. The elder child was for a time in a daycare centre, but problems of fitting in daycare hours with work-hours, combined with the child's asthma, led to Andy's working part-time and giving day-time care. The cost of daycare for two children would for them be quite prohibitive.

Lucille and Don

Lucille, 32, is a cashier in a cash-and-carry outlet, working full-time hours although classified as "part-time", and hence receiving no benefits. Don, 32, is an automotive parts clerk. They have two children, aged 4 and 2, who attend a full-time daycare centre which can make some special provisions for the younger child, who has Down's syndrome.

Their income is $20-30,000, of which Lucille earns about 50%. This income, and her share, will shortly decline sharply, as she is about to first take maternity leave for their third child, then return to work on Saturdays only, when Don will look after the children. They will leave the second child in the daycare centre, the eldest will then be in school, and the baby will stay home. This couple rent a terraced-house from the municipality, and their rent is "sheltered", so that it will go down as their income drops.

THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE STUDY: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Of the 16 couples studied, one had four children, three had three children, and a further three were expecting a third child shortly after the final interview. The remainder had two children, and in general commented that two was all they planned to have, or could afford. Several parents, both women and men, said a larger family, though preferred, would not be practical. At the time of the first interview the children's ages ranged from eleven and a half years to one month, but all families had at least one child under five years.

Fathers' ages ranged from 29 to 41, mothers from 29 to 42. Median ages were for mothers, 35, and for fathers, 36-37. In two families the husband was the younger, by one and two years, and in four families parents were the same age. In the remainder the husband was older, by from one to seven years.

THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE STUDY: OCCUPATIONS AND INCOME

Parents' occupations and incomes are shown in Table 2. The sample includes eight couples whom I have classified as professional, or upper middle-class. In seven cases, both partners are involved in professional, managerial or academic activities. In one case, the husband is a professional in private practice, and his wife, acting as bookkeeper for the practice, identifies with it. It should be noted that one professional family has a total household income very considerably below that of the others in this group.

The remaining eight families are less easy to classify. The three families at the bottom of the income scale could be assigned to the unskilled or semi-skilled working-class, and the hair stylist and insurance salesman/carpenter, and the nurse (without a degree) and orderly perhaps to the skilled working class. But the hair stylist, midway through the study, became an entrepreneur, opening her own business and so joining the ranks of the petit-bourgeoisie, and both she and her husband have university degrees. In some couples, the partners would appear to have different class affiliations. An accountant is usually thought of as a professional, but this accountant is a trainee, not yet fully qualified, working for an apparently rigidly controlled firm of tax accountants, and his wife, though a highly skilled worker, would not be considered professional. "Waitress" is a working-class occupation, but "computer programmer" is not.

Such problems have been previously resolved in sociological studies by assigning class on the basis of the husband's occupation. Feminist critiques of class (see e.g. Acker, 1988) argue that husbands and wives may be differently positioned as individuals with respect to the means of production, and that the positioning of each is gendered. The class location of the household as a unit may hold elements of each spouse's positions. Further, women may have both a direct and an indirect

Table 2

OCCUPATIONS OF RESPONDENTS IN APPROXIMATE DESCENDING ORDER OF HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Mother	Father	Income ($1000s)	percent earned by mother
teacher	lawyer	80+	35%
university faculty member	university faculty member	80+	40%
editor	university faculty member	70+	35%
bookkeeper	physiotherapist	*70+	35%
physiotherapist	architect	70+	55%
physician	researcher	70+	95%
physiotherapist	university faculty member	60+	45%
nurse	computer salesman	60+	30%
lab technologist	trainee accountant	50+	55%
nurse	orderly	50+	55%
waitress	computer programmer	40+	30%
programme coordinator	arts manager/ researcher	30+	30%
hair stylist	insurance salesman/ contractor	20+	35%
cashier	liquor store warehouseman/ tavern attendant	20+	10%
custodian	custodian	20+	70%
cashier	automotive parts clerk	20+	50%

Note: These figures should be regarded as very approximate. Income marked * represents my estimate.

relation to the economy through their own and their husband's wages (Barrett, 1980), and this requires to be accounted for, and extended also to men. "Both life cycle work patterns and spousal work patterns will affect a person's current class identification", say MacDonald and Connelly (1989). On this basis we could assign Elizabeth, the book-keeper, with her husband, to a category of professional/small business employer, while Karen, a professional in her own right, would not be seen as a small business-person even though her husband ran his own practice.[3]

In the present study, it should be noted that in five families the woman was the higher earner, in another one the contributions of each partner were approximately equal, and in only one family did the women contribute less than one quarter of total income, so that it would be very misleading to suggest that the material standard of living of the family was determined by the husband's wage (although at least one male respondent speaks of the father in a family as generally the breadwinner).

I finally settled on two different ways of classifying the 16 families, each with three categories: the first classification (Table 3) is based on job content, the second (Table 4) largely on income. Considering job content, and particularly the amount of control over their occupations respondents describe, I have a professional group of eight families, a working-class group of four, and a further group of four consisting of white-collar non-professional or divided families. The income division gives me seven families with professional-level incomes, four in a middle group (one earning as much as some professionals) and five in a low-earning group (including the one professional family which does not earn a professional income).

[3] I have chosen to consider professionals as a category on their own, including here people who are salaried employees of large organizations and those who own and manage private practices. As will become evident, there are occasions when these two groups differ, particularly in the discourses they use in discussing sickness of a child and who will stay home. However for purposes of having control over their own lives all professionals in this study are in a position very different from that of other workers, whether blue or white-collar, and this is reflected in their talk.

Table 3

CATEGORIZATION OF COUPLES BY OCCUPATION

Mother's occupation	Father's occupation	income	child care group	housing
PROFESSIONAL COUPLES				
teacher	lawyer	80+	2	own **
university teache	university teacher	80+	3	own *
editor	university teacher	70+	3	own
bookkeeper	physiotherapist	70+	1	own
physiotherapist	architect	70+	2	own
physician	researcher	70+	1	own
physiotherapist	university teacher	60+	3	own
programme coordinator	arts manager/ researcher	30+	1	own
WHITE-COLLAR NON-PROFESSIONAL, AND MIXED COUPLES				
nurse (with degree)	computer salesman	60+	1	own **
lab technologist	trainee accountant	50+	2	own
waitress	computer programmer	40+	1	own
hair stylist	insurance salesman/ contractor	20+	1	rent
WORKING CLASS COUPLES				
nurse (no degree)	orderly	50+	3	own **
cashier	liquor store warehouseman/ tavern attendant	20+	1	buying
custodian	custodian	20+	1	rent *
cashier	automotive parts clerk	20+	3	rent

Families indicated by ** own two cars. Families indicated by * do not own a car. See table 5 for meaning of child care group affiliation

Table 4

CATEGORIZATION OF COUPLES BY INCOME

Mother's occupation	Father's occupation	income	child care group	housing
PROFESSIONAL-INCOME COUPLES				
teacher	lawyer	80+	2	own **
university teacher	university teacher	80+	3	own *
editor	university teacher	70+	3	own
bookkeeper	physiotherapist	70+	1	own
physiotherapist	architect	70+	2	own
physician	researcher	70+	1	own
physiotherapist	university teacher	60+	3	own
NON-PROFESSIONAL MIDDLE-INCOME				
nurse	computer salesman	60+	1	own **
lab technologist	trainee accountant	50+	2	own
nurse	orderly	50+	3	own **
waitress	computer programmer	40+	1	own
LOWER-INCOME				
programme coordinator	arts manager/ researcher	30+	1	own
hair stylist	insurance salesman/ contractor	20+	1	rent
cashier	liquor store warehouseman/ tavern attendant	20+	1	buying
custodian	custodian	20+	1	rent *
cashier	automotive parts clerk	20+	3	rent

Families indicated by ** own two cars. Families indicated by * do not own a car.
See table 5 for meaning of child care group affiliation

Tables 3 and 4 also indicate whether respondents own their own homes, and if they have cars.

HOUSING AND OTHER RESOURCES

Most families in the study owned their own homes. (See Tables 3 and 4.) Those who did not were the four least affluent families. Of these, Sheena and Ted rented a house from Sheena's mother in a low-priced area of the city. This couple was at the time of the last interview in process of buying a house big enough for themselves, their children and the grandmother. Don and Lucille lived in municipal sheltered housing, Carla and Andy rented a small apartment in the North End of Halifax, and Cheryl and Mike rented a house in a moderately affluent area of Halifax's West End.

Carla and Andy had no yard other than a concreted back area used for drying clothes. Children could play here, on bikes, but their children were very young and appeared to spend almost all of their time indoors. Don and Lucille had a large concreted area, behind the terrace of municipal housing, which was, however, also used as a parking lot. A grassy area which formed the front yards of the terrace was periodically treated for weeds by the municipality, and on one of my visits carried notices that people should not walk on it (or, by implication, children play) because of herbicide application.

Cheryl and Mike's house had a small yard, including a garden, Sheena and Ted's a larger one.

The house-owners lived in a variety of areas: three in the South End of Halifax, the area of most expensive housing; two in the moderately expensive West End; three in the less expensive North End; one in an affluent suburb; one in a large town-house, which they had built, in the midst of a rather run-down downtown area;

and two in neighbouring, more moderately-priced Dartmouth. Two also had properties in rural Nova Scotia, and they spent most weekends out of town; these were houses rather than cottages, and one couple was attempting to run their property as a small farm. A third couple had a cottage in New Brunswick, which they visited mainly in the summer. All the house-owners had yards, some quite large.

As incomes and housing varied, so did parents' abilities to move themselves and their children around the town with ease. Three families, those of Berthe and Vince in the professional group, and Lucy and Wayne, Brenda and Glen in the middle-income group, had a car for each parent. Cheryl and Mike, with four children, had a seven-seater minibus, and almost all the others had one car, in the case of Kathleen and Douglas recently acquired. As we shall see, families with one car required parents to engage in constant negotiation as to where the car had to be in order to get adults and children to and from their daily locations.

Simon and Sheila sold their rather old car during the course of the study, and did not buy another. Their home was close to their place of work and the children's daycare centre and school, and they considered the exercise of walking would be beneficial and enjoyable, and buses, taxis and rented vehicles would be available when necessary. Carla and Andy could not afford a car, and relied on public transportation for their quite considerable journeys between home and work. In an emergency, such as to transport a sick child to hospital, they would take a taxi.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND ILL-HEALTH

Families differed not only in their access to material resources, but in the demands made by their children's health. Five families had asthmatic children, generally the elder child, though one family had two asthmatic children. Although I did not seek a representative sample of the Halifax population, this proportion of asthmatic children is close to the estimated 10 to 12 percent of Nova Scotian

children who are asthmatic. Asthma necessitated trips to the hospital and to doctors' offices, and engendered in at least one parent in each family a constant attention to both the state of the child's breathing and the level of medical supplies in the household.

Two families had a younger child with Down's Syndrome. This proportion is higher than one would expect to find through representative sampling. An acquaintance referred me to the first of these families, who then referred me to the second, before I knew either had a disabled child. I found that the children's disabilities made visible several aspects of the gendered nature of the work it involved, including constant liaison with various health professionals and members of support groups. In both families, mothers in particular were involved in the organization of these groups, and in one the father described both partners as overburdened with arranging meetings and talking to "new" parents and "experts".

BASIC CHILD-CARE ARRANGEMENTS

As all families had both parents in the labour force, combining paid work and childcare was a central problem of parents' lives. In Table 5 I divide families into three groups, according to the three main strategies they pursued: (1) hiring a full-time babysitter (three families); (2) full-time day-care outside the house (five families); and (3) parental care (eight families). However, parents' childcare strategies were not simple, and underwent constant modification as children grew older or babysitters left.

In Groups 1 and 2, both parents were employed full-time. They relied on resources external to their family to provide childcare while they were at work. The three families of Group 1 had a permanent babysitter (variously referred to as a "nanny" or "housekeeper" or "sitter") who came to their house during working hours.

Children between three and five years of age also attended nursery school or daycare centre programmes, part-time.

The five families of Group 2 used some form of daycare at a location other than their own home. Three families had one or more children in a full-time non-profit daycare centre for the duration of the study. One family moved between a non-profit centre and a smaller private arrangement as their needs (for a preschool programme, then for after-school and infant care) changed with their children's ages. Finally, one family used private "family" daycare to accommodate the parents' 12-hour work shifts.

The remaining eight families, classified under group 3, relied primarily on their own resources to provide childcare. They included two families where one parent (one mother, one father) carried the chief responsibility for child-care, fitting in part-time work as best she or he could, while the other worked full-time. In the other six cases the parents alternated child-care and paid work. At least one parent, generally but not always the mother, defined her paid work as "part-time". These eight families also made some use of external childcare, whether in the form of playgroups, part-time babysitters, or nursery school.

Childcare group affiliation is also indicated in Tables 3 and 4. From this it can be seen that parents who relied on their own resources (group 3) were predominantly in the lower-income group, while day-care families (group 2) and those with housekeepers (group 1) were predominantly professionals.

Table 5

PROVISION OF CHILD CARE WHILE PARENTS PERFORM PAID WORK

(The notation —> indicates that parents altered their arrangements during the course of the study)

1. **Housekeeper-nanny employed full-time** **3 families**

In all three families of Group 1, both parents are employed full-time.
Preschool children attend nursery school or part-time daycare centre twice weekly.

2. **Full-time daycare outside home** **5 families**

A. 3 families
Non-profit day-care centre is preferred option.

1 Elder child is in centre, younger with sitter at home —> both in centre (elder child now after school and vacations only).
1 Both children attend same daycare.
1 Younger child is in centre, elder self-sufficient.

B. 1 family
Both private care and non-profit centre used.

Elder child in non-profit centre, infant in private care —> both in private care (elder child now after-school and vacations only).

C. 1 family
Private daycare some days, parents share other days

Parents work 12-hour shifts, children attend private daycare when both parents on same shift. (Parents are attempting to have this the usual pattern.) Preschooler attends community-based group programmes twice weekly.

In all five families of Group 2, both parents work full-time hours, although one mother is classified as "part-time". (Her hours have since been somewhat reduced.)

(continued on next page)

Table 5 continued: Childcare.

3. **Parents perform bulk of child-care, stagger work-hours** **8 families**

A. 2 families
One parent has overall responsibility and fits paid work around child-care

1 Mother does care, also works as bookkeeper for husband's practice. Uses part-time sitter. Did use part-time non-profit daycare centre.

1 Father does care, also part-time research based at home. Uses cooperative playgroup.
Preschooler attends nursery twice weekly, boarder sits for them.

B. 6 families
Share care

4 Woman does more care, works part-time: man full-time.
1 Both work part-time —> woman moves to full-time.
1 Man does more care, works part-time, woman full-time.

Five employ babysitters some of the time, one also sending preschooler to nursery-school twice weekly, and one having a grandmother who sits for them; one uses a cooperative playgroup, and has started to send both children to part-time private daycare. Only the last family listed does not require a sitter during work hours.

This chapter has served as a brief introduction to the families studied, and indicated the resources available to parents in terms of money, housing and space, and availability of transportation. It has also outlined some of the structuring features of parents lives: their occupations and hours of work, the types of childcare they use, and their children's health.

From this introduction, I can proceed to a closer examination of these structuring aspects of parents' lives, and move on to consider their patterns of work in the home, as they told them to me. However, motherhood or fatherhood is not experienced by participants only as resources and structures and patterns. It is highly complex and emotional, joyful and frustrating. I wish first to examine how the parents described their parenthood, with its ups and downs, its joys and its worries.

VI. THE EXPERIENCE OF BEING A MOTHER OR FATHER

Being a mother or father cannot be described in simple fashion. Parents experience their parenthood as complex, joyful, worrying. At times they become exasperated with their children, themselves, or the situation and resources within which they have to function. In subsequent chapters I shall examine some structuring conditions within which parents operate; but the conditions of parenthood are subjectively perceived by mothers and fathers, who act on these conditions, draw on resources, according to this perception. Later in this dissertation I endeavour to examine ways in which this perception, and their emotional and intellectual responses to parenthood, are socially constructed.

We have to begin, therefore, with how parents perceive their motherhood and fatherhood. From the start it should be borne in mind that motherhood and fatherhood are feeling states, not merely "roles" that can be taken on or discarded (Elshtain, 1982).

Boulton (1983) asked the mothers she interviewed to describe their chief sources of enjoyment and irritation concerning both their motherhood and their daily practice of childcare. To this I added the concept of worry. I asked both mothers and fathers, during separate interviews, about their main sources of enjoyment, irritation and worry, in terms of the generalized "being a mother" or "being a father" and in terms of the day to day activities and childcare routines. This division of concerns worked fairly well, but there were times when parents found it difficult. On the whole, mothers had less trouble in separating the general "being a mother" from their particular practice of childcare.

In this chapter I examine enjoyment, irritation and worry as described first by mothers, then by fathers. Then I look at how mothers summed up their motherhood, and fathers their fatherhood.

THE MOTHERS AND HOW THEY FEEL

Enjoyment in being a mother

To the question, "what do you most enjoy about being a mother", mothers had many answers Most focussed directly on their relationship with their children: hugging them, watching them, reading to them, playing with them. The children's presence "made things more fun", some suggested, and the insights gained from a child's perspective on the world were a great source of pleasure. A sense of wonder and freshness was mentioned in this context. One mother, Susan, mentioned motherhood as an actual status: the way in which by becoming a mother she had joined a community of adult women. Another, Anna, spoke of "feeling like an adult for the first time", when she made the decision to have a child. One, Sheila, mentioned watching the children with her husband, and commented on his being the only person "that can appreciate how wonderful it is", when the children discover new things or develop new abilities.

Berthe's and Rachel's comments quoted here are typical of those mothers who focussed on the direct relationship with their children, and the closeness and immediacy of this relationship.

> Um — I like laughing with the kids, I like hugging them, I like it when they want to hug back, when they take time to hug back. Our middle son is uh, quite the cuddler, he will always cuddle and hug . . . I love to read to my kids . . . I like to see their smiles when you've done something for them, something that makes them happy. I love to buy clothes for the kids. I love to buy toys for the kids. I like to see them playing with their toys. I mean not just playing with them, but I mean enjoying them. I like teaching them things . . . cooking and needlepoint being two things, I guess. (Berthe, II)

> Oh, hugging and kissing and touching and — the nice times, I'm not crazy! *(laughs)* Uh you know the times that everybody's feeling good and, you know, you sit down and read your kid a story, or something like that, or they hug you and say 'Love you Mom', and go to bed nicely . . . Doing things together. You know, Christmas holidays, sort of stuff, you know, it's much more fun being a family. Even sometimes when they're squabbling in the back seat and it reminds you of when you squabbled in the back seat as a kid. (Rachel, II)

Rachel's use of "go to bed nicely" indicates that enjoyment comes not only from activities which are pleasurable in themselves but from the avoidance of problems, the feeling that everything is going smoothly. Other mothers echo this feeling also.

Several mothers conveyed a sense of young-childhood as a stage that would soon be gone, that should be enjoyed while it was there, and of the development of the child, the newness of her or his experience, and the ways in which that was changing.

> (T)he thrill of allowing, just watching someone becoming more and more independent and comfortable and able to do things and confident, that was, that kind of little rosebud blossoming is of terrific appeal. (Kathleen, II)

> I think what I most like about it is watching them, and seeing how they change, develop and — just enjoying watching them develop as people, learning how to do things and uh becoming, I mean watching (the younger) learn his colours, and just how enthusiastic he is, everything you, when you read a book it's like you have to name every colour on every page for him, and if you see a spider, watch out because then you have to sing Eensy Weensy Spider! *(laughs)* . . . Second on my list would be coming home and him going 'Hi Mommy!' *(imitating little kid's voice)* and running to you and giving you hugs and kisses, you know both of them are just so affectionate. and the reason I say that's second on my list is because I know that's not going to be permanent, at least I know we're going to go through periods when I'm not going to get *(laughs)* all that outward affection. (Sheila, II)

In general, this sense of watching, of observing newness, was the favourite comment of professional and middle-class mothers. Cheryl, a lower-income mother, spoke in similar vein. She talks of the joy, the "lift", as compensating for the work of raising children.

> The vitality of the kids, the new experiences, you know, and the, the newness that you get yourself, like looking at things in a different manner. I think I have to say that I like that most about being a mother. You know every little thing is — like (the third one), she's such a tyrant, but *(laughs)* when some thing's excitable to her and just seeing it through her eyes, it, it's nice. And I think it gives you a lift, you know from the doldrums of everyday life, like. I'd have to say that that probably compensates for all the work that's involved with — I really do. (Cheryl, II)

Four working-class mothers, Carla, Lucille, Sheena and Brenda (from a middle-income household), had a somewhat different approach, and one in which the children appear very central to their lives. They like to feel needed, they like the fact of being a mother, life would be very boring without children.

> Having someone depend on me. . . I like it when my son will come to me and say, 'Mummy, I love you!' right, or 'Mummy, can you get this?' or 'Mummy, can you do that?' and then you know maybe every fourth or fifth time he's, 'Thank you, Mummy, I love you!' I just love that, I just think it's so nice, you know. (Carla, II)

> Being needed. Knowing as little as they are now that they need me, and that I'm wanted. (Lucille, II)

> I enjoy the kids. I mean just basically them. I, the one I enjoy the most is the baby . . . just the fact of being their mother . . . If I didn't have kids I don't know what I'd do. I think I'd have a hell of a boring life. I mean I go to work and I think about the kids, you know. (Brenda, II)

> Gosh, it's the whole thing. I love to love, you know like to do things for others, that kind of thing, and I love them, I get off on loving them, I guess is the way, *(laughs)* . . . But I know I'd like to keep having them. *(laughs)* I can't picture a day now with not having a, you know a baby or a toddler around. I'd like to just keep on every two, three years having another one. I won't, and this is it. (Sheena, II)

There are elements of "watching them" in these mothers' answers also, but the feeling of being needed is paramount.

One professional mother, after discussing watching and reading to her children, spoke of status, "being accepted as a woman" by other women who have children.

> Another bonus which is quite funny, because it happened as soon as I got pregnant, is the sense of sisterhood, the sense of being accepted as a woman, which at work was terribly terribly important. Women told me things much more easily. Now they say, 'Do you have children?' and I say, 'Yes.' And they don't sort of stop to inquire any further, I mean they might be having terrible problems with an 18-year-old, but somehow because I've got children they know, they think, I'll understand. Sometimes I do. And that happened immediately, as soon as I was pregnant. And also just the whole business of being one of the mothers at work . . . We talk about our children a lot, and I love that, I really really enjoy that. (Susan, II)

Anna's comments are the most complex. She dealt with both the abstract idea of being a mother, deciding to have children and then feeling "like an adult for the first time", and the actuality facing her. In practice, motherhood is confusing, and her responses to it are ambivalent. It is at the same time wonderful and terrible, and the same aspects of it, in particular the feeling of total responsibility for these little people, are what makes it so wonderful and so terrible.

> (I)t's a big shock, I still, I'm not completely comfortable with mother — I, like I said I had always sort of had a hard time dealing with children so it doesn't come naturally, and if I see something I don't like in my kids, I go — uh that must be, you know, I'm saying to myself, I'm a bad mother, you know, and before you know it — I mean I try and take it pretty lightly, but once in a while I get down with myself, and it is such a big responsibility, and I always knew that it was going to be. It's a wonderful thing, too, it's just from one extreme to the next, you know some days you just feel like you want to, to choke some day — oh my God, this just can't go on — but it's nice because it doesn't go on, you know, the next day is like they do something miraculous and they're wonderful. And I can't, I can't get enough of them, they're just so wonderful, I can't imagine my life without them, you know. (Anna, II)

Enjoyment in doing childcare

Mothers differed on the question of enjoyment in actually looking after their children. Some pointed out that routine chores such as bathing small children could be enjoyable or not, depending on how both they and the children were feeling. Others focussed on non-routine activities which gave them as mothers a break. Talking to or reading to children were mentioned in this context also: Cindy pointed out that these could be "a way to escape the real world" briefly, for the mother.

Childcare is most enjoyable when the day goes smoothly, said Berthe, thus repeating the implication of Rachel's "go to bed nicely".

> What comes to mind is what makes for a smooth day, maybe . . . not only a smooth day, but like a profitable day, what I would call a, a memorable day. And that would be if the children are involved in something . . . I guess I enjoy any day when there's no fighting! So in terms of looking after them, I try to get them as involved as possible. (Berthe, II)

This involvement requires her attention, so that she cannot pursue her own activities, unless these are cooking activities. She has to work to make the day "smooth".

> Because they need you, there's such a short period of time between one need to the next, that I can't get involved in too much on my own. Although I can do cooking somehow, or baking. I can do things in the kitchen much easier than trying to sit on the couch and read or do needlepoint. Somehow that seems to work. Baking or cooking. Maybe it's because the children will taste the results, I don't know! *(laughs)* (Berthe, II)

Physical play, tickling, and joking with children were frequently mentioned.

> It gives me the excuse to climb the monkey bars and go down the slide, and go to silly shows and that kind of thing. (Sheila, II)

The age of the child mattered, as did the child's mood. Talking to the older child, hugging or dressing the little one were enjoyable, said Rachel.

> They're so different, I mean they are at such very different stages of life. When (the younger) is nice, I enjoy the putting-to-bed ritual, the stories and the, oh I guess with (the younger) too I enjoy the moment of pick-up when he rushes, on the days again when he's in a good mood *(laughs)* and he rushes to you and hugs and kisses you and uh and loves you! (The older is) in very different sort of stuff. (He's) most fun on an everyday basis if, if again he's in a good mood and he wants to talk about something, if he asks a question that I can, I mean beyond, a question about life or something, and you can talk to him about it and make some sense out of it with him and communicate, and pass on some of your values and some of your views . . . (The younger) is more of a touchy feely sort of thing, you know it's the hugging and the contact and the, the brief moments of adulation *(laughs)* that I enjoy most.
>
> In terms of picking up after them and cleaning and cooking and that kind of stuff . . . *(laughs)* I don't much like that! *(laughs)* I guess I enjoy getting (the younger) dressed, if he's not too cranky, that's sort of like playing dolls in a way, you know, sort of he's still cute enough for it to be fun to put his clothes on him, but so many mornings that becomes an, an aggravation. (Rachel, II)

There is a fine line, here, between work that is also fun and work that is "an aggravation". Several mothers pointed out that routine childcare tasks could be enjoyable or not, depending on how both mother and child are feeling.

Well, when they're in a good mood and you're in a good mood, almost

> anything can be enjoyable. Like I said about bathing, or putting them to bed . . . I love reading to them. Does that count? . . . There again, sometimes I don't, it depends on the mood and time of day and how tired you are and how many times you've read the book. (Susan, II)

Anna emphasized that enjoyment might come from day-to-day changes that indicate the child is progressing. Toilet training is a bore, until the day it is successful.

> A lot of things just become chores, you know, it's nice, you get a routine down, and sometimes you know you change a little bit each day because you try and teach kids a little bit more, you know, sitting down for breakfast, I used to feed her and then she feeds herself, and then she wants you to feed her again and you say, 'na, na, na . . . You're a big girl, now you can do this for yourself.' And she fights with you a little bit, and once in a while I'll give in, but you see the progress, you know, and it's really neat and — even toilet training, you know, it's a real chore — but then, all of a sudden! . . .
>
> It's like the day-to-day stuff, it's oh it's messy, and it's boring, because you're doing it every day and it's just not a big deal any more, and yet you still have to be enthusiastic about anything you want them to learn, and — but at the result, I think how quickly they learn . . . (Anna, II)

If she's not tired, Anna enjoys taking the children out, particularly to get "a break" from the daily routine, or sitting with them to read. Cheryl also named activities that would give her an "out".

> Like skating the other day . . . it's a change of atmosphere . . . much more fun than doing a few things I should have been doing in here, keeping up on the laundry! (Cheryl, II)

Her lack of enjoyment of indoor play, for instance of board games, is occasioned by lack of time. Many mothers said small interactions in the course of the day were important. Often these involved physical care of young children.

> Kids seem to brighten up your day. Like you can be in a really bad mood and (the toddler will) smile at you or something and it's like, oh wow, you know, takes your mind off other things, like that way. (Sheena, II)
>
> I enjoy things like I like bathing the baby, sitting there and have her splashing away, laughing in the bathtub, things like that. (Brenda, II)
>
> Well, the babyhood stuff is quite wonderful, I like doing all of that, just sort of

preening. (Kathleen, II)

This enjoyment does not extend to the chores.

The washing I could do without. (Kathleen, II)

Some mothers found it hard to pick out tasks they especially liked. "I can tell you what I don't enjoy easier!" said Donna. "There isn't anything that I don't like", said Lucy, and Carla echoed her comment. "I like everything, Jenny, everything. I don't know if I have one particular thing."

One working-class mother, Lucille, discussed her enjoyment of presenting her children to the outside world.

> Getting them dressed up. Getting their hair slicked back, and (the younger one) in his two-piece pin-striped suit and red tie, and (the elder) in his grey flannels, white shirt and red tie, and getting them, you know, spiffy, and taking them somewhere and people, 'Ooh, are they ever cute!' I love it! *(laughs)* I mean what parent doesn't, right? *(laughs)* What parent doesn't? Yeh, I think they are very, two fine, you know, good-looking boys, when they're all do-ed up as they call it. (The elder), and (the younger one) looks like a little Al Capone, you know, with the white shirt and red tie, strutting along there. *(laughs)* (Lucille, II)

Finally, one professional mother, Karen, took a different line by stressing <u>being responsible</u> as her source of enjoyment in childcare.

> Um — the actual looking after — well I guess — I quite like a feeling of responsibility, sense of responsibility for other people. And I think that's reflected in the type of work I do. I enjoy that — the giving, but not necessarily a Florence Nightingale thing, it's a more a liking to be responsible! (Karen, II)

<u>Discussion: enjoyment</u>

Boulton (1983) found some differences between working class and middle-class mothers in their responses to similar questions.The main difference I found was the wish to be needed, expressed so strongly by the working-class mothers with regard to "being a mother". This has some parallels, however, with Karen's wish to be responsible, so that it is not possible at this time to speak of strong class patterns. What is most evident is that many of the responses to "being a mother"

come close to an idealization of motherhood: hugs, rosebuds blossoming, watching and aiding children grow. This is a picture of motherhood as intensely rewarding in itself. Yet from some comments on "doing childcare" we can see that this enjoyment does not come automatically. The smooth day, the perfect moment with children has to be worked at.

From these mothers' words, it is evident that being a mother and doing childcare cannot be discussed only as work. Devault (1987) discusses how her respondents saw feeding their families: done to nourish, done to please, done out of love. It was a way to show the children they cared. The mothers in my study talk of routines, and of breaks from the routine. They talk of long-term hopes and fears for the children. It is evident that for them motherhood is not "just a job".

Irritations in being a mother

At times, however, motherhood can be intensely annoying or irritating. Mothers were divided on what they saw as the most irritating aspect of their motherhood. Roughly half spoke of problems occasioned by their children's behaviour: squabbling or whining. However around half talked rather of the responsibilities of motherhood and how these seemed to have no break, and to necessitate every activity being planned, so that loss of spontaneity was mentioned often as an irritation. Some women indicated the severe time constraints they worked under.

Comments around children's behaviour give a very graphic picture of family life and its frustrations. For Berthe, the most irritating aspect of being a mother is when children squabble.

> The fighting. I can't stand fighting. I can't stand it! . . . it happens quite often. It's usually if uh (the elder girl) and (the boy) are into it, or (the boy) and (the baby girl) . . . And it's not because (the boy) is the instigator, he's not. Well, some of the times he is, I shouldn't say he's not, some of the times he is. Um — it's your regular stuff, you know. 'That's mine!' 'No, it's mine!' You know. 'Give it to me!' 'No, it's mine!' That kind of thing. And the bickering back and forth. 'Oh, you look like a toad.' 'Well, you've got fish eyes.' You know, that kind of thing . . .

> (J)ust before lunch or suppertime, I guess those are the two worst times of the day. And it's because they're hungry, I'm sure. But I won't stand for it at all. I refuse to stand for any yelling and screaming, or — they don't physically hurt each other, they don't punch or hit, kick, any of that stuff. It's basically yelling and I think actually it's probably well-founded because I think I've done enough of that. (Berthe, II)

Squabbling, fighting and whining of children became in these accounts part of the conditions within which the mother performs housework tasks, while also adding to her work. She has to resolve the squabbles, deal with the whining. This is both irritating and tiring.

> The sort of screeching and hollering bit, and (the elder) is very negative right now, and — they're not exactly tantrums, he cries and cries and cries and cries and cries if you disagree or he's crossed in any way, in certain moods. I find it very wearing, and I get irritated with that very quickly. (Susan, II)

> Oh, when they whine and fuss, and you're already tired, and all you're wanting to do is just go to bed! *(laughs)* Oh you know the squabbling, and the teasing, and the bickering. That's the worst! (Rachel, II)

Mothers are not only irritated by the particular behaviour in question, but by their reaction to it. Brenda made this explicit, speaking of the divergence of real-life mothering from the "idea of being this perfect mother". When the children became too demanding (in particular the second child, whom she described as difficult to handle and on medications that made him "hyper as hell") and she lost her temper, she would be irritated both with them and with herself. At this point in the interview, her two younger children were both clamouring for her attention, loudly.

> I guess it can get on your nerves, especially if your image of what a nice mother is, and then when I lose my temper, with this thing [the second child] usually, and you know my idea of being this perfect mother goes down the tubes, and I end up yelling at him and sending him to his room, and he gets a spanking! I guess that's, it bothers me a lot. When the baby was born he was really bad, like I don't know how I survived that, got through that with him, 'cause I'd be home all day, 'cause Glen was at work. And trying to take care of the baby, and he'd be just as bad as he could be. And I didn't feel like a very good mother. I felt like a terrible mother 'cause all I'd do was yell at him. (Brenda, II)

At home all day, she was constantly "on call". About half the mothers spoke of the responsibility they felt and the limitations this placed on their lives.

> You feel like there's an incredible amount of responsibility. And just this feeling like I can't fly to Toronto tomorrow. Not that I would! But it's this feeling like you are tied down and there are these responsibilities that you have to do. Not that I don't love doing them, most of the time, and not that I haven't gladly accepted them, but you know — there's just sometimes when you feel, you know, I would just love to work for another couple of hours, I would get so much more done, but you have to go home, and you have to do this, and this, and this because that's, you know, there's no way round it, you're not as flexible any more. (Sheila, II)

> Having no time to myself at all. Trying to work and take care of the children. I was always a person that had a lot of hobbies, and liked quiet time to myself to read or paint or do photography, or something, and now I've just had to put everything on hold for a while, and I find that very frustrating . . . I don't mind taking care of them, like their physical needs and that. Just seems natural to do that. (Cindy, II)

The lack of spontaneity was a problem for Cheryl. With children, everything had to be planned, particularly meals.

> Babies for sure, I mean they have time clocks in their stomach, you know all of a sudden they're hungry, it's just like that! There's not one thing you can do about it, and I find that very stressful, to try to, you know, to have meals on time so that it keeps everybody happy, just to have that thought in mind, you know, you can go out in the morning and you say — Oh, I have to be home at such-and-such a time because everybody's going to be hungry! Again, that's probably back to spontaneity, not, doing something and not having the limits put on it. (Cheryl, II)

Two working-class mothers, Sheena and Lucille, particularly talked of the need for time for themselves.

> When you get those moments, and it doesn't even happen that often, that you just wish you were the only one in the house. And you're not. That to me is, like I lock myself in the bathroom, now, that's the only room I can read in. It's the only room with a lock. And so maybe that would, that would probably be it. It's just every once in a while . . . I'm always on call. (Sheena, II)

Having to be constantly available was exhausting.

> I mean the endless feedings — When (the first child) was um, you know, we had to go through through all the food and strain it, you know, and all that business, and freeze it and all of that. That's always fallen on my shoulders, and um when I was working, and working nights, and Douglas would come home, you know, just after all of that was over, there's always the feeling of slight, you know, exhaustion, and sort of 'Well why me?' all the time. You know he'd come in and his meal was ready, and the kid was fed, and I wouldn't have time to eat often myself. (Kathleen, II)

Carla said "having to work outside the house" bothered her most. It led to a time problem, being always hurried and harried, not having the opportunity to be with the children without also having to do housework.

Anna summed up many of these comments, mentioning many different sources of irritation: Constant responsibility; continual demands, including demands for affection; children squabbling; failure of children to understand why they shouldn't do things; and perhaps most of all, irritation with herself for becoming irritated by those things, and reacting by herself "throwing a tantrum".

> Well sometimes you feel like you just can't get away. Like you've had something stuck on you, glued to you . . . and of course if you just had a hard day, you're tired, you had a hard day at work and you want to relax, and they drive, the two of them are fighting, you know, and it just seems like they're at each other for the stupidest little thing. And you try not to let it get to you but it always does, it always makes you go 'IEEEH!'
>
> I guess it's all emotional, right, and it's an instinct . . . I guess some people I imagine deal better with it. But yet it's like my nerves are shot, and, you know, I yell really now like I say I scare myself because I sound like my mother, and I always thought my mother sounded like a witch! I go, oh my God, look at the look on (the elder girl's) face . . . I start throwing a tantrum, and I go — no I can't, I hit myself before I hit them, you know I'll spank them but if I'm mad I'll just throw something, and I'll look like I'm ready to kill them, you know. It scares them, and I shouldn't do that, you know, but I just, I'm at my wits' end, I can't take it any more, you know — *(laughs)* (Anna, II)

Anna's laugh, at the end of the comment, removes some of the force of what she has said. On balance, she feels she <u>can</u> cope. But when this happens, the

feeling of intense frustration, of being unable to get away from the situation, is no laughing matter for her, or for any of the mothers I interviewed.

Irritations in doing childcare

Mothers found several aspects of the actual practice of childcare intensely irritating. They were very specific, mentioning particular items of work or times of day. Mealtimes were most frequently mentioned. Five mothers talked about meals, particularly suppertime, as the chief irritant. Others mentioned problems such as general non-cooperation of children surfacing at mealtimes. As Susan said, everything became more difficult "when they're hungry and cross".

> Oh — dinner hour! *(laughs)* The hours between five and seven *(laughs)* when we're all tired, we have to come home and get dinner, get everyone through dinner. You know, appease them while you're cooking dinner because they're starving, and then get them to eat their dinner, or not eat their dinner, get through it, and then you know clean up, do the dishes, and get them into bed. I mean that, that, there's no fun in that . . . you know, you get home and you have to cook dinner, Simon cooks dinner, mostly, and just that whole routine is just — the pits! (Sheila, II)

Carla's husband is out at suppertime on weekdays, and she has herself just returned from work.

> I can't seem to get them to sit at the table and eat without starting to play, then cry, then throwing their food and — don't want to eat their supper. That's it. That really bothers me . . . It goes right down to not only the food, but 'I want that spoon, Mummy!' or 'I want that fork!' . . . I've tried to have music going, to see if this was relaxing. I found that that's terrible. I tried to have silence, and nothing seems to work. I haven't found an answer to suppertime problem at all yet. (Carla, II)

On the weekend, her husband eats his supper in the living-room, which further undercuts her authority at the table, and is a source of argument between the partners.

> They look out here and they want to be with daddy. Particularly (the girl), and (the boy) can't figure out why he has to set at the table and his father's in here. (Carla, II)

Devault described "managing meals" (1987:185), that is, making sure that children are reasonably well-mannered and that the meal goes smoothly, in the category of work that is invisible, not seen as work, not counted by the woman or her husband as energy draining. For the women studied here this invisible work is immensely stressful.The first interview with Cheryl and Mike was held just before lunch, and the toddler suddenly became hungry, and cried. Cheryl said this happened every day.

> It's like her stomach just click click like this at lunchtime, you know, 'I'm hungry, I want to be fed right now!' And at suppertime it's the same, and even at breakfast time, it's the same thing, and I find mealtimes confusing, especially if I'm here by myself, like it was good maybe if I could just — walk out the door, and say, OK, that's all, look after yourself! *(laughs)* (Cheryl, I)

In the second interview she was even more emphatic.

> I hate suppertime. I hate it with a passion. It's just — I, I mean I have an ideal on suppertime, everybody sitting around the table enjoying each other and — suppertime, it's just one big fight as far as right at this point in my life! Both babies are hungry. She has a time, (the toddler) has a time-clock that says 5.15, (the eldest) has classes, she has skating on one night from 5 to 6. (Cheryl, II)

Several women picked out aspects of children's behaviour. One was children's not sleeping, or refusing to go to bed, resulting in the mother's "not being able to get one full night's sleep for a long stretch at a time", as Cindy told me.

> You're tired, and you want him to go to bed desperately because you want 15 minutes to yourself before you go to sleep yourself, and he won't go to bed, and he won't go to bed, or if he, we've had a couple of bad nights when he was up two or three times in the night . . . (Rachel, II)

Children's non-cooperation and "smart answers" were another source of irritation.

> He's getting to the snotty stage, and some of his answers can be fresh, and again particularly when I'm tired and my patience level is not too great, and he gives me a smart answer to something, it's — annoying! (Rachel, II. This child is 11.)

> When they don't do what you say! They get too smart! (The elder boy's) going through a really bad stage where it doesn't matter what you say, it's, yeh I think he's at the stage where he can completely block out your voice . . . And, and then when he finally does hear you *(laughs)* and he says 'No!' *(laughs)* . . . and he'll tell you why. So he's always got a reason. (Sheena, II. This child is five.)

Both Lucy and Lucille spoke of children's non-cooperation, particularly when the parents were in a hurry. For Lucille breakfast-time provided an example.

> Trying to get them fed when you're going out the door. You know, trying to get them, 'Come on, eat, let's go, got to go, got to go,' in the morning. (The younger boy's) there signing 'eat' and saying 'Tee, tee,' he wanted to eat, and he wants to eat now, right. Getting him breakfast in the microwave and trying to find out what (the older one) wants. And he's dilly-dallying . . . Then you have a fight with (the older one) to eat, and it gets irritating 'cause he knows you have to leave . . . To the point that we've left here and his breakfast is still sitting on the table, and he's in the car crying, he wants his breakfast . . . (Lucille, II)

All these problems of non-cooperation, arguing and squabbling were issues of discipline, and discipline was, for Elizabeth, "the least liked part".

Some mothers, notably Cheryl, Donna and Anna, focussed on routine chores such as laundry.

> And the laundry, the other thing, eh! *(laughs)* I can get the laundry done, but I wish it'd put itself away, because after four batches of laundries are piled up and nobody can find their clothes, and two or three kids have gone through the stuff that's already folded, and it's all over the place and you don't know whose is what and what's clean and you're washing all over again *(laughs)* — So I think if I could do away with the laundry and supper time I'd do fine! (Cheryl, II)

> Everything that becomes sort of a daily ritual thing, you know, your job becomes that way, you know after a while, you get tired, you just need a break, you get burnt out, and you find that you do just from all the chores, and you know from washing dishes to doing the laundry to doing the shopping, and you try to sort of ignore it and just do it, you know. (Anna, II)

Finally, Karen says she "probably rationalizes" her distaste for chores, particularly messy ones, into a kind of altruistic nurturance, which she claimed to find the most enjoyable aspect of childcare. It is hard to tell to what extent this analysis might be her husband's rather than her own.

> If you didn't have the sense that you were doing it for somebody else, then I don't see how you can possibly do it, motivate yourself to do it, at all. And so — I think you develop a sense of altruism to cover yourself, too, so that you don't go completely crazy. So in one sense at least from Robert's point of view I probably rationalize some of the things that I normally wouldn't like doing, like possibly changing dirty diapers or doing the washing and all that. But I *(laughs)* I make it somewhat enjoyable through a rationalization process, just to get through it! So I'm not sure. I don't consciously you know, resent any element of it, but possibly — there's a bit of cognitive dissonance involved, *(laughs)* I don't know. *(laughs)* He thinks there is! Where I really don't like it, but I pretend I'm — so caring, so altruistic, just to get through it. *(laughs)* I don't know if that answers the question! *(laughs)* Probably all mothers have some of that. (Karen, II)

Discussion: irritation

From the comments of mothers in these sections it is easy to feel that mothering is a job nobody would want. Indeed it is hard to remember that it is the same mothers talking as in the first section of this chapter. Here we begin to see behind the construction of "motherhood" to some of the work that mothers do: the work of daily routines and tasks, the work of managing behaviour and coping with scheduling problems, and the work of carrying responsibility for children and their welfare. Mothers measure themselves, and are judged by others, against a standard of perfection, the "good mother". We begin to see also differences in the work of different families: the child who is "signing", for instance, has Down's syndrome. He has to be taught to sign, and he requires constant practice, which is more work for his mother.

Worry in being a mother

Mothers worry about their children, and the future, and if they themselves are "doing things right". The worry is not constant, and often is forgotten for long periods of time: but it does surface in various ways, sometimes, as several women pointed out, during happy moments, when they look in on their sleeping children at the end of the day. When women were asked about "being a mother" in general, they listed

their main sources of worry as their children's health and safety, and what the future would bring to them.

Eleven women named health or safety as their main sources of worry. These included four mothers of asthmatic children, Berthe, Susan, Sheila and Brenda, for whom the worry is intense.

> Like (the eldest's) asthmatic, and like I think the worst thing in the world would be to lose a child, you know. That's always at the back of my mind. I think that's why I had three, and why I sort of want another girl, 'cause you know you read about these fires, and car accidents, and I think they'd be the worst thing, just to lose a child. So the more I have the less — That's where they used to be in the olden days, they had so many 'cause they lost so many. (Brenda, II: two children asthmatic)

The mothers of disabled children, Lucille and Sheena, mentioned first health, then safety; including "strangers" and abduction.

> Them dying. *(laughs)* I don't know, isn't that awful! But no those are, and that doesn't, I mean I don't think about that either, really, but I mean, *(laughs)* you know like a stra— Like he started school this year and I immediately thought of, think of strangers. You know. And I know I'm talking it all the time but I'm not trying to make him afraid, either, like I don't want to make him afraid to be outside. But I mean with this code-word bit and you know this kind of a thing, instead of scaring him half to death. Because he's really friendly. But — That they grow up all right, you know. I want them to stay in Halifax for ever, like I don't want them to grow up and move away! *(laughs)* But that's about it really. Just sick, getting sick, or hurt. (Sheena, II: younger child has Down's syndrome)

Five other mothers mentioned health, safety or both. Their concerns included the possibility of accidents in the house, and the threat of the roads and of abduction and abuse by an outside person. Anna summed up the feelings of many mothers around safety and health.

> They're just so wonderful, I can't imagine my life without them, you know. I feel the horror and the tragedy of people losing their children and it's like I know I'd go out of my mind, I would not be strong, I'd just as soon lose anybody and any thing before my children. And that scares me, because that, that's what makes me go overprotective. I fear losing them and I hear too many stories, and movies affect me like they never affected me before, anything that has to do with children just flips me out, although I'm very curious and I'm aware and you

> know, I go, oh God, I can't believe people do this to children, I just can't, you know, and it really scares me. (Anna, II)

Her worry is intensely personal: for her children, and also for herself. What could she do if anything happened to her children?

> I just don't know how people get over it because they would have to put me away, they would just, I would just never be the same again, and I'm pretty convinced of that. (II)

Indeed the whole process of raising children is "scary". Anna has many concerns: the children's futures, and the whole relationship between parents and children and how it will change.

> It's also scary, sort of, to take a chance on somebody growing up and I know I hurt my mother, you know, and I hope you know I never you know, my kids never do that to me or I never do that to, I worry about no matter how hard you try to make them all right, what if they don't turn out, what if one of them turns out to be a murderer, you know what if — . . . So that's the scary part, you know, things that you wish and hope for that are wonderful, just might turn sour, and turn bad, you might not be able to do, you might have a problem kid on your, you know, that nobody knows what to do with. They might, you know, turn out to be a drug addict. How am I going to deal with this, you know? So those things, when I think about then, it's hard . . . I try not to think about it, you know. That's, that's the down side, as far as I can see it. (Anna, II)

Three other women, Rachel, Elizabeth and Carla, picked up her concerns for the future.

> What's going to happen down the road, what are they going to do, are they going to, you know, have an education, are they going to be in trouble all the time, are they going to deal with drugs, and all this thing. Stuff like that bothers me. It really bothers me. (Carla, II: one child asthmatic)

Only Karen claims not to worry: if she was to, it would be about external events. Several people related to her have been involved in physical violence beyond their control.

> I think I basically have my parents' attitude that there aren't, aren't too many problems unless you create your own problems. Through worrying, that is. Things can happen, and unfortunately may happen, but there's not much sense in worrying about. I guess maybe the biggest worry would be just general negative influences, um this crazy messed up world we live in!

> *(laughs)* Sometimes that bothers me. My father was assaulted last Christmas by some lunatic, who was 31 years old, just kind of smack, he smashed my father, beat him up very badly . . . But I don't think I have any other kind of worry, I don't have any major concerns for their intellect, I don't have major concerns for their financial stability, things like that, that — I think those will be taken care of. But — things that are less controllable. The world at large, I guess I get, think about, more. But not very often. (Karen, II)

These women's worries, as I mentioned at the outset, are not constant. Yet the women find that worry can strike them suddenly. "What if . . .", so that anxiety, about other people, futures, and health, is a very basic part of their relationship with their children.

Worries over doing childcare

When I changed the topic to worries over childcare routines, four mothers mentioned safety or health as their basic concern. Three had earlier spoken of health and safety as the worrying aspects of being a mother. Six mothers worried that they were not doing the right things to facilitate the child's personality, emotional and cognitive development. One said "money", and five, including Karen, said they did not worry about the daily practice of childcare.

As with larger concerns over being a mother, safety issues affect the mother's practice of childcare.

> Um like with (the elder) when he picks up (the baby) and he's trying to plop her up on the couch, I'm afraid that maybe if he turns his back on her after he gets her up on the couch she's going to fall off. So I worry about the safety, like it's the kids when they're playing around . . . I might hold (him) back from having, from doing something, because I'm more concerned about his safety than what he is. (Donna, II)

Cheryl explained in detail how children of different ages sparked different worries. With her eldest daughter, walking back and forth to school, there was the worry of strangers.

> I mean I wanted her to get to go places herself, but it's a worry. Like when she's not home from school at noon-hour, quarter after twelve, and I know she gets

> out at twelve, like I know it doesn't take her any longer than 10 minutes to get here, I give her an extra five for dilly-dallying or whatever, but you know sometimes she's not here until 20 after, so, and I mean I notice that, right off. (Cheryl, II)

With the next two children, the worry is over the safety of what they will do: this is especially the case with the third, at this time aged 18 months.

> I worry about her with everything around the house, I mean the other day she put her hand on the burner and she scorched, well she didn't scorch, she literally took the skin off the top of three of her knuckles, and one day she pulled the iron off the thing and caught it on the way down . . . And plugs too, I mean she'll see you plug something in and she'll go to plug something in . . . with one child you could take steps to take most of the hurt away, sort of thing, but with four other people using things and doing things, it's very difficult to control that environment . . . and falling, mean she's gotten up, she's into getting up on the stool and jumping into things, now, hoping somebody's going to catch her . . .
>
> This morning I went down to the post office, to mail a letter, and came back and raked some leaves and brought the rake in through there, and I got back in and said — Oh my God, I left (this toddler) out front, eh! I knew the baby was out there, in the stroller, but I forgot about her being there because I just came in and went out, and she could have been out in the street by that time! You get familiarized with having them around and you forget that they're only 18 months old.

With the baby, a few months old, she has the worry of this third child "doing something to him".

> I said to her 'Push your baby in the stroller', and I meant her doll. Well I come back in here, she's trying to haul him out of his seat, and put him in her own! *(laughs)* Or she will be stuffing something in his face, like yesterday I was eating something, and she was trying to get me to eat chips. Well she gave me one chip and I ate it, well then she's trying to shove them in my face faster than I could eat them, and it was terrible! *(laughs)* And she would do the same thing with him. So I guess I have to worry about protecting, you know *(laughs)* from the vulture! (Cheryl, II)

Hazards are everywhere, and mothers must be constantly vigilant. Lapses in vigilance are extreme causes for concern for these mothers. Cheryl's description outlines some of the conditions within which the work of "parenting" takes place,

particularly problems of dealing with children of different ages, in a limited space, when there is only one adult to act as supervisor and the supervisor has other tasks to perform.

Five women expressed concern that they might not be doing the right things to facilitate the child's growth, and personality, emotional and cognitive development. "If I'm taking care of them right. And looking after them properly", said Lucille. "That I don't do things with them that would help them grow", said Sheila.

> Not that I really worry about it a lot, but you know I always think there must be really interesting games to give them, and things, activities to do that would really — You know I'm not interested in their being whiz kids or anything, I'm not a flash card or anything, not, you know I'm not on a race for anything, but just things that they would really find interesting, and fun . . . unfortunately, there isn't a whole lot of time left to spend creatively with them. (Sheila, II)

Carla worries about confusing her children by what she says or does.

> A cup of tea, a cup of coffee, a cigarette, I'm telling (the boy), 'No'. He wants one 'cause I'm having one. I'm saying 'You can't have that', and he looks at me, you know, and he can't understand — well, why can't I? You are! — type of thing. (Carla, II)

Finances, providing for the children, also formed a source of worry.

> I worry if they're going to be all right, you know, if they want to go to college, you know, will we be able to help them if they need help? We never manage to have any money in the bank, and it's, I worry about things in the future like that. (Anna, II)

Anna was the only mother to raise this particular issue at this point, though several women, and men, said elsewhere they would like more children but knew they could not afford to have them.

Five women, four of them professionals, said they did not worry about day-to-day childcare events. Childcare could be "a bit dreary sometimes", as Susan pointed out, but not intrinsically worrying. Karen explained that "I'm not really a worrier, I don't worry about anything". If she was to worry, Karen said, it would be about health, but her children were very healthy so that she felt there was no cause.

Discussion: worry

These women's worry about motherhood and childcare appears here as part of their very obvious attachment to their children, but also as linked to constant responsibility for these children. Much of the advice given to mothers encourages their extreme feeling of responsibility for their children's physical and emotional health. In their critical examination of the literature on children's mental health, Caplan and Hall-McCorquodale (1985) found that no less than 72 "problems" were blamed on mothers', but not generally fathers' behaviour. This literature was directed to medical and clinical professionals who advise parents.

In these section, also, some of the conditions under which mothers work have come into view. Conditions change as children age, but the work is always framed by uncertainty, about the present and about the future.

THE FATHERS AND HOW THEY FEEL

Enjoyment in being a father

When asked what they most liked about being a father, men gave many sources for enjoyment. Some of these are similar to the mothers'. The largest category here was fathers who discussed watching their children, finding pleasure or amusement in their activities or just "being with them". I had some sense of a greater distance from the children in these comments, compared to those of the mothers: fathers did not talk about hugs, although several spoke of children running to the door to greet them. Several spoke of pride, Andy saying, "I got a son!" — to carry the family name on.

Vince's comments were typical of professional fathers.

> I enjoy being with the children. I find them immensely amusing, although they can be awfully aggravating too, sometimes. But overall, as a whole, I find them amusing, particularly the children at the age that I have children, and they are just plain fun . . . (Doing activities with the children) you're reliving what I think

> are some of the finest experiences you had as a child, and I think they're very fine . . . I guess I enjoy the teaching. Maybe it's the teaching I enjoy. (Vince, III)

Simon, Duncan and Robert made similar comments, and Pete spoke of observing the "spiritual and intellectual growth of my children". One lower-income father also spoke of watching and images.

> I don't know. It's fun watching them grow up. It's fun watching them change. We get the books out, the photo album out all the time and try to see which ones look like which ones and it's fun seeing how different they all are, you know. And they're all from the same plate, and just having them, like reproduction is probably one of the, next to space travel, no I guess reproduction comes first, is one of the most amazing things in the world, I think, even plants, and anything, you know, it's just, just amazing. I don't know what I like most about them. I guess just having them. (Mike, III)

Wayne, a middle-income father, spoke of finding the children's outlook on life "refreshing". His comment (and indeed those of Duncan and Robert) appears more distant from the children, more patronizing, than does Mike's or Vince's.

> I find them refreshing, at their better moments. You know, when they're not deciding that they're just going to climb up and tear things down, but at the best of times. I find them, like they're refreshing . . . it is refreshing to see people whose whole outlook on life is fresh and it's uncluttered with all of the things I could have done, I should have done, or should do, or maybe will do, or can't do but should do, or, you know, all the outside pressures. They don't really have any pressures. (Wayne, III)

Three fathers spoke of "doing something with them" but in very different ways. Joachim is the primary daytime caregiver for his two children.

> Oh, when they play together, that's — and also if I can do something with them, or one of them is usually better, that they're very interested in, [like] telling a story or looking at a book. (Joachim, III)

Glen has much less to do with his children in terms of caregiving, though he does more now than when his first child was small. Indeed he took little part in childcare until (at Brenda's insistence) he visited a marriage counsellor, to be told he was attempting to live a single man's existence in terms of responsibilities.

> I enjoy being a father. I enjoyed it from the beginning. I wasn't a very good father in the beginning, because I was too immature, I didn't take the practical side of it very seriously. I enjoy having the kids around, doing things with them. I'm not that much of a fan of babies, per se, I prefer more to what I call a draggable age, when you can haul them with you when you want to go to meetings . . . to me they don't get a personality until they're, you know, a good four or five months old. Because I don't have as much contact with my children as my wife would have, as my wife does most of the caregiving in our house. (Glen: III)

There is much greater distance from the children expressed in Glen's comment than in those of the mothers, or of Joachim, immediately above. Joachim enjoys being able to do something to interest the children: Glen is pleased when the children fit in with his plans, perhaps by reaching a "draggable" age.

Don talks of spending time with his children as his main source of enjoyment. However with work and household chores there is very little time for play.

> I enjoy spending prime time with the children, whenever that does happen to pop around, which it does every now and then. Like taking (the elder) to his first movie, I thought that was quite a blast. And the times that we do get together and rough-house on the floor, I enjoy that quite a bit. (Don, III)

Two fathers, one professional, one middle-income, emphasized the total nature of being a father. Both appear very close to their children. Rick insisted that the experience of fatherhood was not something he could divide up into good and bad; the good came with the bad, and an unpleasant experience could be a source of very deep emotion.

> I guess the whole experience. It's not one thing, it's like I'm, you know, sort of the cuddling them and — oh, example's staying home with (the boy) when he had chickenpox, four days and he just sat in my arms, and when he throws up holding him and making sure that he's all right. And watching him skate . . . it's the total experience, rather than saying, well you know, I don't like that activity, but that's part of it, if he's sick, then that's — might not be the enjoyable experience, but it's, it's part of the experience, it rings out the total, total relationship. And that means you know loving him when he disagrees with you. So it's not saying this is the best part, it's the whole experience, and to isolate one part would be unfair to the experience. (Rick, III)

Hugh did not separate the work of childcare out from being a father: the two went together.

> Like I love coming through this door at 5 o'clock now, before it used to be at the daycare but here it's now, and these guys they come screaming up from where they are and they jump all over me and the little one cries if I hug the big one too long and — it's a big, it's a big kick, to be the person responsible for these two little charges. That's the day-to-day, and in a more long-term sense there's that sense of family that I really like, which is something I said earlier, that sense of family I have known as a kid, as rough as some of the times were that sense of family was never gone . . . And now that I'm here, it's just a big deal being a parent. I think it's just great. I like the whole, whole razamatazz. (Hugh, III)

Mike, Ted and Wayne, picked up the idea of children running to the door to greet them. "It makes you proud, I guess", said Ted. Mike expressed pride in his four children. He enjoyed taking them out, being seen with them. Wayne described having children as "Like having your own little cheering section!"

Three other fathers emphasized their pride in their children. Paul described his son's behaviour at a skating lesson, and how he felt it reflected well on him. Douglas's account was more abstract, but he commented that —

> If one can take you know pride in what one does to any extent, I think it's in the nature of the child you bring into the world. (Douglas, III)

The most vehement and immediate expression of pride came from Andy.

> I love it! The best feeling is, no matter where I'm at, I always know, like even now, three years later, people ask me about my kids, I feel — Hey! Yeh! That's, you're right up my alley! That's the greatest feeling for me is — talk to me about my kids? That's my pride! You know, I really — There are a lot of days when you feel like, let's lock them in a cage, or run away from home, but when you stop and get away from them, then you can't wait to get back to them. It's uh — like when Carla phoned me up and said she was pregnant she didn't really, she was crying, and I was laughing. So a friend of ours got on the phone, she worked at (Carla's workplace), and said, 'Andy, you're going to be a father!' And I couldn't stop laughing! And Carla was scared to come home, because in all them years, I said, 'I hate kids, and I hate animals' . . . And when nobody was around, like I would babysit for my sister or one of my relatives or whatever, oh I had a great time with the kids. Thinking you couldn't have any, that really hurts. It does. So when Carla found out she was pregnant like I said she was crying her eyes out, figuring I'm a mean old ogre, and I laughed

> thinking, yeh, right, we've been together ten years, and now you're telling me — what a joke, yeh! So I was tickled pink. I really loved the idea. And she kept saying, 'What do you want, what do you want?' 'Long's it's healthy, and there's no problems, I'll be happy!'
>
> So after (the elder) was born, I said, 'Yeah, I got a son!' That's what I wanted. But now we have one of each, so that's great. But I really wanted to have a son. Someone to carry the family name on. (Andy, III)

Andy here reveals his very strong attachment to his children. As will become plain in the next chapter, he is their daytime caregiver. However the concept of pride, expressed in different ways by these six fathers, did not appear in the mothers' comments.

Enjoyment in doing childcare

Fathers approached the question of enjoyment obtained from doing childcare in a somewhat different way from mothers. Most fathers emphasized taking the children on outings, or having the children near them, or watching them, rather than focusing on specific tasks or discussing the physical care of young children (with three exceptions).

Playing with children actively was mentioned often, especially by lower-income fathers. In Andy's comment, getting the children to play together, and with him, is work.

> Playtime, when they want to play it's, it's hard to get the two kids to play together. If they would, if all three of us play, that's great, you know, it's, you're spending equal time with the kids, and they're enjoying being with you. That's the best part of the day. But if you can only get one kid playing, the other one crying all the time, I don't enjoy that. (Andy, III)

Ted and Don spoke of wrestling or roughhousing, making it plain that they would like more time in which to do this.

A number of fathers discussed watching their children, listening to them, discovering aspects of their development, as enjoyable parts of child-care: more

fathers of course had discussed this already. Joachim enjoyed watching how his children learned to cooperate, and how they devised activities for daily play, especially those involving creativity and imagination. As the primary caregiver, he is present and able to observe this. Hugh's focus on "little things" also suggests a close observation.

> There's little things going, it's just little things, you know, they're not big. These guys, we've had the stove on quite a bit the last couple of days and I've been letting it get up a little hot to clear the stove a bit, and these guys want to take off their dresses and run around in just their undershirts and shorts and they're — you couldn't, you'd think they were going to the beach, they're so happy! *(laughs)* Squealing and carrying on and running around and just big deal . . . Going upstairs late at night and seeing your two kids sleeping side by side and not fighting. That's, that's the number one that — The second part is, is that sense of you're getting something done, you know, and especially at this, at this age, you get to see something different almost every day . . . And the third one I suppose is watching these kids pick up their skills, their speaking skills, their reading skills, whatever. (Hugh, III)

Douglas and Pete spoke of reading to children, and exchanging ideas. "Just the being together", said Vince. Several fathers talked of outings.

> I like to take them places and do things. (Pete, III)

These outings are not, however, regular daily activities, nor do they necessarily involve physical childcare.

By contrast, while Simon mentioned taking the children out, his main emphasis was on a specific caregiving activity which he does on a daily basis: cooking.

> I really like cooking for my kids, and I like watching them eat enormous quantities of anything I cook and that's my Jewish mom coming out in me. I love watching kids enjoy what I cook, it makes me, makes me a little bit angry when they don't, although I manage to mostly — I can no longer try and convince them very often, I still slip occasionally, but I don't try and convince them to eat what they don't want to eat, just because it's good for them or anything like that, or because I've worked hard cooking it. So — but when they do like something I've made, and eat a lot of it, I really enjoy that, and some of the other sort of mechanical childcare things I really enjoy are like taking them for walks, and what I look forward to is being able to, you know when (the younger's) a little more mobile, you know get them out into the woods and go

> for walks there, things like that. But even just now, walking around the city, things like that. (Simon, III)

Simon does most of the cooking in his household. Wayne also mentioned cooking, but did so very differently from Simon. Wayne enjoyed being an entertainer for his children. He pointed out that this opportunity was facilitated by his not being the main provider of childcare. He had the easy part, he emphasized.

> It's almost like — an opportunity to entertain them. If I cook some, a meal, I can entertain, cooking a meal, things like that. Again because I don't have to do it every day, or do it less frequently than Lucy does, I — then at the same time that I, you know, I don't have to be doing the laundry at the same time that I'm cooking the meal. Or I don't have to worry about the laundry being done — I mean if I bath the kids, I can pretty much be assured that there's clean towels to dry them with. I don't really have to worry about doing this stuff. It's, you know, that's the, a look at it, the lighter side, the easy side of looking after them is basically entertaining them, for the most part. (Wayne, III)

Whereas Wayne spoke of doing childcare almost as recreation, three other fathers spoke of childcare as ongoing routine. Their attitudes to childcare, however, varied immensely. One professional father, Rick, spoke of the daily contact and sharing with his children and looking after them as routine, but also as sources of enjoyment.

> I guess it's not work, it's — well bathing (the boy) or bathing (the baby girl), if (he) wants to sit in my lap, sit in my lap, or (she) wants to have a bottle with me that's, those type of things. The changing, the getting ready for bed, the scratching (the boy's) back, reading him a story, those type of things I guess may be — even the disagreement's fine for that's, it does a — you know getting (the boy's) breakfast ready, but it's not just getting (his) breakfast ready, it's also getting Donna's and (their baby's) and everybody's breakfast together, so it's a sharing with everybody. (Rick, III)

By contrast, Robert explained that daily routines of dressing children or putting them to bed could sometimes be "fun", but at other times "just a pain". He emphasized that he hadn't been "groomed for that", or socialized into performing such tasks, as he implied women had. Overall his participation appears much less than that of Rick; but he resents it much more.

> There's certain things I do with the kids, like I usually put one of them or both of them to bed, one usually . . . that I enjoy a lot . . . that's sort of again, once again, being with them. Like I said to be honest I find a lot of the tasks tasks most of the time. But dressing them sometimes can be a lot of fun, and sometimes just a pain, because they don't seem to want to be very cooperative, and not having sort of been groomed for that, like . . .
>
> Same thing with feeding them. Sometimes it can be a lot of fun, and other times you just want to get the food into them. *(laughs)* . . . Putting them to bed, that's fun. In the mornings, you know, having breakfast with them, that's usually fun. Kids usually come in the room in the morning, get me out of bed. (Robert, III)

Finally, one lower-income father, Don, said that the daily routine has become "just something that has to be done". This father at various times indicated that he finds the business of performing childcare, and paid work, and worrying about whether the money will last out the month, to be very exhausting, and that he derives little pleasure from it.

> Uh — *(laughs)* terrible thing to say — around nine o'clock, when they're all in bed, and they're sleeping, I enjoy that. . . Practical, I find it, I've kind of come to look upon it as a chore. And not so much as a chore, it's just one of the daily things that you include in your day. It's not something I look forward to or I'm disgusted with, but I do find that that time is, it's nice when they're asleep and they're in bed. And I can kick my shoes off and sit back and relax. So much of the other one, it's just daily routine. It's neither enjoyable or, you know, disgusting, it's just something that has to be done. (Don, III)

Discussion: enjoyment

From these sections there is the sense, firstly, of fathers' attachment to their children and pleasure in their activities. Further, some fathers express a great involvement with childcare and its associated tasks. They may have difficulty separating childcare from fatherhood because they expect to perform childcare as part of that fatherhood.

More, however, appear to see both fatherhood and care in terms of "being with children" or taking them on outings rather than in actively looking after them. Some,

Robert in particular, appear to find childcare very tedious. For the final father quoted above, the routine is overwhelming.

Irritations in being a father

Simon found it hard to speak of "irritations" as he immediately thought of his elder child's asthma and the intense worry it engenders. Of the rest, five fathers found children squabbling, or not listening, as the hardest aspect of "being a father". Several mentioned the lack of time free from children. This emerged also as an inability to act spontaneously, because of always having to plan for the children's care and activities. One father in this category emphasized that "The irritants aren't that big": some recognition that lifestyles have to change goes with becoming parents, he said. Many of these irritants were also voiced by the mothers. Four fathers, however, emphasized a feeling of not being fully "in control" of the situation, a very different response from that of the mothers; and one of these fathers appeared to despair of his situation ever improving.

For two fathers, their problems included their wives' reaction to the children's squabbling or mess. Vince, a professional, mentioned "the loss of freedom", though this was not now a major issue, he said. His chief irritation, however, was "bickering".

> I get sick and god-damn tired of bickering sometimes between them, I get sick of it, you know. I get sick of having to repeat myself four or five times, you know. Sometimes I have more patience for it than others, but sometimes I don't, you know.

His wife's response to the children was also an irritant to him as a father, he said.

> My wife is, can be aggravating because of children too sometimes, and that tends to bring out the worst in women, children, you know — sorry! (Vince, III)

Andy also began by talking about children squabbling and ended by talking

about his wife's reaction to them and their "mess". He emphasized differences in his and Carla's approaches to child-rearing and housework. Clearly he finds these differences highly problematic.

> If the kids are fighting and arguing all day. Yesterday was a complete mess. Every room here had a mess in it. You couldn't even walk through the kids' bedroom to get to the window. So I left it. I usually try to pick up, two three times a day and Carla comes home from work and goes, 'Look at this house, what a mess!' and on and on and on. So. She didn't really see what I had to do. Yesterday it got to me I think the worst.
>
> I've only yelled at my kids out of temper twice in three years, and that's the truth, I really — like Carla said the other night to one of our friends, 'Andy's a very understanding person.' No-o. I control myself. I try to, though when things get to you. Because of my background and the way I grew up and everything, patience is a virtue. I have to — I was really hot-tempered, when I was younger, the drugs and the booze, and, so I'm more understanding than Carla. I don't sit and yell at the kids constantly, or I don't threaten to beat the kids all the time. I try to take the kid, show a little understanding, because I used to get a leather belt across my rear. Yeh. Or I would, when I was a little older I got kicked in the ribs, or punched in the face a few times. No way!
>
> I see them commercials on the church one, where you show a little understanding? Those are excellent! If Carla could learn to show a little more patience and a little more understanding, then the kids know they're loved a lot more. It's no good to stand there and yell all day long! For the amount of hours she spends with the kids, I don't understand why all the yelling and bickering. Kids are pretty adaptable, they can make you laugh or cry, just in an — *(snaps fingers)* an instant. But it's your outlook on the kids. You know. Though Carla was brought up having just her and her friend next door, so when she didn't want to play with her friend she just stayed home. You know, it's — I'm not obligated to the kids, I do it because I want to. There are a lot of men who would just say, 'No, you hire a babysitter and I'll go out all day, or do whatever I'm going to do.' (Andy, II)

It should be said, here, that Carla admits she is tired and irritable when she returns from work. Indeed she said she disliked "having to work", that she would like more time at home. These irritations and differences become more understandable in the light of daily routines and the particular distribution of labour in this household, referred to in chapters VII and VIII.

Several other fathers mentioned children squabbling, arguing or "not listening".

> Since (the eldest) started school he's been, he doesn't listen. He, right up until he was five he was good as gold. Now that he's in school he seems to follow the pattern of some of the other kids. He really doesn't listen . . . just seems anything you tell him to do, right now he just, without telling him four or five times, he doesn't respond in any way at all. Like he's got a mind of his own. (Ted, III).

> When they're all screaming at the same time. You're trying to do something and they're, they're all crying and (the second's) whining. It's frustrating, (the second) cries a lot, she, I don't know, if she's learning that from, from (the third) or what, or she's trying to get maybe attention 'cause there's so many — it's just hard to — It's hard to know whether you're making the right decision all the time and what you're doing with them too. (Mike, III)

For these fathers, their own reaction to the children is part of the comment — not wanting to become angry, to "blow up or make some blunder" as Joachim put it, and finding it hard to make decisions.

Others discussed lack of free time, and the constant nature of children's demands, or children's continual talking and interrupting, particularly after a long day at work, and, like the mothers, the loss of spontaneity and need to plan every activity. Rick and Hugh, however, pointed out that this was for them part of fatherhood that came together with the enjoyment.

> There's no sense in fighting something that's — that's pretty counterproductive, and if you're in a marriage, and you're raising the kids, whatever, there's a lot of things that just naturally fall from that, or they should naturally fall. If you fight them, right you're not going to get anywhere. And you can fight them and five years later all you've done is made yourself unhappy for five years. So in terms of all the things that you have to give up, to get to where I am, and you know there's a lot of them, the change from here to five years ago is major; but it's not, I don't find it bothersome, the little life that I've carved out 'cause I'm, here is quite an enjoyable life. (Hugh, III)

Douglas raised several issues. The loss of personal freedom occasioned by having children was the first to come to mind.

> You know I'm tempted to say the loss of personal freedom, but it's a little

> deeper than that. I mean there's an arrogance that we have that we carry with us about personal freedom. And in the abstract I don't think we really have, you know, much, you know, that we're really not owed much personal freedom. *(laughs)* You know that's a bit of a myth that we've conjured up for our own indulgences, I think. But it's a powerful myth. So in a way that's problematic. It's a problem from time to time, you know I want to do something, I want to go somewhere, I want to do this, but the children, the obligations to the children weigh upon me. You don't anticipate that. (Douglas, III)

On a daily basis, however, Douglas would pick the constant drain on energy occasioned by child-rearing, and the fact that this energy had to come from somewhere, so that he had less to spare for his job.

> I resented that, and I resented the fact that raising children required, required you to think what energy to tie — both of those I extracted from my work, and I've resented that, somewhat. (Douglas, III)

Many of these answers have similarities with those of the mothers. Both women and men are in a situation where they can feel constrained, imposed on, worn down by the exigencies of parenthood. A group of fathers take this further, however. Their chief dislike of fatherhood is of not being fully <u>in control</u> of the situation. No mother talked in quite this way.

> Certainly with the, the absolute impossibility to control the situation with the kids, not having them do exactly what you want them to do. They're not puppets, and sometimes you'd like to have them being puppets and doing exactly what you want to do. I find that somewhat frustrating when they don't do what you want them to do or what you'd expect them to do or what not, but — kids are kids, and that's just the way they are, I guess. (Duncan, III)

Paul returned to this sense of not being in control in various ways throughout the interviews.

> I find it quite annoying when *(laughs)* the kids won't settle down. They just seem like they have injected some kind of energy from who knows where, and it's given them this — turbo-charged effect, where they're racing around at 90 miles an hour and they have to touch every single thing, they can't sit down for a moment, and sometimes these stretches can go on for a fair amount of time . . . (Now the younger is) becoming more active and fairly difficult to control. She wants to be into everything, she doesn't want to stay in a playpen, she wants to check everything, put the TV on and off, go into the kitchen, take the pots and pans out, open up the stove, open up the cupboard, take the food out

> of the cupboard, get into the toilet, put her hands into the toilet bowl, climb into the bathtub — you name it. It's just never-ending. Go up the stairs, go down the stairs, if the door is left open by mistake she might find her way down to the basement, we'll look around, where is she at? You know. I find that difficult, you know, especially if you're tired. If you're not tired, it's not too bad, but if you want a break it seems like you can't get it at that point. So I find that quite hard to take. (Paul, III)

Glen spoke of "breaking the routine" as the most difficult aspect for him to cope with.

> As I grew up in military household . . . If that routine is disjointed or disrupted by the kids' behaviour and their needs, it can be irritating to me that way . . . And nothing else really that takes me other than breaking tradition. (Glen, III)

Robert mentioned one aspect of life, "mess", as not in control, and as a major source of irritation.

> *One of the things is just the kind of mess. Because you see the mess as it's* being made with food and things, and you think — my god, you know, you're going to spend as much time cleaning up after them as you spent, you know like, and it's sort of make-work project it seems, you know that side of it. I don't like — making an unnecessary amount of work out of them, going out of your way to do things that are of questionable value like something. (Robert, III)

He felt that some parents altered their lives more than necessary to accommodate their children and their wishes.

> I know some parents who sort of . . . (become) intellectually and emotionally just completely slaves to them, sort of servants to the kids, and I resent the idea of that, don't think it's natural . . . You know sometimes it seems like you do that, a little bit, you know, sort of go round the block ten times to take the kids around once. You know. Then that's unnatural, you know if that happens a lot I think you begin to resent the kids . . . I don't even think it's good for the kids. Like uh — I don't think Karen would like to be home all the time with them. She would get tired of it. (Robert, III)

There is a sense in some of these comments that the children's activities are rather alien and incomprehensible to the father. Why would they make mess, or run around in "turbo-charged" manner? Some mothers indicted enormous dislike of particular childcare tasks, but did not suggest either that the tasks were

unnecessary or that the need for their performance indicated that they had lost control of a situation. Indeed the mothers did not talk about "control" in this sense, at all.

For a working-class father, Don, "not being in control" referred to the whole daily routine of job, home, childcare. His life seemed to be increasingly full of work, and he had little time to enjoy his children.

> Not being in control. I find really gets to me sometimes, really kind of put me over the edge almost. Like uh basically the actual chore of all the things that come up has never been a problem, it's almost like another thing that you have to do through the day like dishes, diapers, bed, baths, that's never been a problem, it's basically what I find the one thing, if you were to ask me the one thing that I really can't cope with, is not, just the being in a situation where it just goes totally out of whack and I've no way of kind of grabbing it and sticking it back together. (Don, III)

Irritations in doing childcare

The fathers' discussion of irritations occasioned by the performance of everyday childcare activities is again somewhat different from that of the mothers. Whining and squabbling children, finding tolerance for children, and lack of control as in "being kept running around fixing things" were most frequently mentioned, whereas mothers had spoken specifically of mealtimes, chores, and children's lack of cooperation.

Several fathers suggested, like mothers, that sources of irritation might vary, depending on the time of day and the children's mood. Joachim spoke of how some parts of the day he finds more irritating than others, especially "when they're tired and whining and not accessible to reason!"

Hugh described how irritations might be caused by surroundings, the parent's feelings or the child's reaction to events.

> Well the six year old is argumentative. Well, we've made, or let her be argumentative, 'cause we argue with her all the time, we let her get away with it, so . . . you sit there spending, find your blood pressure boiling and you're

> sitting there arguing with this person over what could be a very inconsequential thing . . . In terms of say number two, in a kid of that age (three) we have control inside the house. When nobody's round we can control her, cajole her here, make them play around for five minutes. In public situations you just don't have those and sometimes you have to sit there and be the parent you don't want yourself to be, *(laughs)* and I find that, I find it — something related to other things that I don't like, it's sort of like a mild lack of control. (Hugh, III)

Irritation may result from a discrepancy between the father's expectations and what the child can actually do.

> Oh I, I guess I'm impatient sometimes, because I want them to do things on their own that they really aren't ready to do. Dressing themselves, for example. I guess that sort of thing, I want them to do more and more on their own and they're not ready for it, sometimes, and that's irritating. (Pete, III)

Children not doing what they are told is irritating, but particularly so depending on the father's mood, or if he is tired or has just returned from work, said Duncan and Vince.

> Well, it's irritating when they give me a hard time. That's what's irritating. When they won't do what they're told, and they just start to fight, I mean that's irritating. You know I have, I can take so much of it, but depending on your mood and depending where you are and when it is it can, it can be exasperating sometimes, you know. (Vince, III)

In line with his earlier comments about "mess", Robert finds "picking up after them" to be the chief irritant, again, particularly when he is tired and has just returned from work. Douglas and Don also spoke of their own tiredness, and how finding tolerance then became problematic.

> The most difficult I find is summoning up the tolerance, when extremely fatigued. Not only do I dislike being short and angry with them, I worry quite a bit about the effect of being angry to them . . . I don't mind being firm, but when I'm angry, when I'm out of control, that bothers me quite a bit. (Douglas, III)

Don's comments reflect his earlier statement about things going "out of whack",

> being in a situation where I'm tired and the children are tired and things can have been, I'm more inclined to, instead of sitting back and trying to figure things out, I'm more inclined to go the other way, and snap. Which only makes things worse. (Don, III)

This situation would occur "almost every other day", at supper-time and bathtime, with the older boy becoming quite uncooperative.

> It's like a battle to get him to eat his supper, a battle to get him to go to the bathroom, a battle to get him to go to bed, and he does have a tendency to, to just be totally obnoxious at times, and just basically sits there like a lump on a log, when you're trying, and like I find myself sometimes just taking it to the limit and then just snapping. Like in the bathtub, giving him a bath, and not wanting to have his face washed. Not wanting to, to have his hair washed. Not wanting to have anything washed. Physically fighting you in the bathtub, so sometimes I lose it, and I crack his bare behind, which only makes things worse, which accentuates things. And you know and then we continue on from that, and then by the time he does go to bed it's been a like 45-minute battle, and so by the time that's over it's not, no kicking back your shoes and relaxing, you afterwards say, 'Oh, my God, I just . . .' (Don, III)

The general problem of children not listening, or not cooperating, was discussed by two more fathers, Ted and Andy.

> Ah — when neither one of them will listen, when they just fight and argue and go WO-WO what they're going to do it's, you feel like you're being here for no reasons. It's like, OK, kids, just do what you're going to do. You know. And to be constantly yelling after them it's, it's, makes for a miserable day, it really does. (Andy, III)

Wayne's and Paul's comments appeared to centre around the idea of the father's life being disrupted in a number of small ways by the requirements of childcare, or having children around. Once again they give the sense of loss of control occasioned by dealing with children, along with the general inconvenience of having to exist in a house equipped for small children.

> I mean the foolishness of going through gates up over this, gates down over that, gate up over the other, gate open and closed, try and keep them out, try and get it locked, you know, and all you're trying to do is get a glass of milk out of the fridge, you know! (Wayne, III)

> When you don't seem to have control over that time element again, where things just seem to be happening and you're trying to keep up, so you're sort of running around fixing this, fixing that, as far as the child is concerned, plus you've got to do these other things in between, watching the children, and you know, or you feel, you're not really in control. All these other things are controlling you. Baby's crying and needs to be changed, and you've got to get

> lunch ready for somebody else, and you've got this work to do, and so on. I guess that's the most irritating aspect. (Paul, III)

Finally two fathers, Simon and Mike, focussed on time constraints, planning problems and lack of spontaneity, Simon emphasizing that "What I like least is the way they take time away from my interactions with Sheila." In both cases it should be said that the fathers spoke of these as scheduling problems and minor annoyances, rather than the ongoing irritation of "picking up after them" for Robert.

> Just having to fit my schedule around the kids, around having to look after the kids. Like today I want to be out painting . . . I'm doing a whole house right inside, so . . . I have to plan everything around the time that I have to be at home, and sometimes, you know, it's a real drag. And babysitters are hard to find, you know, and besides that we don't, Cheryl won't let me leave the baby with just anybody, so. (Mike, III)

> The amount of planning it takes, which is always difficult with our complicated schedules, means that we often just don't get out alone, we don't see each other very much, and I think that has a very negative impact on our lives together, and I'd say that's probably what I like least about the sheer mechanics of having kids at home. (Simon, III)

Only Glen could not think of any irritations.

Discussion: irritations

From the comments I have a sense that for some fathers what they find annoying is the whole situation of childcare. Looking after children is all very well if they can take children out or engage in interesting games, but often what the child wants to do may seem quite alien to the father. If what the child wants to do is messy or disruptive this may be perceived by the father as a loss of control. In other families the father comments much more specifically on details of work. This highlights some of the work of the household, and indicates some of the resources — time, space, patience — that facilitate day-to-day childcare.

Fathers, unlike mothers, do not comment on the feeling of carrying the constant responsibility of childcare. This question of where this responsibility lies is investigated in chapter VIII.

Worry in being a father

When asked about the most worrying aspect of being a father, men responded in ways somewhat similar to women, but the balance of answers was different. Three selected health, and two immediate safety issues, although several others mentioned these as a concern of the day-to-day childcare routine. Two mentioned childcare arrangements as a source of worry. Three spoke of outside influences as a worry. Three expressed concern over how the children would turn out. Two wondered if they were "doing it right", and two spoke of money as a chief concern.

Of those who said "health problems", all three had asthmatic children. Simon's and Andy's comments give a graphic picture of dealing with asthma, and further indicate the closeness of these fathers to their children.

> I find (the elder boy's) asthma, the successive colds they go through, the coughs, and then all that I find it tremendously anxiety provoking and very distressing . . . it sort of put everything else in my life on hold, I became completely focused on that, and very anxious and very concerned about him and everything else in my life sort of just gets dropped, and falls apart a little more than it usually does . . . you know the nights spent . . .in the (children's hospital) with him have not been much fun, with an IV in his arm and masks on his face and stuff like that that I, I find that really distressing. So there's the health problems. The second one has been generally a much healthier, but I still worry about, you know I don't like the way he walks, he's sort of awkward in his walk, I worry his toes are turned in too far, I worry about all these sort of mechanical health-related things, as probably most parents do. And I probably get too wound up in them and I dislike that a lot. (Simon, III: one child asthmatic)

> (The elder child has) been in the hospital. At one point there I, I broke down and cried and told Carla that I'm quitting my job to be home with the kids day and night if I absolutely have to, I just couldn't take it no more. His breathing was irregular, because of his asthma, and then it's, yeh it's, it was hard, trying to visit him in the hospital and him crying his eyes out to be with you and — yeh, I just broke right down, I would have quit my job just to go on

> unemployment or something and just be home with the kids, constantly, it's — When they're sick is the hardest. Because mentally you, being a new parent you, it's hard to take. (Andy, III: one child asthmatic)

As will become evident in later chapters, Andy left his full-time job and took evening work, part-time, in order to be with this boy during the day. Here he describes how it feels to have a sick child.

> You hate them when they're bad, and when they're sick you just, love them so much and nothing you can do for them. You feel helpless. You are helpless. (He's) to the point now where he can tell you where he hurts, and that's a big help. (Andy, III)

The third father, Glen, again raises the question of "control".

> Wanting them to be healthy. And as we've got the two boys with asthma, we've gone through some pretty touch-and-go times that were very worrisome. And of course when I worry I get angry, more than worried. More as a frustrated to the situation where it's something I can't control. I worry. (Glen, III: two children asthmatic)

It is interesting that Andy does not speak of control, but rather of being helpless and needing to do something for the child.

Rick and Ted spoke of safety issues.

> Well, you always worry about their health and safety . . . (The elder boy) almost got hit by a car there one day going to school 'cause he wasn't paying attention, ran out on the street. And you can't seem to drill in into him that you know you got to be cautious . . . And of course with (the younger) being handicapped, there was a lot of worry involved there, and there still is, you know, what it's going to be like for him in school, all sorts of different things there. (Ted, III: younger child has Down's syndrome.)

Rick's safety concerns were similar, but he moved on to aspects of the children's emotional and cognitive development.

> When (they) leave, and go into the care of other people . . . worry about (him) on the bus. Whether or not he's making friends at school, and whether he's developing relationships or friendships. How does he feel about things, and the sort of sharing. Whether or not (she's) getting proper care and stimulation at daycare. (Rick, III)

He raised the possibility that he might stay home with the children part-time.

> Are we doing the proper things by having them in a daycare, supportive environments that we have them in now, or should one of us, and I say one of us, either Donna or I, stay home, and provide the supervision, and it could be me, and I'd have no problem with that, for the period of time . . . But that's — we've discussed it, it's no big deal, if it does come to it, I've no problem. Move into a 50% work load and do that. Economically we'd have to look at the consequences as well. (Rick, III)

Another professional father said "having good childcare". For him this meant a good housekeeper.

> When you have good childcare, you can divert your, you can divert your concentration to, to things that you want to divert it, you know. If you don't have it it's, it's a terrible thing to be worried about, it's just consuming, constantly. (Vince, III: one child asthmatic)

For six fathers, the children's futures were paramount. Joachim, Douglas and Pete spoke of the outside world and the dangers and problems facing children when they were older.

> (I'm) constantly wondering what's going to become of this life that you've started. What have you precipitated? You know it's not that clear to me, not that I sit around wondering about you know global annihilation and so on, and the loss of the ozone, but it's not that clear to me what's going to become of this life. . . in the long run I think it's the worry about simply bringing children into this — but that's a very abstract thing. (Douglas, III)

For Pete, with an 11-year-old son, the impact of the outside world is more immediate.

> Drugs would be the first thing in my mind. Violence, crime . . . my son is very wise and informed and sensitive about, to the issue of drugs, and knows people who use them, and knows a lot of people who — a lot of kids in his old school smoked, as well. Not marijuana, just ordinary cigarettes. And he would tell me about that, and I'm glad he's still confiding that sort of — We had a talk about drugs . . . But I also worry about crime and violence, in school. (Pete, III)

Duncan spoke of "long-term worry" as to how the children would turn out. Hugh said his "only real worry" is for the quality of his children's future lives.

> Some ways the fact that this life is so soft, and I'm aware that it's very soft 'cause I've lived in, personal life things that weren't so nice . . . But there's a good 70% of the world's population doesn't live in this state. I worry about you know their political freedom and their food, those are, all I suppose I worry

> about is — I can't see five years down the road, ten years down the road, that that's all going to fall apart. This seems to be too easy. So if I have a specific worry it's obviously it's an underlying one. (Hugh, III)

Don also spoke of the future. His concerns are, however, very different from those of Hugh. Don seems in many ways the most powerless and most despairing parent, father or mother, in the study. He cannot imagine the future: he knows only that it will be problematic.

> I keep saying to myself, Oh my God, what's going to happen when (the elder) is 15 or 16, what am I going to do, if things are this crazy now! (Don, III)

This is tied in with many other worries: regarding money; regarding becoming irritated with the children, "an adjunct to losing control, exactly how far that's going to go"; regarding the elder boy's behaviour and the difficulties he and his wife are already experiencing in coping with him; regarding not knowing what will become of his younger child, who has Down's syndrome.

Two fathers, Paul and Robert, focussed on themselves as parents. Don's comments of course have an implication here also. Paul is concerned to do the correct things in bringing up his children.

> Not wanting to make mistakes in bringing up the children that will have a lasting effect on their psychological make-up. And it's worrying to me that sometimes I may lose my temper, or I may not phrase things in such a way, or I may not show attention at the proper times, or I may not show a positive reinforcement when I should show a positive reinforcement. It's worrying for me that I may not do all these things in the very best way that is possible. (Paul, III)

Robert also expressed some concerns for the children's psychological and emotional welfare, and whether his style of parenting is suited to their needs.

> Something I know when I'm kind of short with them or not very understanding, you know, I think after, you know, that I can't be a good, that there must be, that must have a negative effect. So I worry about that, I worry about setting a bad example sometimes. . don't know. I'm not sure about if I understand what you mean by worry. (Robert, III)

By contrast, Wayne and Mike emphasize material provision rather than "parenting".

> There are everyday worries, you worry about their health . . . you worry whether they ate too much or ate too little, you worry about — you know. But I mean there's not one thing. I worry about making sure that they, that we have enough money for them to explore whatever, you know post-secondary education, if they so desire that they want to do that. That we'll have the money to do that in the face of all the bad news that there is about, you know post-secondary education cost and things like that. (Wayne, III)

Mike's family's income is considerably lower.

> Having enough money. We get enough to get by but it would be nice to — worrying about saving the money for when you get, later on, you know, and then you say, well should I worry about that now or can I wait for five years till the kids get a little older and then we can both start working full-time again and then worry about it? So — but I strongly believe that people, good people get by, so you got to have faith, so don't worry too much about it. I don't worry too much about it. (Mike, III)

Worries over doing childcare

When considering every-day childcare routines, father's worries fall into two main groups, health and safety, and a sense of "are we doing it right?" The latter includes concerns about their own reactions to their children, especially their anger or irritation. Two do not worry about childcare things.

Three fathers discussed health issues. For Simon and Andy, health is the overriding concern mentioned over and over throughout the interviews. Both have an asthmatic child. Both in their answers indicate the "hidden work" of dealing with this (discussed more fully in Chapter IX).

> With (the elder boy) certainly monitoring his, the state of his asthma is always a concern. I'm constantly worried about it, and anxious about, if he starts to laugh too hard he starts to cough, and you worry about that, you know, should we be dosing him higher, dosing him less, are we beginning to overdose him, does he need more of this or more of that, or less of something. As happened a few weeks ago occasionally we'll forget to give him one of his two-daily doses of medicine he takes all the time, and he winds up you know showing strong withdrawal symptoms and headaches and lethargy and really feeling bad and I

> sort of, by the time you figure out what it is that's happened, not only you feel terrible that you've sort of by screwing up made him feel so bad, but also you start worrying then about whether he might start wheezing next, and you know this could escalate into sort of a major episode. And where he can go and can't go. (Simon, III: one child asthmatic)

> Yeh — oh when they're sick and I go to work, I just, I don't concentrate on work . . . if you got to rush one to the hospital, you have to grab the other child just as is and go down. You got to worry about having taxi fare, or trying to get a hold of somebody. (Andy, III: one child asthmatic. This family has no car.)

Hugh, the third father to mention health, made plain that for him it is not a major worry. His children's occasional colds and chickenpox have been "not a big deal".

Four fathers, Pete, Wayne, Paul and Ted, spoke of safety as their main day-to-day concern. While their answers are in line with worries expressed over "being a father" they do indicate more specificity: children's bike riding and increasing mobility with age, sidewalk play, electrical gadgets and power sockets within the house, the need to know where children were when they were not directly within the father's eye.

> If (the boy) goes outside and I had (the toddler) inside here, then it'd be constantly in my mind that he could run out into the street and get hit by a car, or if he was supposed to go next door and play with (the next-door child), then I worry about whether or not he's picking up any bad habits over there, or whether he actually maybe made it over there . . . if there's a long interval I could probably find myself starting to worry that — I wonder if he really is there . . . But with (the toddler), I don't worry too much because she's so, well up to this age she's been under such total control, you know, in her playpen or in her crib, or walking around where I could see her . . . I do have sort of a strong worry that if something was on the stove that was hot like water or grease or something like that, that could splatter in their face or on their bodies, scar them for life. So I worry about that, you know, with (her) now that she's walking around the stove and everything. (Paul, III)

As with mothers' comments about health and safety, these reveal aspects of the work of day-to-day care of young children, necessitated by their surroundings. Worrying about children's welfare involves work and energy. It involves making decisions. How far should Pete's 11-year-old son go on his bicycle? How do you

anticipate the movements of a toddler, to keep her safe? At various times I had the feeling that I was listening to a list of hazards either debated between the partners or, particularly for Wayne and Paul, a recitation previously given by the mother to the father. "Watch out for . . ." Many parents spoke to me of how mothers would read parenting literature, and pass on "tips" to the fathers, perhaps asking them to read an article, even cutting it out for them. A father's day-to-day worries about childcare may sometimes reflect work the mother has done to educate him.

The next set of worries has some relation to this. Are fathers "good enough" as parents? Are they too irritable? Can they find patience?

Douglas felt that sometimes his reaction to the children was cause for concern.

> When I'm angry, when I'm out of control, that bothers me quite a bit. It bothers me when I'm out of control anyway. When I'm out of control with them I see them even more worrisome . . . You know physically it can be just very trying because the more children you have the more of a physical load it is upon you, but it's the notion of trying to, somehow — maybe they're more resilient than they should be, but because I was not used to someone yelling at me, or screaming or you know getting upset at me frequently, I very much try not to do that with our kids, and that can be very very difficult at times. As I'm sure you're well aware! (Douglas, III)

Duncan and Robert commented similarly. Don, once again, does worry, greatly, about this area: the source of his worry is himself.

> Well basically am I doing something wrong, and not doing something right? And that's my basic, I see that the problem is mine, not theirs. So that's worrying me. (Don, III)

Other fathers had concerns in this area, notably Paul.

Three fathers, Rick, Hugh and Joachim, emphasized that their worries about day-to-day child-rearing were minor.

> Oh, sometimes you get irritated, but as I was just saying it, it's not, you know, there's nothing much that you can do in the day. Sometimes when I'm home alone with them I feel that they outnumber me . . . especially when (the girl) wants a diaper change and (the boy) wants my attention . . . sometimes you just feel that you're outnumbered and you're looking for an adult to discuss some of these things with. (Rick, III)

On a daily basis, said Hugh, he and his wife tried hard to do their best for the children. It might be that in later years they would discover they had done something wrong: but worrying would not help this, and nor would guilt.

> No, you don't get to go back to age two and say, OK, let's do it this way. Or you don't get to look at the second kid and say, 'Oh, we did a hell of a lot better about the second kid,' 'cause you're a lot more relaxed. That's how Anna and I feel. But we can't go back, we can't do the first kid over again, and you know we were the way we were, like the same with my parents, where I couldn't help being a middle kid and my brother couldn't help being the third one. (Hugh, III)

Mike repeated that he did not have worries about looking after his children, only about paying for them. Vince "runs a pretty tight ship" when he takes care of the children or takes them out, and so does not worry when he is with them. Glen referred his lack of worry to "faith" in his "wife's ability" to deal with situations.

Discussion: worry

The ways fathers speak of worry reveals that many fathers care deeply about what happens to their children. As with the women, these worries are not always present, but appear in certain situations – when the child is outside, playing, when the child is unwell, when a particular news item (on drugs, for instance) has a bearing on children or on the future. However for some fathers there may be a slight sense almost of panic when the father is caring for children on his own, with the mother not present. There was a sense in some answers of following the mother's instructions, not "letting"' the child go near power sockets, for instance.

Again, some of the work of childcare becomes visible in fathers' comments, in particular Simon's description of dealing with asthma. Worrying about children is work, and creates further work in terms of the actions parents take in attempting to keep their children safe and well.

At the end of the interviews with parents individually, I asked how they would

sum up what it meant to them to be a mother or father. Again, there were similarities and differences between women's and men's answers, and it is to these that I now turn.

BEING A MOTHER

Mothers in their summations produced four types of answer, with some mothers giving more than one.

To be a mother was to be part of the continuation of generations, and so in touch with both present and future: this could also involve some loss of identity. "I was no longer going to be me, I was going to be somebody's Mommy," said Rachel. It represented a developing or unfolding, changing or "enlarging" of self, resulting in an enriching of the woman's own personality as the woman joined an adult community. Some mothers concentrated on their day-to-day responsibilities to their children and the ever-present nature of their job of being a mother. Finally there was the sense that the family was there, part of the woman, joined by a tremendously strong emotional bond, and potentially the source of extreme pleasure but also extreme frustration, fear, or disillusion.

Motherhood as generational

Rachel's answer was the most detailed and far reaching, and I will quote it at some length. She linked some personal loss of identity with becoming part of the succession of generations, and both of these with a new orientation towards the community.

> In the first instance it was a definitely a giving up of self. I can remember my first emotion on finding out I was pregnant was the terrible realisation that I was no longer going to be me, I was going to be somebody's Mommy, you know, and I'd remembrance of, probably from my own childhood days, of seeing one's parents as being just, you know, your Mommy and not being themselves at all . . . you're also moving another step out into the life-cycle and into generations, you cease to be a young kid, you know you're not a single young girl or a

> married young woman or whatever, you know, you're a matron, you're into the middle stage of life, whether you like it or not. And I think it's also, I think basically I think once you get past that *(laughs)* and come to terms with that, I think it's wonderful, I think it attaches you to life in a very different way, makes you part of the generations, part of the life-cycle, gives you a connection to all kinds of things in life, and life experiences, that you miss when you don't have children . . . And you get, you get the experience to, you have the experience of perpetuating things that you care about. (Rachel, II)

Her background and traditions were important constituents of her motherhood.

> I've mentioned I'm Jewish, and to a large extent our vision of eternity is through children . . . the feeling is that your children are your immortality. They're your connection to the ages ahead as you know your parents are your connections to the time before. (Rachel, II)

Motherhood linked her also to a community wider than her family

> Someone who has a child has made even that further commitment to society, to become part of a society, to, to throw your lot in with everybody else in the world and to go through the same problems in life that everybody else has and to not cheat yourself of the joys and not cheat yourself of the problems. I mean bringing up children is a mass of aggravations and joys. You know no-one who doesn't have children knows the thrill of a child's success and the reflected glory and the reflected joy from a child's successes, you know and if that means putting up with a night when you could kill them, that's a pretty small price to pay for that. (II)

Rachel has two sons but no daughter. She can vicariously experience the childhood of her sons, find out something of what being a boy is, she said: but she cannot re-experience her own childhood through a daughter. Reliving childhood as an adult, she said, gave "a whole new slant on life".

> You get to see childhood through adult eyes, to see it and experience it in a reflected sort of way but with the wisdom and with the reflection of knowing what they're going through rather than just experiencing it in a very visceral sort of a way. I mean I can watch (the elder boy) doing things and I mean I know why *(laughs)* he's doing them, and again by the same token I can see that he doesn't know why he's doing them, so I can see it at two levels and it sort of gives you multiple experiences, experiential — is that the word? — levels . . . you get to see all the different layers of life, and see how they all interconnect. (II)

Her motherhood affects all other aspects of her life. There are experiences she will now not have: particularly relating to her career.

> I made a commitment when I, especially when I had the second child, that I, I accepted at that stage and I made a conscious acceptance that I would put a cap on my career, that there was a certain extent of career that I was never going to be able to know, because I had children. But I think the trade-off is well worth it. I might not have had the career anyway, for God's sake! *(laughs)* (Rachel, II)

Rachel's answer is highly important. Her motherhood is very central to her self-definition. It influences all aspects of her life. She sees herself as related to the wider world through her relationship with her children and her status as "mother" within the community. Note, however, that although her motherhood is central, she does not appear as a stereotypical "mom". We do not know from this statement whether Rachel bakes cookies, or does any of the other things discussed in Chapter I as forming part of the institutionalized picture of "mom". Whether she does is not important. What is important are the links between Rachel, her children, her community, her traditions and beliefs. These in turn are reinforced by everyday interaction.

Three other women, Elizabeth, Kathleen and Cheryl, focussed on motherhood as continuation. While their replies were not as detailed as Rachel's, they still conveyed something of the sense of generations, of being in touch with both the past and the future. A fourth, Lucille, did not discuss the past, but did focus on the future. Children provided constancy and continuation.

> Always being loved . . . hopefully they'll always love me like I always love my parents. you'll always have somebody there. Being a mother, you birth them, and you love them and you teach them and they grow up and you watch them go away, but you're always there for them, so they're gone but they're not gone, right? And you're not always alone, when you have children . . . If I had to do it again, I would. Well I am, look at me! *(laughs)* I'd have six more, if I could get away with it! (Lucille, II. Her third child was born a few weeks after this interview.)

Again in this answer there is the sense of links, of reaching out, of motherhood as a changing relationship.

Motherhood as an extending of self

Three mothers discussed motherhood primarily as reaching maturity, extending oneself, changing one's life. Susan did not see motherhood as dramatically different from fatherhood.

> I'm not sure that I would be thinking about, or talking about being a mother, so much as being a parent . . . the whole focus of your life shifts. You're no longer just yourself, you have to constantly, constantly think about the children, you know, you become larger. (Susan, III)

Earlier, however, she had talked about pregnancy and a feeling of joining a community of mothers. Cindy focused on maturity, and the enrichment of her life that her motherhood had given her.

> I think it sort of completes your maturity and personality, adds a new dimension to your life, makes your life richer . . . I'm really pleased that I have two children, a boy and a girl is lucky. And that I've experienced, you know, childbirth, horrible as it was! And I've also experienced having a career, so I've done both. And I'm looking forward to the future maybe grandchildren. Maybe having more, don't know yet. I think it's made me a wiser person. It's made me appreciate my parents more. And that's about it, I guess. True meaning of wife and mother! (Cindy, II)

Lucy made plain that being a mother entered into all aspects of her life.

> It's not everything I am but it's a part of everything I am . . . it just always gives you a purpose, it always gives you something to be thinking about, and to be doing. It's always fun. I guess that's it. (Lucy, II)

This personal experience of motherhood, the way it changes individual women, is central to all three responses. Again their answers are far removed from the concept of "mom" previously discussed.

Motherhood as responsibility

Six mothers did appear to focus on their "role" as "mom". They discussed their "natural" responsibility for their children, for raising them and developing relationships with them. Three of these were professionals.

> I think one of the most important things would be that your children are happy, and then that they're fed, clothed. The biggest thing is that they're happy. And they show their happiness by smiling, and laughing, and being happy. (Berthe, II)

> Just like you're naturally responsible for brushing your own teeth, you're naturally responsible for looking after your kids . . . So that I think I would emphasize just the, the relationship and how it's important to have a mutual respect and develop your relationship on the level on confidence and friendship. . . There's a lot of funny philosophies of parents, parenting, standards . . . Come back in ten years and you'll find out that I'm wrong! *(laughs)* That I've got myself in a real mess! (Karen, II)

> A sense of responsibility, of bringing up the children, looking after their wellbeing, providing them with a secure loving environment. Being there when they need support or they're hurt or they're sick. Just sharing their accomplishments. There-to-help-them-if-they-fail! *(laughs)* All that kind of stuff. Well — that's pretty much what being a mother is. (Donna, II)

Three were in working-class jobs.

> Well I think like the most important is to, I don't know, *(laughs)* to love your kids, for being a mother like it's to know that you're there for them, which I think I am even though I'm not full-time. The kids know that I'm there for them. And to spoil them, mother them when they're sick and spoil them. (Brenda, II)

> Oh, I love it. I couldn't imagine not being (a mother) . . . like I like it when people are, not I don't like it when people are sick, but I like to be like the nurse, like I like all those funny things, do you know what I mean, like, 'Oh, lay down,' and I get this and I get that, like it's all that part, it's all this kind of things that are, I like to feel useful. I like to feel needed.(Sheena, II)

> Doing the little tasks or things for them that may bother you if you were doing it for someone else, but where it's your own you want to. I, that's, it's been what it means to me. (Carla, II)

These women make it plain that as Devault (1987) suggests, the work aspects of motherhood are emotionally linked. Motherhood for them is mothering, and

mothering is, they say, done out of love. These women told me how motherhood, they felt, should be, and what they considered were their responsibilities, whereas women in the first two groups had discussed how their motherhood located them within a wider community and within history, or developed themselves personally. This sense of the "naturalness" of mothering is one I shall return to later, especially in Chapter XI.

Motherhood as emotional highs and lows

The remaining two mothers focussed on the emotions that they associate with raising their children. Their answers sum up aspects of motherhood that they and other mothers mentioned elsewhere. As with Rachel's comments about generations and community, they deal with the tremendous complexity involved in being a mother. They do not equate motherhood and mothering.

> Having you know this wonderful family that is an incredible wonderful escape from all the horrible things going on. I was walking home a couple of nights, yelling at a few people in my head, and the only thing I could do to get myself out of that was to think about, you know, the kids, and thinking how wonderful it would be when I finally got home and I could see them and they'd go 'Hi Mommy!' and they run up to you and they, you know, they're — I mean it's this feeling of a warm bonding and closeness and — just a whole emotional attachment that is unlike any other attachment you could possibly imagine, even with a mate, or a parent, it's, there's something so, that feels so um — biological — it's like you have no choice! *(laughs)* It happens! *(laughs)* And it's incredibly strong, and overwhelming . . .
>
> It means being — um — incredibly harried and hassled and busy and overworked and tired, and it means being incredibly happy and sad and — um — I mean there's the good things and the bad things . . . It means having this feeling of — of a rock, that's there, that — when everything else is going wrong *(laughs)* you know is this one sort of stable thing in your life . . .
>
> It means lots of worry. And it means — having the feeling of this incredible responsibility to other lives, and feeling so inadequate *(laughs)* about wondering if you can, you know, raise these two people. (Sheila, II)

Sheila was the only person, woman or man, to mention her partner in this context.

> It also gives you a — being a mother with Simon is also a very different relationship than being a wife with him, and that's also really nice too because it adds another dimension with him that we've really enjoyed. (Sheila, II)

Anna's comments were similar. Again she expresses ambivalence toward her motherhood. Being a mother, raising children, is scary.

> It's still hard for me to see myself as a parent. I'm still a child in a lot of ways, I know. I'm learning things, things constantly are a big surprise for me . . . I don't know if there is right answers or wrong answers to a lot of attitudes and a lot of answers, questions that your kids throw at you. I know myself I don't know the answers to everything. And I, I hate this, there's too much of a responsibility for 'You've got to be a good parent!' You know. It, I don't know if parent is the right word for me, you know, I mean those are my children, I love them more than anything, but that whole idea of what it means, it's all, it's too idealistic . . . I think it's a major thing in my life, the most incredible thing that's happened to me in the last decade, you know, and it comes with a lot of responsibilities that I'm not sure I can handle, or I will be able to handle, I really just hope for the best, you know. You really do, you try your damnedest and you don't have any guarantees, and that's the scary part of it . . .
>
> I can remember the feeling I had, like this miracle just happened. It's a baby! Like this is a baby! . . . I just think it's amazing *(laughs)* to see this little — you know, you didn't exist, and now you exist! And it gives you this power, powerful feeling, you know, everything that comes along with it is, is — you know, you think you've been in love, you think you know it all, and this little thing, this responsibility! This false advertising! *(laughs)* It's — very hard to put into words. You know, it's so good and it's bad, it's wonderful and it's one extreme to the other, but I wouldn't give it up for anything. This, no way. It's, it is, the most incredible thing that's ever happened to me, for sure. You know, if you had to pick one, the most, the most major thing that happened your life, it would be having, having kids. (Anna, II)

These women express a very great joy in their motherhood, while acknowledging that it is associated also with "hassle", overwork and worry. Neither appears as "mom". Caring for one's children does not translate into an automatic acceptance of a total responsibility. As we shall see in Chapters VII and VIII, both women expect that their partners shall share in the responsibility of raising children.

BEING A FATHER

Fathers' responses when asked to sum up what "being a father" meant to them fell into seven categories, with several fathers providing more than one type of answer. These were: the succession of generations; fatherhood as part of reaching maturity or leading a "full" life; fatherhood as teaching or guiding; fatherhood as making material provision for children; fatherhood as wanting to be with one's children; fatherhood as at once "fun" and responsibility or worry; fatherhood as an overload of work. Some of their answers were similar to those of the mothers: some were not, notably where fathers spoke of providing for the children (although elsewhere in the interviews two mothers talked about concern for material provision), and as wishing to be with the children. The father in the final category of work-overload is the only person in the study for whom the negative aspects of parenthood appeared to be dominant.

Fatherhood as generational

Two fathers, Vince and Wayne, emphasized continuation of the family, and the succession of generations. It was, they said, just "part of life", and they were "playing their part" in life, "perpetuating the species", as Wayne pointed out.

> In a very large sense, being a father is playing or taking a part in the succession of mankind . . . I mean this is my, this is part of my life, and part of their life . . . I feel it's something that was intended to be, it was intended to be part of somebody's life, and because it was intended to be that way, that's why it's enjoyable, you know, that's why it's worthwhile, that's why family life is, is not such a bad thing. You know, I don't think there are many better choices . . . So if you're a man and that's it, so, so you do it and you enjoy it because that's part of it, it's one of life's experiences. (Vince, III)

Fatherhood as maturity, part of a full life

Related to this was the idea that having children was part of having a "full" life, which Robert, Paul and Douglas raised in different ways.

Specifically the times when you're, watching the kids makes you stop and

> appreciate life, and not take anything for granted . . . It's of a great value to the parents, I think, adds fullness to your life . . . So I have, I have a full life. I think, I always thought that having a full life meant — having kids . . . there's always been this division though between family life and my profession, my profession is demanding and it really doesn't offer a lot of time with the kids. And things balance one another out. (Robert, III)

> I think it's made me a better person. I've learned more about myself and enjoyed more of life and I'm prouder of myself than I think I would be if I wasn't a father. (Paul, III)

Douglas discussed how the relationship of parent and child was different from any other relationship.

> I think, it's somewhat abstract but I think the essential one is the displacement of self into another. And it's uh, I think it's very different from the relationship you strike with your wife, or your companion. It's a different sense of, it's much more a sublimation of your own concerns, into the concerns of this, these, or these other beings. That's what seems to me to be the case. And in doing so you, I suppose you bring along an element of what you consider valuable within yourself, or the ideas that you hold to. But that has to be integrated with the concept of self that these beings have, too. (Douglas, III)

Answers in both this and the first category have similarities with the mothers' views. However, differences may outweigh similarities. The fathers do not display the sense of parenthood linking them with the community, and the centrality of parenthood to their lives, that the mothers do. Robert says fatherhood "adds fullness", but there is a division between family life and professional life, whereas to Susan "the whole focus of your life shifts" with motherhood.

Fatherhood as teaching and as pride in children's learning

Several fathers emphasized helping children develop, teaching them skills, teaching them about the world. For Pete, Duncan and Wayne, fatherhood was a mixture of moral responsibility, teaching or "directing them" (in Duncan's words), and "downright fun".

> To help another human being — sort of grow and develop and make their way in the world, and learn some values, and learn how to treat other people, and

> learn how to respect themselves, and it's more of a, there's a kind of a, a — sort of a, kind of a moral function, I guess, in the broadest sense, that a father can play. (Pete, III)

> It's just downright fun, you know! You're a mother, you know what it's like . . . I enjoy it, I get a sense of satisfaction in that, I get a sense of satisfaction from sort of like my own satisfaction and then there's the, the innocence, the opportunity to, to teach and to interact with people, there's the, the — there will be, I look forward to the things that I find, you know, that the time that, the tying of the shoelaces or the riding a two-wheeler . . . I mean it's a sense of, of accomplishment, a sense of giving an opportunity to — I don't know, maybe to accomplish, it's the accomplishment. (Wayne, III)

If there is a counterpart to "mom" in the popular press today, is it not the image of the concerned father guiding, teaching and having fun with his children?

Joachim also focussed on his interaction with his children, but cast it differently, emphasizing the dependence of the children on him, and his responsibility to them.

> Knowing that the children are always dependent on me, until they are, I don't know how old, I guess less and less, but basically for many years to come, they are, always depend on me. And that means they will take a lot of my time, lot of my energy. Yeh, and at the same time just amazement that they're my children! (Joachim, III)

Joachim will be providing basic physical and emotional care for his children for a number of years. Like the mothers, he feels responsible for their care, and this forms the basis of his answer.

Fatherhood as making material provision

Two fathers spoke first of providing for their children materially, and then of the pleasure they derive from their children.

> I guess being the male parent gives you a native responsibility for providing for your family in every aspect, financially and in a caring way . . . I enjoy parenting myself. I get quite a kick out of the kids and their behaviours, just to see them, to learn something new, or to do something that — very enjoyable. (Glen, III. He earns just under half the family income.)

Having children had caused him to view decisions regarding money and jobs differently, said Mike. The necessities of home, food and heating now had to come

first. He went on, however, to speak of both the work involved in childcare and his feeling for the children, and how they gave him a link with his own childhood.

> It's nice to watch them grow up . . . just gives you, brings back memories that are, that life is only short, right, and you get to have, life and death, you know. You wonder what what would happen if something, if one of them got hit by a car or developed a serious illness and died, how you'd feel, and there's one question there that I was thinking if you have, if I had to give up one baby to survive the rest of the, which one would I give up, right? And it would be a very difficult decision for any parent to have to do something like that. So I would imagine the whole family would end up suffering. No you would never give one up to save the rest, I don't think. They're all important. (Mike, III)

Mike's answer therefore has components both of carrying responsibility and of links with his own childhood. His sense of his family as a whole, as a complex web of interrelationships, is closer to the comments of many mothers than it is to Glen's getting "a kick" out of fatherhood.

Fatherhood as time with children

Several fathers spoke of their wish to spend time with their children while they were young, the sense that the children could not wait, but other areas of their lives might. Some with more flexible jobs, like Rick, could make time to spend with their children, but others regretted not having this opportunity.

> I think the epitome was when I stayed home with (the boy), the one day I was working on a paper and I guess he was a year and a half old and he ate one of my papers . . . I'd worked on it for about a month, I figured if he didn't like it, why work on it, so I just spent more time with him. So it's uh — things get done, they might not be as fast as I want to be done, but they'll get done . . . Work's still always going to be there but these kids aren't going to be that small that long, so I'd rather be with them than other stuff. (Rick, III)

Rick does not speak of the frustration that this episode must have caused him. Lower-income fathers do not have his job flexibility. Ted's time constraints come largely from his carrying two jobs to meet the family's financial needs.

> Trying to spend time with them. Valuable time. Which like again, like I say, I don't often get to do that, not as much as I'd like to. But I'd, I — maybe it's because my parents, or my father, didn't spend much time with us, but I've

> always felt that I would spend more time with my kids that he did with us . . . I think he'd like to look back and remember that I took him to these things, took him to that. I know I wish my father had. So I'm sure he would think the same way. But basically I guess we're just at base, spending valuable time with them. They're only a kid for so long. (Ted, III)

Fatherhood as fun and frustrations

Four fathers spoke of how fatherhood could be at the same time "the most fun and the most pain and anxiety". Two of them, Simon and Hugh, spoke in very similar terms to those of their wives.

> I think it's, it's in some ways the most fun and the most pain and anxiety I have felt about anything . . . I feel very in touch with, you know, the reality of being a father. And I basically like it a lot. I mean I see it in a lot of different perspectives . . . there's obviously something unique about my own children for me that gives me an opportunity to teach them, to uh, learn things from them, to see their different perspectives on the world . . . And I don't think I'd give that up for anything. It's, it's just tremendous fun. And also of course they generate more anxiety in me than anything else . . . there's nothing like having your own kids for creating in you a sense of total insecurity about the universe around you, how you know threatening and hostile the universe begins to seem when you see it from a perspective of being a father of a small infant. So it's a source of enormous anxiety, and satisfaction. (Simon, III)

Simon's anxieties, as we have already seen, are partly to do with his elder boy's health. Both he and Rick emphasized that fatherhood meant change and responsibility.

> Once you're assuming a responsibility there's things that you give up . . . So to become a father means that certain things, or a mother, it means certain roles and expectations will be altered. And certain responsibilities will be added on to it. To become a biological father, anybody can do, but to become a father that's going to be there for the cuts, or the late-night screams, or to be there for late night, or nightmares, um you've got to assume those things in saying that this is part of my lifestyle. To be a father or a mother . . . you give up spontaneity but you gain something else that I find just as rewarding, the one hug or the kiss or the sharing of the moment of watching them walk over and watch a caterpillar go by, so there's a different perspective of what becoming a father means to the individuals. (Rick, III)

After talking of his sense of his children as "family" and watching them grow, taking the good with the bad, Hugh speculated as to how far the experience of fatherhood and motherhood could be similar. These is a sense of regret, here, for the physical "connection" that he does not share.

> Different from the motherhood I suppose. I'm sure my wife feels different about it than, probably because she's a woman but I don't know. Maybe not essentially different . . . she probably feels closer to these guys in a way that I can't 'cause I'm a guy, or there's I'm sure there's a sense of these kids coming out of her loins, there's a connection there that I don't have (Hugh, III)

Finally, one working-class father expressed his fatherhood as complex and as crucially important and central to his life.

> Pride, joy, responsibility, happiness, frustration *(laughs)* you know, it's a, it's a whole, all your emotions come into play. But the pride and joy, and it's just — I beam all over even when people talk about me and say, well, 'How's your little guy, he's getting big,' or whatever, I feel good all inside. . . .It boils down to pride, and understanding, and that's it for parenthood for me, it, little more of that can go a long ways. Instead of all the anger and frustration and looking at — If people would mentally look at their kids different, and think about their attitudes as children, maybe their complexes and inferiorities or — whatever kids grow up, it's because of the parents. That's my opinion. (Andy, III)

Fatherhood as work

One father expressed more negative than positive feelings about fatherhood. This was Don. He loved his children, enjoyed playing with them when he had time, enjoyed the "little things" he mentioned here, and took pride in them: but he felt that more and more of his life was being taken over by work routines, at his job or at home. Elsewhere in the interview he expressed his sadness at the lack of time for playing, and his continual worries about money.

> (Being a father means) quite a bit more work than I would have associated with it. Like I said, you can't go home when the parents come home, it's always there. Granted, there are times when they can give you quite a bit more joy than you can possibly get from anything else, like at Christmas, (the elder boy) opening up his gifts at Christmas, this is something that you'll never — I mean (the younger's) just ripping paper, it's like (he) takes things as they come, but with (the elder) it's something else, it's like a complete change in personality,

> it's something that you never, nobody could ever give it to you. Little things like that. Then again, it causes quite a bit more, if I wasn't a parent, there's some things that I'm experienced now that I would never experience if I wasn't a parent . . . Then again it kind of evens itself out. Seems like there's more of the negative stuff than there is of the positive stuff, to me, right now, to be perfectly honest. But that's just my situation, I don't know if it's, you know, the normal or whatever. (Don, III)

THE CONSTRUCTION OF MOTHERHOOD AND FATHERHOOD

The ways parents talk about their motherhood and fatherhood reflects a multitude of emotions linking themselves and their children, themselves and society. Parenthood is neither simple not straightforward. Some aspects are occasions for joy and pride: some aspects are very problematic. These women and men are highly involved with their children as people. Only in one case (Robert) is there a real sense of children's activities being in the way of the parent, although all parents could express frustration and irritation with some activities of their offspring, and at times the demands became so great that some parents expressed the feeling they would like to escape, for a short time (as in Sheena's retreating to the bathroom.)

Both women and men, in this chapter, have discussed the work of being a parent and how they feel about it. From their comments it becomes clear that this work is itself complex and may be "invisible" (Devault, 1987). Simon and Andy's descriptions of dealing with a sick child, Berthe's attempts to make the day go "smoothly", the great dislike of many women for having to be responsible for children's bad table manners, all illustrate an intimate connection between the work parents do in the home and their relationships with their children. The work of childcare is done both out of love, and out of a feeling of responsibility. For mothers this may extend to a view of themselves as "naturally" responsible or nurturant: and indeed several mothers described this responsibility as constituting motherhood, for them.

There seem to me, in reviewing the data presented in this chapter, to be four major points to be made. The first, already stated, concerns the evident attachment of both women and men to their children, although some men, though not all, do seem more distant from their children than do the women. The remaining three are points of difference between groups of parents.

The first difference concerns both class and gender. The talk of many middle-class mothers, and some fathers, contains many references to watching and facilitating children's development of skills as enjoyable: there is the sense of the parent actively developing, "growing" the child. By contrast, working-class mothers emphasize enjoying being needed by their children, and working-class fathers talk about play.

The second difference, gender-based, concerns "control". From many men's talk of unpleasant or worrying aspects of fatherhood, a strong sense emerges of a perceived need to be "in control". Having to deal with squabbling, crying or "not listening" children, step over gates, be followed by demanding toddlers, gives them the feeling that they are not in control, and they dislike this intensely. They talk also of control over themselves, and what will happen if this is lost.

Mothers do not use the language of control in this way. Instead they speak of responsibility, a responsibility which never ends, and it is the lack of a break which they find frustrating. In part it is this talk of responsibility which conveys the sense of greater physical and emotional closeness between mothers and their children, which I commented on earlier in this chapter.

The third point of difference lay in the ways in which women and men separated "being a parent" from "doing childcare". On the whole I had the impression that women were more able to particularize childcare, picking out certain items of work to describe for me as enjoyable, or irritating, or a source of worry. Fathers appeared less able to do this, at least for enjoyment and irritation.

With family after family I found that the woman would describe her relationship with her children, then move on to precise details of work, bathing babies, managing the meal, whereas the man would talk about "being with the children" under both headings.

In this chapter I have indicated some areas where I felt that parents' comments, or differences in comments of mothers and fathers, only made sense when the circumstances from which these comments were produced, that is, the particular situation of the family with respect to finances or children's health, and the way labour is divided in a household, were taken into account. Parents' feelings about their motherhood or fatherhood are of complex construction, created from their backgrounds and traditions, from images of the mother as responsible, the father as providing, and from the various practices in which they engage as mothers and fathers on a daily basis. I now turn to an examination of the routines of parents' daily lives and some of the resources available to them (Chapter VII) and the division of labour in the home (Chapter VIII).

VII. PATTERNS OF DAILY LIFE (I): CHILDCARE, PAID WORK, AND THEIR INTERSECTION

In this and the subsequent two chapters I intend first to sketch out the basic organization of parents' days. I will then look in more detail at particular aspects of those days: at patterns of organization of domestic chores and the arranging of children's activities. Finally I will turn to the question of what happens when the pattern is broken and the rhythm of daily life disturbed, as, for instance, when a child is ill.

In the present chapter, therefore, I outline working days, and examine the formal childcare arrangements that make these days possible. To do this I draw upon the basic information on occupations and childcare given in Tables 2 and 5 of Chapter V.

Patterns of family life, as outlined below, are not simple. There is variation not only between one family and the next, but for many families between one day and the next. This chapter therefore indicates the complexities of family lives, but also indicates that there are commonalities. In all families studied here, parents face a need to earn a living: most as employees, though in a wide range of positions, and a few as self-employed. This need conflicts with the requirement, in our society, that pre-teenage children be supervised, and pre-school children physically cared for, by an adult. Parents' paid work becomes dependent on their ability to have the care of their children performed by their spouse, another family member, or another person or organization. Paid work and work hours, childcare arrangements, and intersections of the two (such as the ability to afford quality childcare) therefore actively structure parents' daily lives.

As we shall see, within some families one adult is chiefly concerned with childcare, either providing it or organizing it. This is generally, though not always, the woman. However, in many families both adults are involved to some extent in

that their work-hours are affected by the exigencies of care, there are times when they are physically providing care, or they have a responsibility to take children to where care will be given.

For all families, childcare is organized on a "private" basis, in that each family has to make its own arrangements for care, and fund this. One family did for a time receive a daycare subsidy as being a low-income family with a disabled child. No parents have, for instance, employer-sponsored childcare.[1] Yet while parents make arrangements on an individual basis, and indeed for the most part speak of childcare as a private matter, it is clear that childcare is a requirement of their workforce participation. Whether or not it is reflected in G.N.P. statistics and whoever performs it[2] , the production of childcare underpins the production of goods and services in Canadian workplaces.

FAMILIES AND THEIR DAYS: BASIC CHILDCARE STRATEGIES

The organization of parents' days is dependent on both hours of work and the type of childcare used. In order to describe working days, I will divide families' attempts to accommodate paid work and childcare into four broad strategies: those

[1] One couple have children in a daycare centre within the university where both parents work.The centre is, however, not run by the university, and the parents pay full fees.

[2] Much childcare is performed on an "unofficial" or untaxed basis, by women within their own homes or going to the homes of the children. Many of the "sitters" referred to in this chapter are not officially "employed". If sitters do not pay tax on their earnings, this does not mean it is cheaper for the parents: the sitters do not issue receipts for income tax purposes, and therefore parents cannot claim income tax relief on the amount they have paid for their children's care. This situation may arise because the sitter herself does not want to be taxed, or because she babysits only very occasionally and sees no point in declaring a very small income. It may also arise, (as in a case I know of, where the "sitter" is a qualified child-care teacher) from her husband's unwillingness to lose his tax-exemption for having a "dependent" wife. This state of affairs means that the sitters remain unofficial and unlicensed, and there is neither inspection of their premises nor any code of rules by which they have to abide.

where the children are looked after at home, by a housekeeper (group 1 of Table 5, p.89); where children are taken out of the house to a daycare centre or family daycare provider (group 2 of Table 5); where one parent remains at home with the children, (group 3A of Table 5); and where both parents, and possibly also the children, come and go, adjusting their lives as will best fit the case and splitting responsibilities accordingly (group 3B of Table 5). In the first two categories, parents are employed more or less for a standard work-day. In the remaining two, at least one partner is employed part-time, and may work non-standard hours.

Below I describe working days for the four groups. These days are constructed from parents' descriptions, during Interview I, of their typical daily routine, and from details of how the routine was followed or not followed on an actual named day (usually the day preceding the interview). I have attempted to sketch a "general" picture for each group, drawing on descriptions from all families in the group. That I can do so indicates the extent to which childcare is a structuring element in their lives.

Routines described therefore represent each group, rather than any one family, although when one family departs notably from the general description I will indicate their departure. For each group, I follow this general description with a more detailed look at the childcare arrangements, attempting to indicate how these link with parents' work patterns and availability of resources.

The aim of this chapter is to give a basic understanding of the busy-ness and complexity of parents' lives, and ways in which these are structured by external pressures and social class, in order to form a background to the discussion of the gendered division of labour that follows in Chapter VIII. Because the routines of families with housekeepers appear somewhat less complex, somewhat more smooth-running than those of other families, this is where I begin.

FAMILIES WITH HOUSEKEEPER/CAREGIVERS

Daily routines

Three families are in this group. Two have professional incomes, those of Berthe and Vince, and Karen and Robert. The third, of Cindy and Paul, is a middle-income family.

The day may start as early as 5.30 a.m., with a child waking or coming into the parents' room. Around 6.30 a parent, usually the mother, prepares a bottle for the baby, changes her diaper, and puts out clothes for the other children. The second parent gets up a little later. The father may dress a preschool child while the mother sees to the baby, but dressing children may also be done by the housekeeper when she arrives.[3]

Parents have breakfast, informally, and start organizing food for children. The housekeeper arrives, and may take over the breakfast organization. The mother leaves for work. The father finishes eating, talks to the housekeeper about the children, and leaves also, possibly taking a preschooler to playgroup on his way — to be returned to the housekeeper at lunchtime. An older child makes her own way to school. Cindy and Paul leave together, and twice a week they take their elder child with them to spend the day at daycare.

The housekeeper remains in charge until the evening return from work. Her chief responsibility is for the children, including an older child returning home from school at lunchtime and after schools close at 3.30; but she usually carries out some housework, tidying up after the children, vacuuming floors, perhaps putting in a wash. The parents will not see their children until almost suppertime, except where a preschool child has to be fetched home at lunchtime from nursery school, by the father.

The mother is first home. She chats to the housekeeper, then starts to prepare

[3] All housekeepers of families in the study, and all babysitters, are women.

supper, and the housekeeper leaves. Cindy and Paul return together. When the father returns, he can play with the children while the mother makes supper, and he may set the table. Vince often finishes the meal preparation, enabling his wife to talk to the children and set the table. The family eat between 6 and 7 o'clock. One parent then clears the table while the other plays with the children, or starts to get them to bed. The father may take children outside, if it is early enough. The mother organizes a wash or a bath for the children, and puts them to bed: or each parent may see to one young child. Mother, sometimes father, reads or tells a story, and puts out the light.

Parents are now "on their own time" — child-free time. The father may return to work, or engage in various activities, sports included, seen as "his" activities. The mother may do some office work at home, reading or organizing material, but "her" activities are likely to include putting on a wash, cleaning or tidying, although she may alternatively perform such chores early in the morning, when she wakens. Lastly, at the parents' bedtime, a preschool child may have to be woken, taken to the bathroom, and resettled in bed. The last parent up, often the father, will do this.

Childcare Arrangements

Two of the three families here describe their arrangements as working successfully, and both are professional families (Karen and Robert, Berthe and Vince). Their housekeepers are full-time employees whom the parents believe will be with them for some time. The middle-income couple in this group (Cindy and Paul) have some problems, and some doubts. First, the professionals.

Berthe and Vince found their housekeeper/caregiver through a nanny-service,

paying $500 for the recommendation. She is the fifth "good" housekeeper, in six years: there have also been — Berthe counted —

> three, that didn't work out at all. We just had them for a very very short time, like a matter of weeks only. (Berthe, I)

They consider themselves lucky that they could afford to have someone come to the house (for $190 per week) as they feel their children should remain in their own surroundings. They are strongly against daycare centres, while saying that these may be useful for "some people" who "have" to send children there.

They do, or did, worry about the person they would get as a housekeeper. "The sitter situation is very, very crucial", Vince said in Interview I. We have already seen that in the second interview he identified having good childcare as his main worry connected with being a father. Berthe commented on problems in finding a good person to come in.

> Well, nobody wants to look after three children, for starters! (Berthe, I)

They mention the "sitter's"[4] education and manner of speaking — a working-class mode, different from their own — but are not concerned about this. The children will learn language from them, not the sitter, and besides, the three-year-old attends a part-time nursery-school programme two mornings a week.

Karen and Robert admit to having some doubts about their housekeeper's educational level, but feel similarly that with their elder child attending a preschool, or playschool (for two mornings a week) this will not be very important. They have minimized the number of housekeepers they have had, through Karen's efficient system of advertising and interviewing. She maintains a file of information on all respondents to their advertisements. Finding a good caregiver requires work.

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[4] Housekeepers, regular family-daycare providers, and part-time minders of children are all referred to as "sitters" by the parents. I try to indicate the nature of the "sitter" — permanent, temporary, a regular employee, a friend, or a friend's daughter. "Housekeeper/caregiver" most aptly describes this couple's permanent employee.

For both these families, the housekeeper occasionally stays for an evening to let the parents go out. Karen and Robert pointed out the importance of having someone they know they can call on in an emergency.

Fa: It's nice to know that if you do have any special need, like when Karen was in Las Vegas and you know I needed to work a couple of nights and she would stay on and stuff, and you know that, we were lucky that way, and she's —

Mo: Yes, because she's not married, and doesn't have attachments herself, and is in her early forties, so that's kind of nice. For us it's nice, it's nice for her. (Karen and Robert, I)

Both families expect their current housekeeper will stay with them for several years. Karen, however, points out that with the present demand among professional families for competent housekeeper/caregivers:

> she could easily pick up and leave and get a job the next day. She probably knows that. (I)

The middle-income couple, Cindy and Paul, also discussed how they found their caregiver. This quotation from Cindy indicates some of the work involved.

> Through the newspapers, I found her. Another lady used to mind (the boy), and then — she minded him for a year, and then I was off for six months when I had (the girl), I took two extra months and six months, so I was with them. I put an ad in the paper, "apply in writing" . . . So we'd received three letters and hers was the only one that interested me, I said this sounds good. So we called her up. She had just finished a job that she did for two years, similar to this, minded two boys, the lady had a third child and gave up her job. So she had just finished that job . . . Paul and I both liked her . . . January 6th I think she started last year, and she's been with us ten months. No problems or conflicts yet, it seems to run smoothly. (Cindy, middle income, I)

The situation seemed quite unproblematic, but when I returned for the second interview I discovered they had a new "sitter". In Cindy's telling of the changeover, she minimizes the inconvenience to the family, and principally to herself. Her mother lives in Halifax, and could come in to do childcare.

> Daisy told us on a Monday that she was leaving us on Friday. And we didn't find anybody that quick. So my mother filled in for four or five weeks while we looked And we asked the neighbours, and we put notices up in the churches and stuff. And we put a notice at Manpower. And Megan saw that notice, so

> she called us, and that's how that came about. She also has a little girl, seven, and she comes for lunch and after-school, so that's a difference, and (this girl) plays with (their son, aged four) and that's good. Good arrangement. (Cindy, II: babysitters' names changed.)

Where Cindy says "we" put up a notice, it was she who organized this.

> It's pretty well the same system, she comes in at the same time as Daisy did. Basically it's the same, except for her personality's different. She's working out well. They were both good in their own ways. (Cindy, II)

Their son was attending daycare part-time, two days a week, and had done since he was three, for social and developmental reasons. Cindy was "impressed with" the centre and its quality of care, other than its outdoor playing area.

> Pleased with them — except for their playground, which has nothing in it, but glass and sand. *(laughs)* Outside. (He) brought home a big piece of glass, like the bottom of a pop bottle, and it's not the first time here, but the third time. He said 'this is for my glass collection.' You know — he's started from their playground. But you can't have that. (Cindy, II)

When I returned for the fourth interview, a further change had occurred. The children now spent part of the day at the sitter, Megan's, house, fairly close by.

> She asked us if we would bring our children to her house, she was having trouble watching her 8-year-old, so we compromised. She comes in the morning, and then they have breakfast and lunch here, and they go to her house at around 2, so she's with her child after school . . . that's not what we wanted to do, *(laughs)*, it would be too much work for one thing and we want them in their home environment, that was the whole plan of having someone come in, so — we've been doing that for about a month. So far it's OK I guess, but we feel like we've lost some control in what's going on. (Cindy, IV)

The business of dealing with work, home and the sitter is beginning to seem too much for Cindy. She is seeking part-time employment.

> I decided that I'd like to work part-time as soon as possible, which would be job-sharing, hopefully, if I can find someone to do it with. So I'm, started actively looking at work. So that'll be a major change, I'd work probably 20 hours a week instead of 40. (Cindy, IV)

Cindy feels trapped in a situation that is slipping beyond her control. The pace of life has become too hectic. To gain some control she has to modify has own life:

and she can balance some of the pay she will lose against the money she has at present to pay the sitter.

By contrast, the professional parents, in employing a housekeeper, make clear that she is a servant, a regular employee contracted to perform various functions in order to make their own lives easier (see New and David, 1985:108). It should be noted that the $190 per week Berthe pays her housekeeper forms a very low-income wage, although it would be a large amount to be found from the budget of many families. Berthe and Vince do not necessarily see this money as coming only from Berthe's salary; when Berthe's school is closed over the summer, or when she is on leave of absence (as during the final interview) they still retain the housekeeper.

Discussion

New and David (1985) describe "non-maternal care at home" as a middle-class phenomenon, saying that "Access to good non-maternal care is partly a matter of class and income" (p. 107). We can begin to see, with these three families, how financial resources affect the availability of childcare, and how both income and childcare affect the organization of parents' everyday lives. This becomes more evident when some aspect of the situation is problematic, as with Cindy, Paul and their "sitter".

In all three families it should be noted that while the father does interact with the employee, talking of children's needs and so forth, it is the mother who is responsible for her hiring.

An important point evident from families' daily routines is that the mother's domestic labour appears to cover more, and to continue for longer periods of time, than does the father's. Women's chores occupy time in the late evening and even the early morning when men are engaging in either paid work or leisure activities.

DAYCARE FAMILIES

Daily routines

Three families with children in a daycare centre, those of Sheila and Simon, Rachel and Pete, and Donna and Rick, have professional-incomes. One middle income couple, Brenda and Glen, and one lower-income couple, Lucille and Don, are also in this group.

Where children are in daycare, the whole family has to be readied to leave the house. All family members get up around the same time, usually 6.30-7.00 a.m. for professionals, earlier for non-professionals, around 5.30-6.00 a.m.. Usually parents will each wake and dress or supervise dressing of a child, and organize breakfast for this child and themselves, though Brenda does all dressing and supervision, and her children have breakfast at their private daycare. An older child will require to be woken and told to get dressed, perhaps told several times. Then children and bags of spare clothes, prepared babies' bottles and so forth, have to be taken to the car. The mother is most likely to organize the bags, whether in the morning or the previous night.

Actually getting to work and daycare can be complicated. For three families one parent will make his or her own way to work; the other (Lucille, Rachel, Glen) first drives the children to their caregiver or daycare centre. Sheila and Simon leave the house together, to walk to their elder child's school and the younger's daycare. At the start of the study they took only the elder to daycare, the baby remaining in the house with a "sitter", the wife of a work-colleague who also looked after another colleague's toddler at their house. Donna and Rick have children with different caregivers, and getting them there first requires Donna to walk with the baby to a neighbour who does childcare. Rick, driving, will collect her from the neighbour's, drive her to work, and then take their preschool child to his daycare before going to work himself.

Once parents are at work they are unlikely to have much further contact with the children until pick-up time, although Rachel and Pete occasionally do some work from home, and may arrange to be home in mid-afternoon when their older child, who is of an age to be fairly self-sufficient, returns from school. Sheila and Simon, with home, daycare, and work fairly close together, might see their children out on walks. Since the elder started at a nearby school, they take turns to walk him across the road to his daycare at lunchtime.

Getting children and parents home is organized similarly to getting them out of the house. On the return usually the mother makes supper while the father sees to or plays with children. One parent may clear up while the other plays with children or starts bathing them, or both may clear up. Older children may help with the table. In one family the parents work 12-hour shifts, from approximately 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., and all family members have eaten before they return home, the children at their caregiver's, the parents in their workplace canteen. The mother will bath children and put them to bed, often reading to them, or parents will divide this task, each taking one child or the father bathing, the mother drying and dressing children in pyjamas.

One family has a different evening pattern. Simon makes supper while Sheila is with the children, she clears away and washes dishes afterwards while he is with the children (though the previous evening he had washed up), and they each put one child to bed.

Parents may perform various activities, including professional activities, after children are in bed. However, housework remains to be done (although two families in this group have a maid service on a regular basis) and there may be bags of children's clothes and equipment to be readied for the morning, bottles to be made, washings to be put on. Women report doing these things during the evening. Pre-

school children who no longer wear diapers may have to be woken and taken to the bathroom, as a last chore before parents go to bed, and fathers report doing this.

Childcare Arrangements

This group presents more complexity, in its arrangements for childcare, than did that employing housekeepers. Firstly it should be noted that families use two different types of external daycare: fairly large registered non-profit centres, licensed and inspected by the Provincial Government, and with some spaces reserved for children whose parents received a government subsidy (four families); and private "family" daycare providers, in some of the literature referred to as "childminders" (New and David, 1985), conducted on an unofficial basis by individuals from their homes (two families).[5]

Secondly, many parents in group two have tried other arrangements. These have been less than satisfactory. However, two families at the time of the first interview had children in different arrangements. Sheila and Simon, as I have mentioned, had their older child with a non-profit organization, and a babysitter came to their home for the younger. Donna and Rick had the elder child in a non-profit daycare, the younger with a private caregiver, a neighbour, in a family daycare arrangement. Sheila and Simon's second child was just under two years old, Donna and Rick's only 5 months. The double strategy was occasioned both by a

[5] There exists in Nova Scotia a third type, i.e. fairly sizable daycare centres established on a for-profit basis, licensed by the government. No families at the time of the interviews had children in these, although several such institutions were mentioned by parents on the same basis as the non-profit organizations.

shortage of day-care spaces for children aged under two[6] and by the parents' perception that until a certain age (for Sheila and Simon, two years) the child's needs would be better served by a private caregiver in a small-scale arrangement, whether at the parents' home or in the caregiver's house.

Parents in this group, then, had first-hand experience of other childcare methods. The comments of one professional couple are typical. Asked why they chose a daycare centre, the mother, Sheila, said:

> Babysitters are incredibly unreliable. You just can't depend on anybody for more than a month. I mean, we, we went through five babysitters with (the elder child) before he was six months old. (Sheila, I)

Sheila's comments about the work that has to be done to find a "sitter" are also typical of the group.

> You may know about this, but it just takes so much time out of your life, just interviewing people, getting them to — then when you hire someone then you have to spend time talking to them, you know, this is how the day goes, and you spend a week or two worrying about whether they've, you know, figured out . . . (Sheila, I)

The "childcare story" of this family illustrates many of the ways parents spoke about daycare and the alternatives, and also illustrates the complexity and changeableness of parents' daily arrangements. The sixth sitter for the elder child was "a wonderful one", said Simon, but she stayed only for a year. They had earlier put the child's name down for a daycare centre place, and one now became available.

Fa: At that point (the elder child) was just under two years old, it was coming up on September 1985 and he was almost two. That's when we put him in daycare.

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[6] Around the time of these interviews my youngest child was admitted to daycare. The waiting list for her unit — taking children aged between six months and two years — had 95 names on it, according to the daycare's Assistant Director. There were six places in the unit, which increased at that time to nine. My daughter was "lucky" to get one of the newly-created spaces. Waiting lists of other Halifax centres catering for under-twos are similarly lengthy. Only four non-profit organizations take children under 15 months. (Daycare: Registered Facilities. Brochure published by City of Halifax, 1988.)

Mo: And — I had signed him up for daycare when I was pregnant. And I think we'd basically decided that we'd like to put him in daycare when he'd reached a reasonable age, um anyway, because —

Fa: What we thought was reasonable was determined by the fact that his babysitter —

Mo: Was about to leave. Yuh.

Fa: — was about to leave and go back to school.

Mo: And um — I think it's a good idea for them to be in daycare at some levels, because I think they get the social interaction and — this daycare that he's in, well you know it's a wonderful daycare and I think they learn a lot, and it's just more reliable, and cheaper. (Sheila and Simon, I)

With the second child they had followed a similar pattern: several babysitters, finally one that they liked, and then her announcement that she intended to leave coinciding with the offer of a daycare place when the child was two.

This final sitter, though much liked, brought with her further complications. Her own two children were in school nearby, and they came to the family's house after school, which, said Simon, had both "pluses and minuses". A plus was that the sitter's elder daughter, aged 12, was able to help her mother deal with the two small children (though not yet competent as a babysitter herself, said Simon), and that their younger son became very attached to this girl. On the negative side, things were broken or misplaced, food was spilt and not cleaned up:

Fa: Yeh, especially as this is a person whom you've hired partly to clean up after you, and I wind up there like cleaning up dirty coffee cups that I find in the bathroom . . . and I sort of feel stupid cleaning up after her, washing up spilled things on the kitchen floor when she's not — she forgets to clean up the microwave, I remember some time I found junk in the bottom of the microwave and she said, oh I forgot about that.

Mo: It's you know small annoyances but after a while they start becoming bigger and bigger.

Fa: Yeh it sort of feels like when we don't have a babysitter in the house any more we'll sort of get to reclaim the territory, it'll be our house again . . . That should be this August, right? Next month! (Sheila and Simon, I)

It should be noted that none of the parents who employed housekeepers made these kind of comments. Sheila and Simon appear to have regarded their "sitter" differently, as a temporary solution, and as an acquaintance with whom mutual

favours were being exchanged (she was the wife of a work colleague), not a servant. The "minuses" then reinforced their belief that daycare was the appropriate choice for them.

By the time of the second interview, the new scheme was underway. The younger boy was in daycare, on the university campus where the parents worked; the elder now in school, but going to the daycare at mid-day for after-school care. The school was close by both the daycare and the parents' work, and the parents took turns to walk him across the road to daycare. Simon had an alarm on his desk set to ring at noon (as it did when I interviewed him in his office) and he would call upstairs to remind Sheila, if it was her day, or if unsure he would go himself.

The whole family now had to be made ready to leave the house in the morning, but Simon pointed out that this actually simplified the morning's confusion.

> [Previously] there was conversations going on, the babysitter's, children in there, playing, and people getting distracted. So that in some ways it's simpler now to get everybody out of the house, although we are a little more time constrained . . . Now, we have to get (the elder boy) into school by nine, so it really is a little more important to stick to schedules in the morning. But it's working fairly efficiently. I find it's a little less hysterical in the morning. Sometimes you're actually done a little bit earlier than you expect, it's amazing. (Simon, III)

Daycare, then has simplified this family's daily life. However it must be remembered that they live in a situation where home, work, daycare and the older child's school are all within walking distance of each other, and that they have the financial capability to afford "quality" daycare. Full-time daycare costs of at least $14.50 per day, $72.50 per week, the costs Sheila and Simon were paying in early

1989, are not within every family's budget, as we shall see later in this chapter.[7]

Rachel and Pete have one child in full-time daycare. Their older boy, at 11, is reasonably self-sufficient, getting himself to and from school and fairly frequently looking after himself in the house after school. He is indeed starting to do some evening babysitting for his young brother. The younger child was three at the time of the first interview, and his parents were very happy with his daycare programme.

> They have a pool and gym on the premises, they have a lot of teachers, um a lot of young, cheerful teachers, and the premises are just bright and cheerful, they move around from room to room, they're not always in the same space, and they don't rely on conventional toys very much, which I like, you know it's not filled with the kind of toys that he has at home, it's got much more basic toys and craft materials and things like that. So — and they take them out a lot, without being fanatic about it. (Rachel, I)

They had initially chosen this centre because it ran drop-in facilities for young infants and part-time services for somewhat older babies. Rachel had taken a part-time job that she was able to develop to a full-time position. As the job grew, she applied to several other centres that would take two-year-old children full-time, eventually being offered places at two, neither of them this couple's preferred choice. Then their part-time centre announced that it was to start a full-time programme for this age group, and they were able to get a space.

As with other couples in this group, they like the reliability of a daycare centre.

Fa: If one of them [a teacher] is sick, or one of them needs to go on holiday, there's always somebody else . . . Those institutional structures are really important, because when you have organized institutions like that you're not depending on individuals and their whims or their weaknesses or their illnesses or their misfortunes or their accidents or whatever —

Mo: And there's a lot of continuity —

Fa: The institution continues .

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[7] This figure of $14.50 per day represents the January, 1989 provincially-established rate within Nova Scotia for non-profit centres. This couple's centre introduced a surcharge of $1 per day in March of that year. The rate for children under two (not applicable to this couple) was an additional $2 per day. (Information supplied by centre director.) Lest these figures appear low by comparison with other Canadian cities, it must be pointed out that salaries in Nova Scotia are also relatively low. Simon and Sheila are very well-off by Nova Scotian standards.

Mo: — I mean (he) has three teachers, so even if one left, you'd still have the continuity of the two —
Fa: Two others, you know.
Mo: — that follow through, so it wouldn't be a shock that one day he knows the teacher and the next day he doesn't know the teacher. (Rachel and Pete, I)

These comments should be contrasted with Cindy and Paul's experience of having the "sitter" leave at short notice.

During their first child's first year Donna and Rick "went through three babysitters". With one they had a worrying experience. They discovered she was taking the child out of the house, against their instructions, to unknown destinations. They then put their child's name on waiting lists at several centres, and later had him admitted to one close to Rick's place of work. At the time of the first interview, their younger child, a few months old, was in "family" daycare at a neighbour's house. The elder child was about to start school, far from his daycare centre, and the parents were arranging for him to go to their younger child's caregiver for after-school care.

Donna described their arrangement for this younger child.

> Now I know a girl that lives up on the corner, who works in the same department as I do, and her little girl goes down there. And also the woman next door has her little boy go there. So — highly recommended. And also the neighbours all up and down the street know this lady, she's lived here for years, so I felt good about taking (the baby) down there. And with (the boy) starting school, he's starting French immersion and he's going to be bussed to and from school, so again it's in the same neighbourhood um for getting the bus, and coming back to the same neighbourhood. So, we thought that would be a good arrangement starting in September, so both kids will be at the same place. (Donna, professional, I)

By the time of the second and third interviews this new system was underway, and working satisfactorily. Because the elder child was bussed to school he was entitled to stay there at lunchtime, on the two days a week when he attended school

in the afternoons.[8] He was then bussed to the caregiver's. His father explained.

> Wednesday and Thursday he goes all day, got to make sure his lunchbox is ready for to go in his backpack, and Monday, Tuesday and Friday afternoons he spends at the babysitter's, so I make sure that we have it ready and Donna carries it there . . . he goes to the babysitter in the afternoons, on Monday, Tuesday, Friday afternoons, and we pick him up from there. (Rick, III)

As this quotation indicates, a child's daycare attendance creates work. Rick prepares a lunch, every morning, for the elder child. Donna organizes bottles and bags of clothes and diapers, the night before, for the baby.

Brenda and Glen work 12-hour shifts, so the care required is for more than 12 hours a day, but not every day: and weekends may be work-time. Formal daycare arrangements do not operate at the right hours, or on the right days to meet their requirements. This couple send their children to a private caregiver, whom they describe as a qualified person who previously ran a daycare centre for children of Canadian Forces personnel. They had previously had babysitters come to their house.

> They were little 17-year-olds who dropped out of school, one because she partied too much and just fell behind, and here's this person going to come in and babysit! (Brenda, I)

Their present caregiver, who answered Brenda's advertisement in the local paper, looks after her grandson during the day as well as their two younger children and their eldest when he is out of school. She has a large playing area in her house, and a fenced yard.

Their preschooler also attends two community-based weekly morning programmes, "the library one, and the fire-hall one", in Glen's description. Both

[8] Halifax has a complicated system of school hours for children in Grade Primary, the first year of public school. Children attend initially only until noon, then "after Thanksgiving" they return after lunchtime on two afternoons a week, from 1:30 until 3:00. In my experience, parents do not know on which afternoons their children will attend until about a week before the Thanksgiving holiday, which makes it hard to plan childcare.

involve stories and crafts, with "the fire-hall one" more structured than the other, more like a nursery school. The child will be taken to these by a parent, if either is not at work: alternatively they must arrange for him to be taken there by the caregiver, or by a neighbour with a child also in the programme.

Finally, Lucille and Don have two children under five attending a non-profit daycare centre. Like the other families they have tried babysitters — less costly, but they had found "sitters" unlikely to give sufficient attention or "stimulation" to their younger child, who has Down's syndrome. In their "daycare story", this child's disability becomes a structuring aspect of their lives.

> A babysitter would have been better, financially beneficial to us . . . but more often than not because (the younger boy) was the kind of person he was that would stick in the playpen all day if you wanted him to, if he had something to play with, that's what they were doing. And there was no stimulation. (Don, I)

The couple indicated their progression from a part-time to a full-time daycare situation. The elder child had initially been in private daycare for two days a week, while Lucille was employed part-time. She would use one of these days to take the baby to his many medical appointments.

> He was going two days a week, Tuesdays and Thursdays, then we changed it to three days a week, Monday Wednesday and Friday, then we changed it to a full week! *(laughs)* You know, we were just, using it just for a couple of days, and I was making appointments on Tuesdays or making appointments on, on Tuesdays and Thursdays, because I knew he was in daycare those two days, right, then he started going, we started putting him in more and more, we got a good rate, I mean we only paid $50 a week, the daycare, for a full week, and that wasn't bad. (Lucille, I)

At that time Sheila and Simon would have paid around $70 per week per child. Lucille and Don are a low income family, but did not then qualify for a daycare subsidy. An inexpensive daycare was a necessity, especially as they were also having to pay "sitters" for the baby. They liked this daycare, then, and saw the social experience of daycare as beneficial for this older child. After some time, however, it

became evident that the daycare director did not want to take the younger child:

> first she said it was insurance, the insurance wouldn't cover him and then she said it was because of his condition, and because he couldn't walk, and I come to find out it was because she didn't want to have handicapped, she didn't like the way it looked, right, so that she finally said she didn't want him to be there. Because she said she'd give me a good rate, and then every time I went in she was always like pushing (him). 'Come on, walk, say mama, come on, walk and say mama.' So you can't push them, you can't push them. (Lucille, I)

> We were going to have a meeting with (the daycare people) and [to] have somebody from the Canadian Association for Community Living Provincial [who] wanted to sit in on this meeting, and they wondered why we'd want to have that person there. But then it was 'OK if (he) can walk, he can come to daycare,' and we were saying well that's it, that's kind of crazy, I'm not going to push (him), let's look for someplace else, and it is difficult finding a daycare. (Don, I)

It is very difficult, given long waiting lists, given the attitude of people who, like this director, do not want to be associated with disability, given this family's lack of financial resources. Professionals working with this child told the parents of a non-profit organization that had dealt satisfactorily with other disabled children, and now both children attend there, full-time. But the fees are higher, comparable with those Sheila and Simon pay. This family did, however, for a time receive some subsidization, as a low-income family with two children in licensed childcare, one with a disability.

The parents' very positive experiences with this centre, and its effect on the second child, have caused them to re-evaluate the previous caregiver

> We find the daycare great for (him). Since he started in June, (three months previously) he was just bum-scooting, he's crawling, on all fours, walking, he turned two on August 4th, on August 5th took his first step, at daycare. . . He now climbs up furniture, no problem, climbs up the stairs, lickety-split, uh drinks out of a cup, cup with sipper tops, he drinks out of a cup, eats his own meals, tries to dress and undress himself. Signs more, eat and drink . . . (Lucille, I)

> (T)here's no comparison but there's more stimulation and uh, you know — all kinds of different stuff . . . And now saying that (the previous caregiver) was good at her daycare and it was adequate for (the elder), we've come to find out

> that, you know, it wasn't until this — just that there's so much more out there. (Don, I)

However this family's arrangements were about to alter once again. Their third child would soon be born, and shortly after the eldest would start school.

> Lucille is only going to work weekends, after the baby is born, which would make you know that easier through the week, (the eldest) going to school, and (the second) hopefully will still be in daycare if we can keep him there financially . . . and Lucille will have some time with the new baby through the day. (Don, IV)

She would work on Saturdays, to earn some money to pay for the daycare, to retain her seniority at the grocery store where she was a cashier, and to —

> give Don time to be with the kids with on the day . . . and gives me time to be with grown-ups! (Lucille, IV)

The family would no longer be eligible for daycare subsidy, as a low-income family, because the daycare would not cover Lucille's work-hours; and the younger boy's I.Q. was now apparently "too high" for a municipal subsidy, although they could claim the cost of his specially-designed daycare programme as a medical tax-exemption. The parents were however determined to keep this child at the centre as long as possible.

Discussion

For all parents in this group, daycare is a major expense. If required for two children it may be of an order comparable with mortgage or rent payments. However for the three professional families it is an affordable expense. The cost of having two parents in the workforce full-time is for professionals considerably less than the money coming in. Indeed the professional couples in this group barely mentioned money when they spoke of both being in the workforce. Both women and men spoke of both partners having a need to "work", enjoying their jobs, and so

forth. Rick did raise the possibility of one partner taking some time at home, but money was not a reason given for this.

Brenda and Glen are a working-class couple, but their earnings are relatively high; indeed, either of them can earn almost as much as Lucille and Don's total family income. They do not in the interviews tally childcare costs against one or other salary. However, Brenda is thinking of cutting back on her work hours, if she can find someone to share a nursing job. Like Cindy in the preceding section, she sees this as a way of easing an increasingly complicated and hectic situation. The family will then revert from a private daycare strategy to one of shared care with occasional use of daycare facilities.

Don and Lucille are in a situation very different from other daycare parents. They have a low income and they are deeply concerned about money. The cost of daycare for three children would be prohibitive. By Lucille's shift to a part-time situation they will not only simplify their arrangements but remove a large monthly charge against their income. Lucille will still work for pay, but at a time when Don is available to look after the children. The second child will stay in daycare — if they can afford it — for medical and social reasons, and somehow they will try to raise the money for this.

Their situation points also to the structuring effect of children's abilities and disabilities. The younger child requires more cognitive "stimulation" and social interaction than an untrained "sitter" is likely to give. Daycare is a necessity. The availability of daycare is restricted by other people's perceptions of this child and his abilities. Further, care is needed for the elder child to enable Lucille to take the younger to his many appointments. In Chapter IX I further examine the exigencies of health, ill-health, ability, disability.

Some other structuring principles become evident in considering this group. Not everyone works standard "office hours". Parents on shifts may find the

availability of daycare a problem. Brenda and Glen have found a solution, with their private caregiver. It should be pointed out that this caregiver, fairly regularly, will be required to look after their children overnight; the non-profit centres used by the other four couples are not organized to do this, and few private caregivers would be willing to take it on.

The geographical location of home, daycare and work is important. Sheila and Simon, with all three in close proximity, need not even use a car, but for other families in this group an appreciable amount of time is spent in driving. Taking the children to the caregiver is a crucial part of the daily routine. Where there is one car (only Glen and Brenda have two) parents must ensure that the car is at the right place, at the right time, for the right person to make the pick-up rounds.

Having children in daycare then complicates family life. However these parents indicate that they consider the alternative — having a "sitter" in their home — unsatisfactory. Two families are changing their paid-work/childcare strategy, and this moves us into a consideration of families where at least one partner defines their paid work as "part time". I look next at situations where one partner is "at home" with the children for most of the time, and carries the major responsibility for their care, fitting in their employment as best they may. Finally I will turn to the group of parents who share care, although generally with one performing more of it, which is the strategy to which Lucille and Don are planning to move.

FAMILIES WHERE ONE PARENT IS AT HOME

Daily routines

Two professional families come close to the supposedly "traditional" model of the home-based caregiver and the breadwinner who leaves for work, the differences being that the caregiver is also attempting to engage in paid work, fitting this in where appropriate or possible. For Elizabeth and Duncan, the home-

caregiver is the mother. For Susan and Joachim, it is the father. I have included with this group one middle-income family, that of Lucy and Wayne. On what Wayne describes as a "normal" day he is at work and Lucy is at home with the children. However some days are also workdays for Lucy, and these are described in group four.

Typically parents and children wake around 7.30. The worker-parent sees to his or her own needs, gets breakfast and disappears to work; Duncan, for example, may already have left when other family members wake. If there is time, the worker-parent may help with waking and dressing children.

The caregiving parent dresses young children, organizes older ones to dress themselves, putting out clothes for them, and gets their breakfast. An older child may leave for school, returning at lunch time. The absent parent may return for lunch, too, if work is close enough to home.

The caregiving parent does some housework and laundry, and possibly some shopping, taking the children. Lucy performs the main grocery shopping at this time. Part-time playschool or playgroup attendance may impose a structure on the day, as a child or children have to be taken to and from the playgroup location. Joachim stays as a parent-worker at playgroup on two mornings per week. A babysitter may come in for part of the day, enabling the caregiver/parent to engage in paid work.

Caregiver/mothers start dinner preparation. Worker/fathers arrive, and may "help look after the kids" during dinner preparation. On some days, the children may be fed and ready for bed before the father gets home. In any case, the mother will bath children and get them into their pyjamas, and if present the father may read them a story and put them to bed. He may also help clear up the supper dishes. After children are in bed, parents are on their own time. The father may use this to do some extra work, or engage in leisure activities. The mother may also be able to pursue her own interests, sometimes going out to engage in a hobby, or taking the

chance to get her paid work done; or if Lucy is to be at her workplace next day, she will prepare bottles and other supplies for the babysitter's use.

For Susan and Joachim, evenings are somewhat different. Joachim drives with the children to meet his wife from work, and on the return home they decide who will cook dinner and who will look after the children. One evening a week Susan goes grocery shopping, usually with a child. Usually she baths the children, and either parent will read to them or tell them stories. After 8.30 parents are on their own time, and either may engage in work, whether paid work or study or performing chores: Susan is likely to read or do a crossword if not studying.

Childcare Arrangements

Although the days of these three families are fairly similar (when Lucy is not at work) the childcare/employment strategies practised by parents fall into two groups. While the two professional families are pursuing broadly similar paths of having one parent as the primary caregiver, combined with part-time work conducted from the house, the strategy of Lucy and Wayne is better described in the next category of "shared care" parents. I will therefore concentrate on the professional families, here.

Elizabeth is a bookkeeper for her husband's physiotherapy practice, carrying out most of her work from home. She has the chief responsibility for childcare and household chores. Her eldest child is in school, and the second started school before the final interview. At the time of the first interview this second child was attending a part-time daycare program, leaving Elizabeth with a toddler to care for during the mornings, all three children at lunchtime and after school, and the younger two during the early afternoon. She attempts to fit her work around the children's needs, if necessary completing work at night after they are in bed.

The parents have considered the possibility of a full-time babysitter, to give Elizabeth more time to complete her paid work for the practice. They have rejected

this idea, in part because of how they regard a babysitter. She would be in competition with the mother.

> Elizabeth has certainly has won me over with the idea that she doesn't want the kids looked after by someone else for a whole day, for every day, and I totally agree with her. (Duncan, I)

The main reason for the part-time daycare, rather than a part-time sitter, was social: their children (the elder boy had also attended the pre-school) needed other children to play with. Because "many of the mothers in this area are working mothers," said Elizabeth, neighbourhood children were in daycare or after-school programmes and not available for play. Also there are educational benefits accruing to the daycare, said Duncan, which outweigh the inconvenience of having to drive children there.

> (H)aving them influenced by someone who doesn't say 'Ain't got no' — like 'the kids ain't go no diapers, can you go out and get some, Mrs Gillespie?' which is what you — because many of the babysitters that um Elizabeth has interviewed may be very nice loving people, but they just don't have the educational level that we would like to expose our kids to. (Duncan, I: last name changed.)

Duncan explained why he liked the arrangement.

> The nice thing about it is that you've got the best of both worlds, because you can have the kids playing with other kids, part of the time, and yet the other time you've still got them to play with yourself, or to do other things with, and I see that as a real asset, you've kind of got the best of both worlds. (I)

As he is himself out of the house during most of the day, this appears to mean he finds it "nice" that Elizabeth has the children "to play with".

By the time of the second interview, however, no child was attending the preschool, in part because a friend who used to share the driving was out of town, and the two younger ones were at home full-time. Elizabeth had a babysitter come in two afternoons a week, and hoped to have the second child in a private school within a few months' time. Indeed by the final interview this child was in school, until

mid-afternoon. Elizabeth still had the babysitter come in part-time to look after her toddler, whom they considered still too young for preschool.

The second professional family's situation has many similarities with that of Elizabeth and Duncan. The main difference is that it is the father, Joachim, who combines part-time paid work, mostly on a computer, with childcare and housework. At the time of the first interview both children attended a cooperative playgroup, each three mornings a week, and their father, Joachim, was there also on two mornings, as a parent-worker. This was again largely for social reasons.

> The idea of having them spend, having them (at the playgroup) was very appealing. Because I was very hesitant on sending (the boy) off to a conventional (preschool), and this place I could still see what he was doing, and, well I saw for example when he had problems . . . And (the social environment) I find very important, because we'd reached early stages of social experience, social learning. (Joachim, I)

This couple have a student, the daughter of a friend, staying with them from time to time. When she is boarding with them she babysits, and even when she is not part of the household she visits regularly and babysits.

At the time of the second interview their daughter was still attending the cooperative playgroup, but the boy, at almost five, was in a nursery-school program, three mornings a week. Susan pointed out that this gave more flexibility to her husband's day.

> So he has, oh just a different pattern of doing things, and things have to start earlier in the mornings, on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, to get (the boy) off to school. In many ways it's sort of broadened things out, because oh (the boy) will go round to friends from school, and Joachim will get a bit more free time, or some people will come here and there are sort of more connections now for Joachim with the outside world, which is nice. (Susan, II)

However Joachim pointed out that it reduced his connection with what their son was doing.

> It's different from last year in that he's there all by himself, whereas in the playgroup that (the girl) still goes too, I was working one morning per week, so I knew all the children, all the parents, and — *(laughs)* knew what they were

> going through, if they had problems with a child I knew what it was about, pretty well. (Joachim, III)

Though the new system had its advantages, he said.

> It gives me more free time, because I have to work one morning less, and more important for (the boy) it is more structured, because they do activities on a quite, a regular basis, and with somebody qualified teaching them. Even though it is fairly, fairly loose, it's a very gentle way I think, seems very pleasant. (Joachim, III)

There is a trade-off between contact and knowledge of children's activities, and free time. Joachim has a familiarity with pedagogical, rather than popular, literature on the education of very young children which few other parents in the study indicate. He shows great concern for teaching methods. The nursery school is an "alternative" to conventional programmes.

Discussion

It must be pointed out that for both these families the ability of one parent to act as primary caregiver is predicated on the other's ability to earn a good salary (in Susan's case) or run a successful practice (for Duncan). Indeed Susan and Duncan are firmly defined as primary earners. Joachim earns very little, doing scientific programming on a contract basis, and this family has the largest earnings differential between partners of any in the study. However, his employment is quite separate from that of his wife,and it seems likely that at a later date he will contribute a larger share to the family income. Elizabeth's employment is by contrast part of Duncan's practice, and she contributes to the practice in other ways, washing materials for the clinic, for instance. The practice is family based, but defined by Duncan's professional knowledge and expertise.

In terms of daily routines it is apparent that Elizabeth and Joachim do considerably more domestic labour than their spouses. For Elizabeth this continues

after her husband is home from work. For Joachim, once Susan is home, both do domestic work, then both have time to spend in other fashions.

FAMILIES WHERE PARENTS ALTERNATE CHILDCARE

Daily routines

The final group is the most varied in terms of how time is allocated. The families which use this arrangement cluster around the low end of the income scale with two (middle-level) exceptions, to be discussed below. In two cases affording full-time childcare would be difficult, so that a situation in which they provide their own childcare becomes an obvious choice, perhaps the only choice, and at least one parent becomes a part-time worker, to facilitate this. (We can compare this to Lucille and Don's situation, where they are about to move to a shared-care arrangement, with Lucille's hours of work drastically reduced, because of the cost of daycare.)

However, in two low-income families the parents appear to have deliberately chosen a part-time work life-style while their children were young, even though they could have increased their earnings by both working full-time.

For the two middle-level income families in this group, work hours have tended to move them towards a shared-care situation. One is the family of a waitress, Anna, and a computer programmer, Hugh. Previously both partners were employed full-time, with the children attending a day-care centre which the parents very much liked. Anna's evening-shift work, however, meant that she had little contact with the children on a daily basis. Her present schedule has her performing daytime childcare, and going to work three nights a week, during which time Hugh is the primary caregiver.

The other middle-income family is that of the nurse and the salesman, discussed also in the previous group. When Lucy is at work, either a babysitter or

her husband will perform child-care duties, so that there is some sharing of care. However it seems that she essentially carries responsibility for the children which is lifted only when she is at work, and hence the double classification.

It is hard to produce a "typical" day for this group. I will outline the simple case where one parent looks after the children during the day, the other during the evening (which applies to the three families of Anna and Hugh, Sheena and Ted, and Carla and Andy) and then discuss some departures from this.

The first parent to go to work may leave before children are up (Ted, Carla) in one case before 6.00 a.m., or may perhaps wake a school-age child. Hugh often dresses his younger child, in clothes the mother has laid out, before he goes to work. The second parent dresses children, feeds them breakfast, and is then the caretaker for most of the children's waking day. Older children walk to school, and may reappear for lunch. A mother at home during the morning may perform some chores, organize her requirements for the evening's work (e.g. washing a uniform) or take children out visiting, shopping, or to the library. Sheena's mother arrives to help, around 10.00 a.m. The father at home, Andy, will play with the children, or watch television, after breakfast is over.

For Sheena, her school-age child returning for lunch gives structure to the day: Sheena has to be there, and lunch ready. On some days this child returns to school for the afternoon. Anna's school-age child stays with a friend at a house near the school, so Anna has only to provide lunch for herself and a preschooler. Andy has both children with him all day.

After lunch the mothers at home clear up, and wash dishes. Andy puts the dishes in the sink to be dealt with later by his wife. Younger pre-school children take a nap. The two mothers at home now have some "child-free" time, which they may use to do housework. Andy sits at the table with his older, three-year-old child, helping him with playdough.

After the nap, younger children require to be got up and have diapers changed. The parent at home may play with them for a while, and will then, in the case of a working day, start preparing to go to work. Anna may also prepare dinner. At some time between four and five, the other parent returns, and the daytime-caregiver leaves. Alternatively, the returning father will drive the mother to work, in which case the parent at home has to have not only herself, but the children ready to go out, which during the winter means into their snowsuits, and on the return the father then has to get the children in from the car. This changeover period may on some days necessitate a babysitter, usually a neighbouring woman or teenage girl, who will come into the house until the second parent can get home. For Andy and Carla, transportation is by bus.

The second parent prepares dinner, if it has not been already made, and serves it; then cleans up, washes dishes, and baths children "if it's a bath night". Hugh may take children out, briefly, to play, or in summertime on an outing. Carla says her house is "trashed" when she arrives from work, and she has to clear it up before she can go on with dinner preparation. Children play, or watch TV, prior to their bedtime. Hugh reads a story before lights-out.

After children are in bed, usually around eight, fathers who are home will finish clearing up from supper. Hugh then performs other household chores, Ted naps on the sofa. For Carla also this is the time for chores, the only time during the day when tasks such as laundry will be done. The absent parent may return at 9.30, where she is a cashier, at 11.00 where he is a cleaner, after midnight for a waitress. However for the cashier and the waitress there are nights during the week when they are not at work. The evening is then somewhat more leisurely, with the mother cooking the dinner, and generally both parents being involved in children's bath-time and bed-time routines. Andy works every week-night. Carla saves some dinner for him, which he reheats in the microwave oven and eats on his return.

Deviations from this pattern, for the remaining three families in this group, usually relate to the hours of work of the parents. Kathleen and Douglas, Cheryl and Mike, may come and go during the day, changing over childcare duties at midmorning or lunchtime, often at different times on different days. Wayne and Lucy have entire days where one parent is "working" and one is the caregiver. All three families make more use of external caregivers than is described above. Cheryl and Mike have a regular babysitter for one evening a week when both parents are at work. Lucy and Wayne have a babysitter five days a month, and Lucy spends time, the night before, preparing clothes and bottles for the sitter's use. She also prepares children's clothes and food for Wayne's use, when he is to do childcare. At the time of the first interview Wayne had to drive the children to a sitter, or bring the sitter to the house, both options requiring the children to be made ready to go out in the morning and the evening; Lucy later found a sitter who could make her own way to the house.

Kathleen and Douglas moved since the first interview to a situation combining aspects of home care and family-daycare. This family's routine includes taking the elder child to a cooperative playgroup, three mornings a week, and more recently taking both children to a part-time private daycare. Which parent takes the children there depends on the particular distribution of work-hours on the day in question.

As with families in other groups, the work of organizing external childcare is almost entirely done by mothers, although fathers take part in conveying children back and forth.

Childcare Arrangements

Several couples in this group had made an early decision to perform childcare themselves, where possible.

> It was a conscious decision, I think at the onset — (the girl) had never been without a parent, one of her parents, one parent or the other. She'd never been

> without one parent or the other, I think, [illegible] first year, save maybe two hours. Twenty-four hours a day every day of the week, yeh. Yeh we, you know, I think we thought about that and um you know there's always, first of all, knowing, not knowing what arrangements you could make with people. You know, what do other people do, what will a babysitter do, are there, do you take babies to other people's homes? Then knowing what some arrangements were, the, maybe some of the consequences and the dangers of those and all that — And plus the fact that we just downright enjoyed it, we just wanted to do it. (Wayne, I)

This comment was typical of many made to me by members of this group, who emphasized the importance of having "a parent" present, and the uncertainties and dangers they associated with having small children go out into what was phrased as a difficult and dangerous world, to "strange" sitters and so forth. Wayne also makes the point that this couple, like many others, simply did not know what was available to them in the way of childcare. Their life since the birth of their first child has been a process of learning about childcare, and this has been mostly done by Lucy.

Kathleen and Douglas also spoke of their decision to share childcare.

> That's been more or less a conscious decision on our part to deal with the children ourselves to the degree that we can. (Douglas, I)

This couple are professionals on a low income. They had initially decided to look after their children themselves, with Kathleen working part-time. At the time of the first interview she was on maternity leave, but they described the situation pertaining prior to the second child's birth. Douglas's work was largely in the evenings, so that they shared day-time care, allowing each of them to attend meetings or organize activities, while on most evenings Kathleen would be the caregiver.

> The arrangement of our jobs fortunately permits us to be fairly flexible, at least my job, mainly, and since I tend to work evenings, since I have to work evenings but I have a certain latitude of work in the day, uh, I'm much more able to accommodate the requirements of being at home than I would say lots of other people. (Douglas, I)

Kathleen's work also involved two evenings a week, when her husband would be at home. In an emergency neighbours would babysit for them. Their elder child, aged three at the start of the study, attended a cooperative playgroup three mornings a week, with a parent, more usually Kathleen but quite often Douglas, in attendance as a parent-worker on one of those mornings.

Sheena and Ted, a working-class couple on a low income, had scheduled Sheena's part-time work as a supermarket check-out attendant into two evenings per week, and Saturday afternoon and evening. At other times, she was the caregiver.

> I guess both of us always kind of thought that it would be nice to have one [parent] at home. Like just think — you should if you could, you know. (Sheena, II)

Ted looked after their two children when she worked, unless he had overtime, when they hired a babysitter (who also sat for them on Wednesdays to let them go out together) or Sheena's mother came in.

Frequently during the interviews Sheena spoke of wanting to be home, imagining herself as "mother at home", hoping that other mothers in the new neighbourhood to which they were moving would be home, and so forth. She was the only mother who expressed a desire to be home for her own reasons (though several suggested it would be nice for the children). At the start of the first interview she said, "I don't work", although she contributes about 15% of the family's income. She added later,

> You know I mean really it would probably be better money-wise if we both worked. Like really. But it was like I think it's better to suffer a little bit and one of us stay home. But then um I had said about I should get a part-time job, for the money but also so I can get out, and uh a friend of mine at (a grocery chain) called me up and said there's an opening there with the two nights and the Saturday. (Sheena, I)

The decision to share childcare for these families requires that at least one

parent has "a part-time job". In four families of this group, two middle-income and two lower-income, this is the women. Pupo (1989) found that most of the part-time women workers she interviewed regarded part-time work as permitting them to fulfil their domestic responsibilities while maintaining a work-force presence and assisting with the family income, and thus fell into what Luxton (1986) termed the "separate spheres and co-operative relations" category of domestic relations.[9] The man had responsibility for breadwinning, the woman for domestic labour, but each would help the other. This appears to describe Sheena and Ted's situation. Sheena moved into part-time work from being a full-time housewife, to "help out" with money and to have some time with other adults as a break from the family. Whereas in Pupo's finding this was the most frequent route to part-time work, Sheena is the only women to have pursued it in this study. She has other reasons, however, for "staying home" now. Their second child has Down's syndrome.

> I would have to find a babysitter, if I did work full-time, that would take him to all these appointments, like doing all the stuff I'm doing . . . Now there are a few other mums that I know, that have kids with special needs, that they do have babysitters that do do this. You know, a bit. But I think they're — few and far between, you know. (Sheena, I)

The link between children's health and the structuring of parents' days, including details of the way time is structured by the needs of disabled children, is further pursued in Chapter IX.

For Kathleen and Douglas, while the woman has the part-time job, the man during the first part of the study had the more flexible work schedule. Though the parents referred to their wish to look after the children themselves, they also spoke

[9] Luxton (1986) interviewed mothers in paid employment, asking them "who they thought should be responsible for domestic labour". In their answers she identified three distinct positions regarding "appropriate" gender relations. (1) separate spheres and hierarchical gender relations, (2) separate spheres and cooperative relations, (3) shared spheres and changed relations (p.23). She notes that "there were no obvious sociological factors that might explain the differences in opinion and behaviour" (p.36, F.2). I discuss this categorization in Chapter VIII.

of the difficulty of organizing a permanent babysitting arrangement around their hours of work. Financial reasons were important, too. The costs of full-time daycare (around $70 per week in 1989) would have been hard to meet from their budget. This family have chosen to live on a low income in order to pursue their particular types of work.

Fa: Our schedules are so chaotic it would be hard to coordinate something on an ongoing basis —
Mo: — how you'd try to arrange it, to pay someone with these hours —
Fa: Other than a grandparent I can't imagine anybody doing this whatsoever! (Kathleen and Douglas, I)

The ability of one partner to work flexible hours, or non-standard hours, may both necessitate and facilitate shared care. Lucy's work hours make shared care possible.

> I like what I'm doing a lot because Wayne is involved in the childcare, like he can be. If I worked oh you know all weekdays, for instance, he wouldn't be able to uh look after them — so most of the time I work they're with him, which is the way we both like it. (Lucy, I)

Because her employment is in part at weekends, Wayne is drawn into childcare and relations become more cooperative. However as we saw in the previous chapter, Wayne perceives childcare partly as recreation. His practice of childcare is different from that of his wife.

> There aren't two Moms in the house, you know, and nobody can be better than Mom. (Wayne, I)

While expressing a wish to take part in childcare, Wayne referred on numerous occasions to the "special" relationship of mother and child. Other men also did this. In Chapter XI I look at this discourse of maternal-infant relationships, and the way it is used to maintain women as primary caregivers. In the context of the present chapter, Wayne's comments indicate that Lucy is the "real" caregiver. He stands in for her, and enjoys it, but this is again a case of separate spheres and cooperative

relations. He is helping out. Lucy's comment, of course, implies that care would normally devolve on her.

By contrast, Anna and Hugh, the other middle-income couple in the group, were both in full-time employment, with their two children in full-time daycare, until a few months before the first interview. The hours when daycare centres were open were however not necessarily the hours when the parents required daycare. Waitresses work non-standard hours, and when Anna's children were in daycare she saw little of them during the day. Hugh dealt with the children in the evening. Then Anna's restaurant closed down for a month, and with many regrets the parents removed the children from their daycare centre, which they could no longer afford. When the restaurant reopened, Anna negotiated a part-time working arrangement whereby she goes in three evenings a week. Her husband looks after the children then, and she looks after the younger child during the day and the older after school hours. Both parents, however, remain strong supporters of the idea of universal daycare.

Their situation points to a strong link between hours of work, flexibility of work, finances, and shared care. It is not only that non-standard hours facilitate shared care, but that here they made it a necessity. However, the factor that finally precipitated the change was the temporary restaurant closure and its effect on the family budget. It should be noted that although Anna now works part-time, she still brings in 35-40% of total income. The ability to negotiate part-time hours was crucial: employed full-time she would work over lunchtimes, and besides she would be too tired from late-night work to deal with children during the day, requiring time to sleep.

In this family, Anna's work is flexible, but has no future, no career track. Still this is not a family of separate spheres. Both parents classify themselves as wage-earners, and both, as shall become evident in future chapters, as child-rearers.

Kathleen and Douglas moved during the course of the study in the direction of a part-time daycare arrangement, with Douglas' childcare time much reduced. By the time of the second interview the partners' work schedules no longer dove-tailed, requiring modification of the child-care arrangements. Finances were improving, and some paid-care became possible.

> Before, Douglas was free to take some daytime hours off because he owned his own business. . . Now, the business is bigger and it takes more time, but there's more than that, he's applied for a grant and he hopes to be able to get it, but he doesn't know when it will come and when it will start, and when it starts he won't be free to flex his hours quite the same . . . and a lot of this is also financially dependent, I mean it looks like we're sort of out of the real pinch that we were in . . . So (the boy) is going to go to a little nursery school twice a week for whole days, and then (the baby's) going to go to a grandmotherly sort in the neighbourhood for a couple of mornings, which will allow me to have two afternoons a week with just one um hopefully sleeping baby, (and the boy) will still go to the little playgroup. (Kathleen, II)

So Douglas' employment is now mostly during standard hours. The nursery school plan did not work out, but both children attend part-time family daycare, as well as the cooperative playgroup. Kathleen has four mornings a week in which to perform paid work, plus occasional evenings, and she also attempts to work from home in the afternoons, with the children around. However, Douglas' time as sole caregiver is considerably reduced, to those evenings when his wife is at work. The spheres are becoming more separate.

There remain two lower-income families in which the men have part-time jobs, both quite deliberately to facilitate childcare. Both Mike and Cheryl work part-time, she as a hair stylist, he selling insurance and also doing some carpentry. On one night a week their schedules do overlap, and a babysitter comes in. This double-part-time strategy means that, as Mike points out, they do not have a lot of money. Later, with all the children in school, they expect to have more. Mike pointed out that

> Because I'm in sales, I can sell, I can work, I got very flexible hours, so. When Cheryl's working I stay home and look after the kids. (Mike, I)

Employment conditions at the time of the second child's birth were partly responsible for their decision to look after the children at home.

Mo: When we had the second child, we decided at that time, I mean looking into the cost of daycare and because — I think when we had (the second child) you were unemployed at that time, weren't you, so that it worked out —

Fa: I was unemployed, but we had bought some houses, my brother and I, and we were renovating them into apartment buildings, so rather than working I would take the baby to work, this is (the second child), to work with me into the afternoons and she would go to sleep while I worked. And I could have the table saw going right beside her and she still wouldn't wake up. So I looked after them then.

Mo: And that's when I started to work. (Cheryl and Mike, I)

The first child was at this time in nursery school, two mornings a week, and the parents had been trying unsuccessfully to find a reliable person, who would not cost too much, to look after both children.

> So it just started out that we were juggling the hours, and then it just seemed to be OK. (Mike, I)

Cheryl's comments at the time of the first interview seemed to lean towards the "separate spheres and cooperative relations" argument of Pupo (1989). She said that part-time work gave her, as she put it,

> enough to do, that I couldn't possibly work full-time and then spend full-time you know doing — because I do do, I will say, most of the stuff around here, so I just said OK I'll work part-time. That gives me an out, which you know I love my job. (Cheryl, I)

Like Mike, she was able to negotiate hours of work that suited their schedule.

Carla cleans offices during the day, and Andy, also a cleaner, works part-time in the evenings. They exchange child-care and employment in the late afternoon, with Andy going out the apartment door as Carla comes in, and occasionally they have to call in a babysitter if Carla is to be late back. Carla also hires a teenage sitter when she needs to do grocery shopping.

Their elder child did attend a non-profit daycare centre for a while, as an infant. This led to problems which they outlined for me.

Fa: Well OK, he was hospitalized twice, while during daycare —
Mo: Three times.
Fa: — three times. The ear infections were getting so bad, he had tubes put in his ears, and we were told that a daycare is nothing but a playground for disease and germs and stuff, so we — got tired of making the trips up to hospital. I went from a full-time job to a part-time job so that I could be with the kids. And daycare's out for those two. I have a part-time job five hours at night so I can be home all day with the kids . . . I couldn't do it before, working, getting off seven in the morning, waiting for him to go to daycare at 8.30 or 8 o'clock or whatever . . . And come home and try to sleep all day. But now that's when we just had him. And I had to change jobs in order to keep a job, because I was missing time, too. If he was up all night with his teeth or his ears then that meant, Carla worked all day and was up all night with (him), and when I come home, before, if he was sick and couldn't go to daycare I was up all day with him. (Carla and Andy, lower-income family, I)

This family could not afford to run a car, so that taking the child to daycare meant a lengthy bus ride, and trips to the hospital were complicated an worrying to arrange. Andy deliberately chose part-time work because of the needs of this child. Now, with two children, daycare would be beyond their means in any case, as with a double wage they fall outside the limit for provincial subsidization.

For many families, childcare arrangements were subject to frequent revision and renegotiation, as the needs of children or the work-hours of parents altered. Kathleen and Douglas have already provided an example of this; Cheryl and Mike give another. When I first met this family, the second child was ready to start school, which would provide some childcare; but her birthday fell shortly after the cut-off date for the new public school intake. The parents sent her to a private school which allowed the child to remain for lunch and during the afternoon, but could afford to keep her there only for one year.

By the time of the last interview, Cheryl had set up in business, opening her own hair-styling salon, and her hours of work had become "full time, plus". They now took the two younger children to an outside sitter, two days a week, and were attempting otherwise to manage as before, staggering their work-hours so that

Cheryl had some mornings in which to do childcare, shopping and chores. They were thinking of having someone come into the house on a part-time basis.

> It would be a lot easier if someone came here. But uh, we're looking towards it. Just for the convenience of, you know, not having to lug them and take all their stuff with them. Plus the summer coming with the two other ones being home [during school holidays]. (Cheryl, IV)

In practice all families in this group have some reliance on outside help, to accommodate the time when both parents' work schedules overlap, or when one parent is delayed and the other must leave for work. Even flexible work hours cannot meet all eventualities, as Wayne found in his family's first year of shared care.

> (B)eing a salesman I have some flexibility in my hours, a type of flexibility. And (the girl), during (her) first year, when Lucy was working I would work at home, look after her, look after her during the daytime. But business considerations forced an end to that *(laughs)* because she couldn't be, I couldn't afford to be — Since I travel, you know, which was uh — sort of difficult. (Wayne, I)

When their work schedules overlap, a babysitter is required. As Lucy's nursing shift starts early it is Wayne who has to drive children to the sitter, or fetch the sitter to them. This affects his work.

> It's difficult to travel four Atlantic provinces based on a reduced work — reduced work-week in the sense of being, having to be here for an evening or a morning when I drive them to the sitter or, as the case may be, or get, pick up a sitter. (Wayne, I)

Shortly before this interview a regular sitter had quit, and the parents had been employing students over the summer. This couple would have considered a part-time day-care arrangement (and indeed the older child attended a nursery school programme, two mornings a week) but the parents' work-hours were not those when daycare centres were open. By the time of the second and third interviews, their childcare situation had become more stable.

> We've got an older lady who had a fair bit of experience with them, with children. She comes in, and minds them during the daytime. (Wayne, III)

This babysitter had even taken their elder daughter to [illegible] playschool, the previous week.

Anna and Hugh's situation illustrate the amount of planning that supports a shared-care arrangement. Their reliance on others for childcare is fairly minimal, but sometimes a back-up arrangement is needed. Indeed they have a "backup for the backup". Recently when Hugh was out of town this emergency system was tested. Their babysitter was caught in rush-hour traffic, and so, Hugh says,

> couldn't get here in time for Anna to go to work. So we had the people next door take care of our kids for 45 minutes . . . the woman with 3 kids down the street is our back-up back-up, right like if all things fall apart that's where the kids go. (Hugh, middle-income family, I)

Babysitting costs are generally reckoned by the hour; about $4 for an adult, and usually less, from $1.50 to $3.50 for a teenager. Where children go to a "sitter's" house in the more formal kind of arrangement used by Kathleen and Douglas, parents may pay a fee for each child. Thus Kathleen and Douglas would pay around $10 or $12 for a half-day for each child, whereas Sheena or Carla will give a teenager two to five dollars to mind the children for an hour or so.

As with families in other groups, the work of organizing external childcare is almost entirely done by mothers, although fathers take part in conveying children back and forth.

Discussion

The families in this group indicate a complex linkage between work-hours, income and type of childcare: availability of childcare, availability of transportation (for children, parents or caregiver) and children's health further complicate the issue. Working non-standard hours may necessitate the shared-care strategy, as for Kathleen and Douglas, Anna and Hugh, and Lucy and Wayne. Alternatively one parent (Sheena, Andy) may consciously choose non-standard hours so that they

can look after the children during the day, or the parents may try to devise a schedule with both parents entering into the negotiation (Cheryl and Mike).

For the two middle-income couples, the interaction between their work hours and the types of childcare available to them results in a particular strategy of shared care, with the mother putting in more child-care hours. It is difficult to see what other possibilities are open to parents such as these, without a source of 24-hour childcare. In both cases it was possible for the woman, but not the man, to pursue part-time employment. Many waitresses work part-time, and hospitals in Halifax have formal job-sharing schemes, whereby employees can retain seniority and benefits.

The situation of Anna and Hugh, whereby the closing of Anna's restaurant precipitated shared-care, indicates the precarious nature of middle-income arrangements. One month they could easily afford daycare; the next they could not.

For the lower-income families in this group, we find that it is not necessarily the women who define their work as "part-time" or who have flexible work-schedules, although for Sheena and Ted this is the case. Douglas's work was until recently fairly flexible, and both Mike and Andy work part-time. For all families, however, the cost of full-time childcare has to be borne in mind. While parents speak of their arrangement as being "better" for the children, they are in a situation of trading off the potential gain of a double-income against both the cost of full-time childcare and the increased stress and time pressures associated with this.

Finally, this group gives a further example of the ways in which full-time childcare may be represented to parents. An association of daycare centres with disease is one that is often made, for instance in a recent (September, 1990) issue of the Today's Health supplement to the Globe and Mail. Carla and Andy's family's physician told them that daycare was not appropriate for their asthmatic elder child. Another physician repeated similar information to Sheila and Simon, who came to

different conclusions based on their reading of relevant medical literature and the experiences of their friends, and kept their child in daycare. Clearly many factors affect the choice of childcare: in addition to finances and hours of work, there are the needs of the child and perceptions of daycare centres as beneficial or otherwise.

DAILY LIFE: PATTERNS OF INEQUALITY

In the sketches given above of daily routines and the organization of childcare, there are indications of differences in the ways parents organize their life: not only differences of parents' various choices, but constituted by and constitutive of unequal relations. There are differences both within families, that is, between women and men, and between families in what parents do, how they do it, and the extent to which they have control, as couples or as individuals, over these aspects of their lives.

In general in these sketches women are "doing" more than men, on a daily basis. It is not unusual for women to be still working at domestic chores after children have gone to bed, when their husbands are pursuing their own interests, whether these be sporting activities, watching TV, or returning to complete paid, as opposed to unpaid, work. In Chapter VIII questions of the organization of chores and childcare are explored.

When we compare families there are obvious points of difference, relating to resources upon which parents can draw. In the next chapter I discuss further how these resources structure their daily lives, and become media for the exercise of power. One obvious resource is the ability to afford quality childcare. Whether children are receiving adequate care is a constant source of worry for parents. Some have minimized this worry by being able to buy what they consider both "good" and "reliable" care. But reliable housekeepers, full-time quality daycare, are expensive. Anna and Hugh, Lucille and Don, are examples of parents who move

away from the full-time-care option for financial reasons.

Further resources and limitations are hours worked and the ability to negotiate a shared-care arrangement. For the shared-care families, cost, hours and flexibility act together to make parental-care a possible and appropriate "'choice".

All families, in making their "choice", are dealing with socially-prevalent ideas of childcare and who should perform it. These ideas likewise form resources. The various discourses of daycare versus parental care link with discourses of motherhood and attachment or "bonding" with children, discussed in Chapter XI. The work of Belsky, (e.g. 1989), mentioned in Chapter II provides an example of an anti-daycare discourse.[10] New and David (1985:114-115) identify a different presentation of daycare in the advice of Penelope Leach, constituting the "right age" at which children should attend. Simon and Sheila indicate how in practice parents may come to an understanding of the "right" age, based on particular material circumstances (a babysitter leaving), and how this understanding comes to constitute their view of what is "right" for the next child.

We have seen how the perception of daycare as a breeding ground for germs contributed to Andy and Carla electing to care for their child at home: this, however, has to be seen in context. For this family, keeping children at home means also that they do not have to be taken, by bus, to a daycare centre at the other end of the city. Further, the cost of daycare places for two children, now over $8,000 per year, has to be considered in the light of a total family income of under $30,000.

For parents, then, financial circumstances, hours of work, job flexibility and availability of alternative caregivers come together with prevailing ideas about children and their care to structure parents' "choice" of particular strategies for dealing with the problem of combining paid work and care of their children. These

[10] Belsky's work appears to indicate an ideological shift. His earlier work (e.g. Belsky et al 1982) is more positive, strongly recommending increased provision of "quality" daycare.

strategies in turn surround and structure their daily practices. Once a child is in daycare, a parent has to take the child there daily. When the child is to be cared for at home, a parent has to make sure, on a daily basis, that someone will be there to see to the child's needs. In organizing for a particular childcare/employment strategy, parents are constituting the bounding conditions of time and place in their daily lives. These in turn are fashioned out of what is perceived to be available and possible. Availability and affordability are linked, as we have seen, to patterns of social class and income. It is no accident that four out of five lower-income families stagger their working hours to provide parental care at home. The resulting conditions of parents' daily lives are not only classed, but gendered, with conditions restricting one partner more than another. The negotiations surrounding that organization are also gendered, with women doing the work of organization in almost every instance.

Childcare arrangements of course periodically break down, for instance when a child or a sitter is unwell. In Chapter IX I examine how parents talk of this problem, and the solutions they describe. First, however, I will turn to a more detailed examination of domestic labour practices within the household.

VIII. PATTERNS OF DAILY LIFE (II): DOMESTIC LABOUR

It is time to look at the organization of work within the home. Study after study shows that whether or not they are in the paid labour force, women perform the bulk of domestic labour, whether this is measured by time or by number of tasks performed (Crouter et al, 1987, Meissner et al, 1975, Michelson, 1985, Thompson and Walker, 1989). "Most women do two to three times as much work as their husbands," say Thompson and Walker (1989:854), reviewing the literature.

This domestic labour involves a range of activities. Luxton (1980:18) discusses four interrelated components: daily reproduction of labour, that is the readying of adults to face another day of paid work; generational reproduction of labour, that is childbearing and childrearing, with the eventual production of a new generation of workers; chores associated with both of these such as laundry, cooking, cleaning; and the "transformation of wages into goods and services for the household's use" involving budgeting and shopping.

Women perform some services, in these families, specifically for their men, to enable them to engage in paid work. Sometimes these are referred to in the interviews, in passing.

Sometimes I get mad and refuse to iron his shirts! (Brenda, II)

More often they are implicit. Psychological, emotional and sexual services are not discussed here. The main emphasis of this study is on women and men as parents, and I will concentrate on Luxton's categories two, three and four.

There is a considerable overlap between the second and third categories of domestic labour. Some aspects of parenthood — feeding specialized food to infants, bathing children, taking children to swimming lessons — are "childcare", that is generational reproduction tasks or "motherwork" (Rosenberg 1986), whereas laundry and cooking are general chores, performed for the family, adults included.

Yet cooking and laundry are considered by some of my respondents part of childcare. Both these categories are discussed in this chapter. Shopping and budgeting activities are performed to benefit both adults and children, and are likewise discussed here. The daily organization of formal childcare (Chapter VII) often involves a budgeting of financial resources. Yet it is hard to know where to categorize it, as it is about childcare, and it is performed to aid the entire family, by enabling both parents to earn: in short, it is central to the daily reproduction of labour. It seems likely that for most families childcare is thought of as enabling women to work for pay, whether it is a paid service or whether the man is "babysitting", as Glen said, while his wife is at work.

In interviewing women who had recently re-entered the workforce, Luxton found three expressions of how the women considered the gendered relations within the family should be organized, these being:

1. separate spheres and hierarchical relations;
2. separate spheres and cooperative relations;
3. shared spheres and changed relations (Luxton, 1986: 23).

I referred briefly to these in the preceding chapter. These categorizations can be used both to describe an ideology (as Luxton envisaged them) and to describe the situation that appears to pertain in a particular household. I should say at once that both in terms of their divisions of labour and in terms of ideological belief, most participants in the study, men and women, come into the category of separate spheres and cooperative relations.

In the families studied here, both women and men perform domestic labour, in that both take part in childcare and both may do associated tasks: but women do more, sometimes very much more. Furthermore, the meaning of domestic labour is different for them than for their husbands. The husband's participation is described generally as partial, and as optional, as "helping" rather than taking responsibility.

This is particularly so for household chores (especially laundry) but applies also to shopping activities, arranging for childcare, and such childcare activities as involve organization of tasks as opposed to just "minding" children.

In this chapter I look briefly at who, parents say, performs tasks relating both to general chores and to budgeting and shopping. I then turn to childcare, distinguishing between responsibility and performance of tasks, first dealing with the "basics" of children's health, safety, clothing and feeding, then focusing on activities that children engage in and examining who makes these possible or profitable.

THE ALLOCATION OF HOUSEWORK

Some domestic tasks are mentioned by all families. These include the typically female chores of laundry, cooking, and household cleaning and tidying or "straightening". Some chores are mentioned only by a few, and these include snow shovelling, yard-work, and general household repair jobs, which at least some respondents saw as typically male. Some of these jobs are seasonal, and it might not occur to couples to mention them. However these last tasks are not performed in all households: people in rented houses generally do not perform maintenance activities, and apartment dwellers may not always engage in snow shovelling or yard-work. Further, yard-work is to a certain extent an optional chore, which may involve mowing a lawn, planting a garden, or paying the children to sweep leaves off a paved parking strip. In several families gardening was a female chore, grass-cutting male.

Although household maintenance is more often spoken of as a male job, several women in the study perform it. They are most likely to do painting, particularly trim painting. Cindy had been varnishing a floor the night before the first interview, and hurt her back doing this. Elizabeth was sanding paint from woodwork

when I interviewed her husband; the sound of her hand-held sander is on the interview tape. Sheena puts in windows and fixes up drywall, which most of the men in the study would be unwilling to do. Several women rake leaves, cut grass or shovel snow, although at least one father (Wayne) could not understand why they would perform such tasks.

Researchers such as Berk and Pleck (summarized in Thomson and Walker, 1989) have pointed out that these tasks of maintenance, mowing, shovelling, are performed sporadically and infrequently, and do not form part of the household routine. Indoor housework is by contrast regular, routinized, and on-going. One characteristic mentioned by several parents is that it is never finished. The focus of this chapter is therefore on these regular, ongoing tasks.

The housework tasks most often done by men are cooking (though usually simpler food than their wives cook), washing dishes or loading dishwashers, and sweeping or vacuuming floors. Most men in the study will do some of these tasks. Some fathers will shop for groceries, fewer for clothes. Laundry, and dealing with clothes in general, is almost always done by women, as is dusting (though not all families mention this). However from the interviews there is a sense, not so much of what fathers will or will not do, but of the idea that for almost all families, housework chores are a female responsibility by default. That is, performance does not necessarily equal responsibility. Men will probably do the task if asked to, but would not, on their own, think to do it, and may not see a necessity for its performance.

Luxton (1986) describes how women may attempt to have their husbands participate in domestic labour, both chores and childcare, and how the husbands resist such participation. Some such strategies for participation/non-participation can be read in parents' comments. However several women in this study had a way out not available to Luxton's working-class respondents: domestic help in the form of a housekeeper or a maid-service. While the paid helpers did not do all household

work, they did at least do some of it. The effect of this help on the husband's participation is not clear, though in two, possibly three cases it seems likely that it may remove pressure on him to "help".

Further, if we consider the working conditions in houses, these differ greatly. Large houses have more space for storage. There is more floor area to vacuum, but also more ability to tidy things away, to have places where things should be put. Karen and Robert's house had in its living room a long wall of shelves and cupboards with sliding doors, into which "mess" (Robert's chief dislike) could be rapidly cleared away. Small houses may become cluttered, particularly where young children are playing, so that many items must be moved before the house can be cleaned. A large kitchen with many countertops makes cooking easier. A small house may lack kitchen space, and what space is available may — as three families mentioned — be taken by baskets of washing, which have to be constantly moved.

Resources available to parents therefore affect the nature of domestic labour. Professional and working-class parents, as we have seen in the previous chapter, have differing resources at their disposal, and interact with these in organizing their daily lives, "coping" with circumstances that arise. Thorogood (1987) conceptualizes resources as structural properties, providing "a conceptual bridge between individual and structure". She here draws upon Giddens' work, saying that:

> (H)e sees resources as structural properties which are both the medium and the outcome of the reproduction of social practices. In this respect the individual's relationship to 'resource' is structured by his or her class, race and gender experience. Further, resources are not simply inert materials possessed (or not) by individuals but are part of a process, or set of relations (p. 21).

Resources here become media for the exercise of power. In this sense resources for my respondents are not only monetary. Space, as I suggested above, is a resource. Time is another. So, however, are particular skills parents may

possess. Fathers especially speak of "patience" as a resource (often one they do not have) in dealing with children. Possession of the resource does not automatically convey power; some resources can be viewed negatively, and these may include specific skills that women have or are seen to have. I investigate this in Chapter X.

Women organize, men "help"

The pattern of women carrying out indoor, continuous, domestic chores, with "help" in various degrees from their husbands, was found in 13 out of the 16 households, including three with paid assistance in the form of a housekeeper or maid service. Three families therefore departed from the pattern of female performance with male help. In one of these the man did no domestic chores. Only in two families, therefore, did the man appear to take an equal or greater share of housework. Here I shall deal with the majority case, where women not only did most of the domestic work, but carried responsibility for it. Many respondents were very open about this division of labour.

Fa: I'll be up-front, it's a traditional, I do all the outside repairs and Donna does the inside, and I will do dishes when she gets on my case and then I'll do things more. *(laughing)* Ah — it's broken down, I hate to say, traditional sex lines, I — It's like a trade-off, I do the outside grass, the maintenance, but it's gets so — yeh and I break more things and I fix those! So it's definitely a trade-off there. Where other things are concerned, that's a trade-off, oh it's like, if I'm doing something with (their son, aged five), I can't be doing something else. And if I'm doing something with (their baby daughter) or (their son), I can't be entered in — and I know Donna's argument will be the reverse. She could do those things and I could be doing the other things, but somehow I just take the kids and leave before the argument starts. *(laughs)* Oh, so yes, she does, she does the cleaning, she does the vacuuming, and all that stuff. So — I'll be upfront. But I'm working on it, I'm working on it . . .
Mo: He's helped with the dishes.
Fa: Yeh. I'm getting into that more now. (Donna and Rick, I)

Often, while it was clear that domestic chores were in the woman's area of responsibility, both partners emphasized the man's share.

Mo: I'm sort of organized, I do most of the laundry, sometimes Paul'll help me fold it up. I just go ahead and do it. And usually like once a week I'll ask him if he'll do the floor, wash the floor. And I just vacuum when it's necessary or do a wash when it's necessary. It's not a big house so it's not too hard.

Fa: And what I normally do is like uh, if I'm, wherever I am, and I see something that needs to be done, just maybe a small thing, then I'll just do it like — If like sometimes a glass will be upstairs and I'll make a point to bring that down, or if I see something like the floor is at this particular time kind of dirty, this type of floor here shows up all, like if there's maybe if we had some toast and you know little grits get around and all that sort of stuff, well then I'll just take the broom and go over that very quickly, that kind of stuff. (Cindy and Paul, I)

In this formulation his "helping" by bringing down a glass or sweeping up toast crumbs is constructed as paralleling his wife's doing of major, time-consuming chores such as laundry or vacuuming. This phenomenon of the man's "help" appearing as greater than it is, as equivalent to the woman's domestic labour, has been noted by other researchers, for instance Backett (1982). I shall return to this point in Chapter X.

The optional, or part-time nature of men's participation was implicit in many comments.

> When we're at home both together he's sitting with the kids. He has the TV on, he likes to watch TV, and he plays with the kids or else he does errands, and I'm always doing, I've always got something to do, so I'm usually on the go. If it's not the dishes, it's the laundry, or making the beds, or — so I'm usually doing that. (Brenda, I)

Brenda's indoor responsibilities are continuous. Glen performs tasks only if she is not in the house, and he can choose to <u>not</u> do them.

For families where parents shared childcare, it might be expected that fathers performed domestic chores when they were at home with the children. In some families they apparently did do this. When Anna is at work Hugh does whatever chores, including cleaning chores, appear necessary, as a matter of course. He takes responsibility for heavy-duty cleaning tasks such as washing floors, noticing when these need doing and allocating time for them at weekends.

Several other men had particular tasks which they did regularly: shopping, often with a list prepared by their wife; washing up; putting laundry away. These specific tasks may relate to specific circumstances. For instance, as Sheena has developed a problem of eczema on her hands, Ted performs most tasks that require hands to be in water, such as washing dishes and bathing children; though Sheena points out that she still cleans the bathroom. However, men often perform these tasks under supervision, and to the women's specifications. In some cases their performance does not meet the standards. They "get it wrong". This was particularly noted for laundry, and in two families for grocery shopping, where the man apparently bought the "wrong" items.

Many women and men suggested that men would simply not notice, or care, what had to be done.

> Wednesday night I would usually scrub the floors and before I went to bed I'd vacuum the carpet down here. The upstairs I don't worry too much, I mean the bathroom when it's looking grungy I'll just take the time and — but I usually do it, because I'm home more and because if I waited for him to do it I find that I could wait another week! *(laughs)* Men don't seem to mind dirt like women do. I don't know, I like things to be generally, I can't live in a lot of confusion, you know, so I find I just generally tidy, at least that's just one element of confusion that's not there. (Cheryl, I)

So domestic chores, especially cleaning chores, remain a female responsibility.

In general, men appear as willing to help with chores, when asked to do so, as a favour to their wives. Sheena asks her husband, occasionally, to help with what she calls the "back type" of work: heavy work.

> I usually do the floors. Ted did them the last time, though, which was nice. And then I waxed them. I went out one night and I said to the kids, 'I must get Dad to wash the floors for me and I'll wax them in the morning'. And he said 'OK' which was nice. (Sheena, I)

The "help" may not be so willingly given.

Mo: Sometimes you know I ask him to help [with cleaning] and then he does.

Wouldn't you say that's the way it goes?
Fa: Grudgingly. Grudgingly.
Mo: Yes and um you know in rare cases if we're having company coming to stay and we have a lot of cleaning and stuff to do and a lot of getting ready, we do it together. But most of it I do. (Lucy and Wayne, I)

If the man does not notice, or will not "help", the task defaults to the woman, even if it is hard for her to perform. Wayne does not like to go shopping as a family on Friday nights, so Lucy gets groceries during the day, with her two small children, aged 20 months and two and a half years. I asked how she coped.

Last couple of weeks the way I do it is take (son aged 20 months) in a small umbrella stroller and push that ahead of me and pull a grocery cart behind me with her [the two-and-a-half year old] sitting in the cart in the little seat. And I get a few groceries that way but I still have to go, you know, two or three times a week, to bring enough food home. (Lucy, I)

For three of the families which employ other people to do some of their housework, it appears that this frees the woman from some aspects of domestic labour; leaving her able to perform others. Berthe says her housekeeper does "everything", cleaning, vacuuming, putting on washes. However, Berthe does similar chores, often early in the morning before other family members wake. Karen and Robert report that household cleaning, and laundry, are carried out partly by the housekeeper, partly by Karen.

Mo: Oh, exclusively either by myself or by Ena [the housekeeper]. Ena tends to be quite consistent in that she will pay attention to things that involve the children. I mean that's fine with me, sort of — of course she wouldn't do our wash. So we, I do all of our wash, and sometimes I do the children's wash too.
Fa: That's the evenings when — you're either doing when I'm going back to work, like in a little while.
Mo: I'll do some of it tonight, and I'll do more of a wash.
Fa: And I'll go back to work.
Mo: The vacuuming is, Ena will do it, and then if she doesn't seem to get around to it then I'll do it. (Karen and Robert, 1)

Rachel's maid-service provides a fairly thorough dusting, vacuuming and cleaning of the house, including the bathroom and kitchen. Pete and the children

help her tidy up before the service arrives, but she takes responsibility for the service.

Having paid help removes certain items, notably cleaning, from the list of what is to be done. The residue from these items then defaults to the mother, so that the housekeeper or maid service appears to facilitate a "separate spheres" division, by keeping cleaning aspects of housework to a level manageable by the woman without requesting much assistance from her husband. Cowan (1983) suggests that provision of specialized equipment which apparently eases a task may constitute the task as female by removing the husband's obligation to help. The effect of employing paid help, for these three families, may be similar. It should, however, be pointed out that the three families differ in the extent to which husbands do participate in the remaining daily work of the household, Vince having specific tasks, such as shopping, which he performs regularly, and for which he claims to take responsibility.

Deviations from the pattern

Three families do not follow the overall pattern. In one the man does no housework. In one he does most of it, and in one the partners divide responsibility for chores.

Andy is home during the day, looking after his children, but he does, both partners agree, no housework.

Fa: That's easy! I don't do any! . . . Carla does all the washing, she does all the dishes, she does all the meals. I feed the kids and everything and set the dishes aside, and — I might straighten up if it's a real heavy day with the toys. And then you might do that four times a day or you might only do it once. So. They seem to like a lot of toys out everywheres. Bedroom, bathroom stay good. Kitchen isn't too bad, they confine themselves to front room or their bedroom.
JB: And that gets —
Mo: Trashed! *(laughs)* (Carla and Andy, I)

So the housework is done by Carla, in the evenings, when Andy is at work.

> When the kids go to bed, between 7 and 8, then it starts. If we're having a light supper, or sometimes I take the kids out, both of them, for supper, OK. Then the washer's set up and I let that go, and I do other things. But usually it is, other than their bedroom, it's all done after bedtime. (Carla, I)

Andy gives two reasons for this division of labour: He would get it wrong; and it is habit instilled not only from the years within his present household but from his childhood, with many sisters at home. In Chapter X I examine these "reasons", repeated by other men as well as Andy. This division of labour may shed light on the ways both Andy and Carla feel about their parenthood, outlined in Chapter VI. Andy complains that his wife is always doing housework, not spending enough time with the children, not being patient enough with them. It becomes clear, however, that she has little time to spend. She must be both the major earner in the household and the main performer of domestic labour. She, in turns, dislikes "having to work" to earn a living, and having to clear up the house at the end of the day, feeling also that she should be with the children.

Joachim by contrast does housework while he is at home with the children, as their daytime caregiver. As he and Susan phrase it, his doing of housework comes from his being present, in the house, on the spot. He knows, and notices, what has to be done.

> Well I never do any vacuuming, you always do it. I know it doesn't often get done, but you're always the one that does it! And doing the kitchen floor. I might (do) the dishes, but you sweep the floor, and wash it and dust it. (Susan, I)

I asked how they would decide who did what.

Mo: Whoever can't stand it any longer does it, and Joachim is more sensitive than I am. I suppose also he does have more time, but — not really, when you think about how demanding the children are. I'm like a husband in that sort of respect, I get up and I go to work and — you sort of expect the chores to be done. I do get the awful husbandly sort of attitude to watch then, and just sit there with my beer and my —

Fa: Crossword.

Mo: Crossword puzzle. Yeh, I do the crossword every night. But that's after they've gone to bed though, mostly. I don't always even do the dishes! I mean if it was left to me the house would be in a terrible mess . . . I keep thinking if we should

> have a cleaning lady or not . . . it's something you have to clean up before the cleaning lady comes. (Susan and Joachim, I)

Susan does share the responsibility in a number of areas, notably shopping and cooking. Neither partner described her contribution as "'helping". On several occasions, however, she categorized herself as "like a husband". She goes out to work, comes home, and has to resist the temptation to sit back and let the work of the household be done around her. She repeated a comment often made by men during the interviews, that when someone, usually the mother, is more at home they become practised in doing daily housework, noticing what has to be done and knowing where things are.

The final family has, if not "a cleaning lady", a maid service. Sheila "straightens" the house prior to the arrival of the service, clearing up what she describes as "tables that grow papers". Simon does interim cleaning and helps their elder child organize his room "when it's like impossible to walk through it".

Mo: I'm the organizer/straightener, Simon's the cleaner and the shopper.
Fa: Mostly the cooker, not always.
Mo: Yeh, the cooker, I should have said, the cooker.
Fa: Although you cook occasionally. (Sheila and Simon, I)

"Egalitarian" families are scare in the research literature, although a study by Berk found that 10% of husbands "did as much family work as their wives" (Thompson and Walker, 1989:854). From the outset, Simon and Sheila made a decision to share childcare and chores. Sheila does everything to do with clothes and laundry and Simon has responsibility for food, shopping for groceries and household supplies. They consciously attempt to keep chores to a minimum, for instance leaving beds "to air", says Simon. They have each chosen, they say, the chores that they most like, or least dislike to do. For this couple, the maid-service appears to facilitate their egalitarianism, by removes the major task of routine cleaning, leaving them able to divide the residue of housework into specific items.

Domestic chores reconsidered: visible and invisible work

While domestic chores are often in parents' accounts discussed in one-word terms as "laundry" or "shopping", these are complex activities. Laundry, perhaps the most complex, will be discussed in more detail in Chapter X. Grocery shopping involves not only visiting a supermarket, loading a cart with purchases and having them checked out, but the necessity of knowing what is a suitable purchase, what would make a good dinner or a fast dinner, what foods people will eat and what they will not eat, what staple supplies require to be replenished and how the food budget should be apportioned. In some cases women make a list and men take this to the store, but in at least two professional families men were reprimanded for buying the "wrong" items, and this chore effectively returned to the woman.

The business of shopping with young children in tow is mentioned by many parents, usually as something they try to avoid doing. There are temptations at child-height by the checkouts which can cause a major row, or children become bored, and whine, or run up and down the aisles, or insist on pushing the grocery cart; and in general it is much faster to shop alone. However some parents mention taking one child as a treat for that child and as a positive experience for themselves.

With more than one child, there is a problem of how to hold on to them or transport them. Lucy's solution of having one child in a supermarket cart and one in a stroller results in the need to make several trips to the supermarket during the week. Her husband gives his "not liking" to go on family shopping trips as the reason for this division. In Chapters X and XI I return to this use of "not liking" something as a reason for not doing it, a usage associated particularly with men.

The most common solution is for one parent to shop. Either the father "minds" the children while the mother shops, or he goes, often with a list she has prepared, while she does other things. (She is not seen as "minding" the children for him to

shop.) Simon and Glen shop without a list. Vince takes a list, but said in a later interview that he knows what to buy.

> I'm planning the meals ahead of time. When I buy, say when I go out and buy the groceries, I'm thinking of at least four night's suppers, when I go out to do it, I'm thinking meals when I go out to do it . . . I watch to see when the chicken gets low in the freezer, and when, you know, I watch these things . . . I know what there's stuff in the cupboards, far better than you do, right? You know. You're continually writing down, 'Get relish' you know, she puts it on the list, and there's relish sitting up in the cupboard. (Vince, IV)

Clearly here shopping is linked to other activities: knowledge of what to buy is associated with cooking, with knowing the preferences of family members, and with knowing what supplies are running low in the house, including non-food items such as detergent and diapers. This knowledge is in turn linked to daily performance of other chores, and daily awareness of what is going on in the home. Despite Vince, this awareness is almost always female. Yet in traditionally-organized households the details of planning meals, planning shopping, often are not mentioned.

Devault (1987:188) comments that "the work of meal planning and management is invisible work". For many parents, the planning of meals or the conducting of a shopping expedition becomes instead linked to women's individual personalities or their "natural" abilities, as several respondents indicate in Chapter X. Vince has made sufficient shopping trips to know that he <u>can</u> remember what is in the house: but it is work. Susan and Joachim were agreed that often planning what to cook for supper was more work than actually cooking it. Where the division of labour is not entirely traditional, invisible work may become visible in this way, with sharing of the work may result in the ability to talk about what that task entails, the details that are often otherwise taken for granted.

The notion of women's "natural" abilities, in the talk of many parents, is linked with the notion of male incompetence in the performance of chores. Men have to be asked to help, told what to do, and even with a shopping list they may "get it wrong".

In Chapters X and XI I investigate these "reasons" for non-participation, and how they may reconstitute such tasks as female.

Several researchers have suggested that husbands' participation is likely to be greater in the area of childcare than in household chores (Luxton, 1986, Thompson and Walker, 1989). I now turn to a consideration of childcare, who does it, and where responsibility for both physical childcare and the organization of children's activities is seen to lie.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR CHILDCARE

When I interviewed mothers and fathers on their own, I asked who had responsibility for certain aspects of childcare. The first, and most encompassing, of these, was for what we termed the "basics" of childcare: keeping children fed, clean, healthy and safe.

Both mothers and fathers in most cases included some chores, particularly laundry and cooking, in their discussion of "basic" childcare. I originally intended to separate "housework" from "motherwork" (Rosenberg, 1986) but this distinction proved hard to maintain. Many women and some men saw responsibility for doing laundry, for example, as part of the responsibility for children's care: the way to make sure there were clean clothes to put on children was to run a wash.

There was some divergence between mothers' and fathers' accounts of childcare, indicating that I was to an extent tapping into different views of the situation. However there was a large measure of agreement between the partners, and a broad agreement with their previous discussion of who performed domestic chores. This is not surprising. Ways of looking at childcare and chores have been negotiated between the partners over a period of years. Parents have become expert in presenting their household to the outside world. They have constructed "official family versions" of their daily realities, not deliberately, but through an

ongoing process of daily interaction. In one family, all answers appeared as part of what Hochschild (1989) terms a "family myth", an ideological version which underpins many aspects of the parents' lives. This family, and the concept of "myth", are discussed in Chapter X.

In 14 families the mother appeared to have major responsibility for basic childcare. In one, it was shared fairly evenly, and in one the father carried this responsibility. I will examine these divisions, looking at how mothers and fathers spoke of responsibilities.

Mother has chief responsibility

All fathers did at least some childcare, but in most families women claimed the chief responsibility for children. In general, their husbands agreed.

> I don't think there's any question about that. Although I delegate! I delegate that responsibility but ultimately that responsibility would be mine. But I'm quite good at dividing it up. (Berthe, II)

> I think my wife does. That's the responsibility, that's not necessarily who does it. (Vince, III)

> That's my responsibility largely. I take it upon myself, I think. If I weren't here, I'm sure Robert could handle it. But by and large I'm — it's my responsibility. (Karen, II)

These comments are worth some consideration. The two professional families represented here have very different allocations of the actual performance of childcare. Vince is a relatively participant father: Robert is not. Yet Vince agrees that the "responsibility" rests with his wife, differentiating between this and task performance.

Lamb (1987: 8) distinguishes "three components of parental involvement": engagement or interaction; accessibility; and responsibility. Engagement involves one-to-one interaction, which might be direct physical care such as dressing the

child, or helping with homework, or playing. Accessibility means that the parent is available to the child — perhaps watching TV or engaging in household tasks, but able to be called on if required. Responsibility, however, involves

> knowing when the child has to go to the pediatrician, making the appointment, and making sure somebody takes the child to it . . . making childcare and babysitting arrangements, ensuring that the child has clothes to wear, and making arrangements for the child's supervision when she is sick . . . It is hard to quantify the time involved, particularly because the anxiety, worry, and contingency-planning that comprise parental responsibility often occur when the parent is ostensibly doing something else. (Lamb, 1987:8)

Responsibility, then, is in part "invisible work". Lamb indicates that where both parents are in the paid workforce, as here, fathers' accessibility to children and engagement with children are higher than if their wives are full-time homemakers, but says that

> as far as responsibility is concerned, however, there is no evidence that maternal employment status has any effect on levels of paternal involvement. Even when both mother and father are employed 30 or more hours per week, the amount of responsibility assumed by fathers appears negligible, just as it does when mothers are unemployed. (p.9)

For several families the father's responsibility indeed seemed "negligible", but not, however, for all. At one extreme were fathers who seemed to participate very little in their children's care. They might be directly and specifically involved in engagement activities, but in general were not available to be called on, not accessible, and certainly carried no responsibility for day-to-day childcare. Most fathers were accessible to their children for fairly large parts of the day, but both they and their wives indicated that the women were the ones with responsibility. Some fathers, however,did take responsibility in specific areas, though this appeared to be less that their wives'. In some families, while fathers said responsibility was shared, mothers maintained it was more theirs.

Elizabeth and Duncan agreed that childcare was Elizabeth's, both to organize and to perform. It was her "job", said Duncan.

> Elizabeth just doesn't work a full-time job, at working in a structured sense, and as a result I think she does more things around the house, an up, food preparation or meal preparation, getting groceries or whatnot, and looking after the kids, simply because she's got the time to do it . . . My job in the family is to do what I'm doing, and her job is to do what she's doing. (Duncan, II)

Duncan's "help" with childcare is limited. Elizabeth says that he will "keep the kids out of my hair while I prepare supper".

Neither Duncan and Elizabeth actually talked much about responsibility. Both spoke rather of task performance. She gets the meals, runs the house and sees to the children. He runs his practice, and sometimes minds the children to help out. The thinking about childcare, about schedules, about clothes, about nutrition, about teaching children to cross the road safely, appears very infrequently, although Elizabeth did speak of the time and effort it would take to toilet-train her two-year-old daughter. Planning for childcare is invisible work (Devault, 1987).

Where some women speak of their husbands as very willing to "help", it is clear that organizing this "help" is work for the women. Karen orients her husband, every evening, to the kind of food suitable for the baby. Sheena gives direct instructions on childcare.

> The main thing is initiation, of, of anything. I mean, Robert will take my lead and almost follow me. If I start to do something then he'll do it, but unless I suggest it he doesn't, doesn't seem to connect that well. Even routine things. Although now he tends to automatically feed (the toddler) in the evenings, without me asking, but I do have to orient him toward the kind of food . . . almost everything, clothing, food, sleep, play, is, I initiate it. (Karen, II)

Mo: Me . . . Well not, wait now, was that in thinking or just doing it? See I'm the one I think that thinks it —

JB: In making sure that it's done. Carrying the responsibility.

Mo: That would be me, 'cause he might do it, like I'm like 'Ted, do this, Ted do that,' you know what I mean, like 'change the baby,' and uh — so I'm the one that thinks it, and then we both do it. (Sheena, II)

> Ted says that in his rather limited time with the children, he just wants to play.
>
> She's definitely a bit more responsible on that sense than I am. (Ted, III)

Sheena has observed a similar phenomenon in other families: the women "think it". Perhaps, she suggest, women simply do not trust men to do it right. This implies that she sees herself and other women as voluntarily "taking on" the tasks of domestic labour, as a result of their belief that they have superior skills in this area.

This general agreement that it is the woman who "thinks it" cuts across income and class divisions between families, and the childcare/paid work strategies which they use. there are many other examples of this situation where the woman directs operations. Brenda calls her husband, if she is at work and he is at home, to tell him if the children need a bath. Cindy emphasized the willingness of her husband, Paul, to "help".

> He's very cooperative, if I ask him to help me do something he'll just do it. I don't ask him to do a lot, he just sort of pitches in if he sees something that has to be done he just does it. And there's always something to do. (Cindy, II)

Again here we have the idea that the man <u>would</u> help, if asked, or if he happens to notice that there is something to do. But Cindy is more likely to "notice". There is a sense of men being less gifted in this area, less capable, slower to respond. Besides, Paul has other things to do.

> He's usually studying or out doing work. (Cindy, II)

Paul likes to think he takes "a more active role" in childcare than some of the men he knows, but agrees that Cindy is "like the dominant force" when it comes to responsibility for basic childcare.

> Cindy seems to somehow have a mental inventory already in her mind of everything that they'll need, whereas I have to go almost like step by step. Like for instance OK (their son), let's see, he'll have to have his coat, his mittens, and his uh turtleneck, his boots, I go through each thing, whereas Cindy it's almost like an instantaneous thing. She can put things together very quickly. And that same example I think follows through with everything else, no matter

> what it comes to. She seems to have the, like a natural facility for organizing those things, and doing them much more quickly than I seem to be able to do them. (Paul, III)

If Paul does these things, it is work. If Cindy does them, it is her natural talent surfacing, in this account. These women also considered they had a "natural instinct" or "mother's instinct" for responsibility and organization, with Karen defining hers as "a neurotic, a compulsive tendency" to organize and initiate tasks and events.

In some, though not all, of the shared-care families, women considered that their responsibility for basic childcare could be lifted, temporarily, in at least some areas, when their husband looked after the children.

> It's really whoever is looking after them at the time. Most often that's me, so I feel that I have the real overall responsibility. Yeh. [But when she is at work and her husband is looking after them] I feel it's lifted off my shoulders, too, for that period of time, sort of. (Lucy, II)

There is here some sense of sharing, of alleviation. There are, however,a number of things, involving planning, preparation of clothes, preparation of food, that Lucy does that Wayne does not.

> I wash their clothes, and prepare you know a lot of their food, most of it. Through a lot of the time we've had the children I would usually be the one to decide what they could do and what they couldn't do, safety-wise, and there might be some disagreement, he may not agree with me but still I would have the ultimate say. (Lucy, II)

> Lucy is obviously your, the key man. Because of the fact that she's so, the most <u>reliable</u> in that sense. I mean you know I'm at it on and off, and she's at it all the time. You know, again the sort of, in my way the child's mother syndrome. (Wayne, III. my emphasis.)

Lucy's "reliability" is here linked by her husband to a "natural closeness" between mother and child. I examine this concept, and how it functions to maintain a gendered division of labour in the home, in Chapters X and XI.

Douglas was not entirely happy with his family's division of responsibilities. He

had until recently spent part of each day caring for the children, but his changed work-hours now prevented this. He now "deferred" to his wife, as the knowledgeable one. He felt he should take a greater share, not only of childcare duties, but of responsibility for these, but did not know how to arrange this.

> I would say Kathleen does [have responsibility for childcare] without question . . . Previously [when he worked nights] I had a certain daily involvement with the children that I don't have now. I'm aware of that. In feeding them, in making sure that — I mean I have no hesitation in undertaking those duties, but I do it less. And so I defer to Kathleen and — because she's with them every afternoon I defer to her on those responsibilities. It's beginning to, I'm beginning to wonder about whether in fact I should be doing more in that regard, but I'm not quite sure how to go about it *(laughs)* at the moment. Logistically it's tougher. (Douglas, III)

However in some families the father does not necessarily "defer". There may be particular areas in which he does carry responsibility, in Lamb's terms. Vince, for instance, buys some of the children's clothes, and knows, he said, what they are needing, or are likely to need in the near future. Aside from this, he is caretaker for children and house for specific time periods, such as at weekends. While agreeing that his wife carried the major responsibility for the children, he suggested that they had, in practice, an equitable division of labour.

> I would think that this is not a division we foisted on each other, I'm sure that this division has probably lasted as well as it has probably because it's, both parties see it to their own mutual benefit. I'd sure as hell rather not get up with the kids at six o'clock in the morning, or quarter after six during the week, you know. That's how I look at it. And I think that she would, she can do that easier if she knows she can sleep in on the weekend, and read a book, and do whatever she wants. (Vince, III)

In three families the mother claimed to have the major responsibility for basic childcare while the father maintained this was shared. In all three the mother agreed that the father "helps" quite considerably.

> I probably do most of it. Rick has been contributing especially in the mornings, he does a lot for (their elder child) in the mornings and he helps a lot in the evenings. I feel like I'm supervising, making sure it all gets done. *(laughs)* That kind of thing. Even though Rick's taking care of it, I make sure it's done, kind of

> thing. Maybe I worry, maybe that is another thing I worry about, whether or not all this is getting done. (Donna, II)

In the accounts of both Donna and Cheryl men appeared as the assistants who were learning, women as expert supervisors.

The amount of housework and childcare Mike does has increased with the number of children.

> I'm helping out more and more now than I did, like with one baby it was no problem, but — I understand now how busy Cheryl is, so I chip in just to be on the, just keep on the good side of her, I don't want her mad at me! *(laughs)* (Mike, III)

This idea of "helping" to keep Cheryl happy is one that came up again in the final interview, and in Chapters X and XI I consider how it acts to maintain household tasks as "really" Cheryl's. Mike, however, does appear to perform considerably more childcare than most other fathers in the study. Indeed I could observe this. During every interview with Cheryl and Mike there were diapers to be changed, and in a joint interview the parents took one child each to change. Mike did not have to be asked to do this. He "noticed" that the change was required. He organized lunch for the toddler, Cheryl breastfed the infant. In the separate interview with Mike he casually took the infant to the changing area and changed his diaper while continuing to talk about his favourite tasks in doing childcare.

Clearly some fathers are more practised than others in childcare skills, and feel more competent. Their tasks may involve both "'knowing" what to do and "noticing" that it needs to be done. They are doing invisible as well as visible work.

Rather than speaking of "helping", Rick's talk was of his "reclaiming" responsibilities and "rights", since the time of the first interview, which he had previously "surrendered".

> I started to assume more things that — I guess maybe looking back on it, I'd surrendered . . . And so now I've asserted my right again, saying that, 'Hey I don't mind doing this stuff, but just let me do it my way, don't give me any questions about it!' So it's now worked out that you know I throw a load of

> laundry in every night and I make (the boy's) lunch. And maybe it's along, you know I don't want to say sex lines, but I take care of (his) things in the morning, and I do the breakfast, and Donna takes care of (the girl). (Rick, III)

So where Donna says he "helps", Rick suggests they now have a joint responsibility for basic childcare.

> I guess a joint responsibility, 'cause it's like I'll give (the boy) a bath, or (the baby) a bath, and I will feed everybody in the morning, it's not just — and I'll feed (the baby), and I'll clothe, get her dressed, and change diapers, so I guess it's joint responsibility. I have to take of it so if Donna goes to work, I got the kids during the day, two days on the weekends, so it's like, it's not that I leave them dirty and not feed them for those two days, it's my responsibility to do those things. (Rick, III)

In this family the parents appear to have different views of gendered relations surrounding childcare. As we shall see in Chapter XI, Rick resists a positioning within discourses of traditional gender-roles. Donna, however, although she would like more "help", appears to assume that separate spheres will, or should, operate to some extent. The question remains, however, to what extent Rick is talking about engagement rather than responsibility in Lamb's (1987) terms.

Anna and Hugh are in general agreement that both are engaged in childcare, so that the question at issue becomes rather the extent and nature of the sharing. Anna feels that she carries more of the basic responsibility, but points out that she is in the house, during the day, and that child-related chores could and would be handled by her husband if necessary. He would do them differently, and she thinks she does at least some of them — cooking, laundry — better than he would. These ideas of course are common to many families, and act to constitute the father as <u>willing</u> to help, as I discuss in Chapter X. But Anna agrees that many areas, including responsibility for health, <u>are</u> shared. She sees her husband spending more time with the children than would be typical.

> I think Hugh likes to do more than most men, in the families that I know. A lot of other men are forced, it seems like they're forced into doing things with their kids! He has never, like he thinks it's an oddity for someone to have to, you

> know, to be told to spend time, he goes out of his way to try to spend time. (Anna, II)

This is still, however,engagement, in Lamb's categorization. Hugh would go further, suggesting that responsibility is divided between them.

> When I'm here by myself obviously I'm in charge, of keeping them fed, cleaned and clothed — And Anna's nights even though I'm here she does it all, I have no idea how it would work out if Anna was home 7 nights a week. 'Cause I really like giving these guys a bath, we have a, a lot of fun. But again, Anna does all of the kids' laundry, I do house laundry and my laundry but Anna does all the kids'. . . But that, that's a side issue, so who has those responsibilities again it's our situation has made it this way, and I have no, I really can't think of how it would work out the other way. (Hugh, III)

Hugh spoke of men viewing themselves as "helpers". Although more men, he thinks, are doing more with their children than previously, most of these are

> still in the helping role as compared to carrying the ball role but they're, they just find themselves doing a lot more of these things. (Hugh, III)

This couple's work/childcare situation means that on three nights Hugh has to "carry the ball", looking after the children and the house, and at weekends he also looks after the children, so that Anna has a chance to recover from her late-night waitressing job. It remains hard to tell, from this, to what extent he continues to feel responsible, on a daily basis, when Anna is in the house.

There remain two families whose practices require some examination in this section. Andy is the daytime caretaker for his children. It might be expected that he would have responsibility for childcare, at least in this period of time: and indeed Carla describes childcare responsibilities as equal. Andy, however,disagrees. The responsibility, he says, remains his wife's despite his daily performance of childcare tasks. He does on-the-spot care, on a daily basis. She has to think and plan.

> Yeh, any doctor's appointments or medical treatment or anything, she takes care of all that. It's, she leaves me instructions when I'm with the kids. For clothing and stuff, she makes sure that everything's clean, that their drawers are always full. She knows where everything's at. Um — I'd say just about everything. All as I do during the day is, I feed them, play with them, try to tidy

up a little. That's as far as my responsibilities go. (Andy, lower-income father, III)

In terms of Lamb's (1987) categorization, Andy is highly accessible, but Carla carries responsibility.

Neither parent is totally satisfied with this arrangement. There are real disagreements, in this family, over how the children should be raised and which tasks or activities should take priority. Carla keeps a stricter discipline, and dislikes some of the activities, such as television viewing, that Andy permits the children to engage in. Andy feels Carla makes too much use of threat to keep the children in order, and worries about how she punishes children. He feels she does not spend enough time with them. His "alienation", as he describes it, appeared to reach a peak at the time of the individual interviews.

> I don't want my kids brought up her way. I don't agree with a lot of things she does, I disagree with the discipline thing and the punishment and I'm tired of her yakking and going on I don't do enough, and I feel alienated, like I shouldn't even be here except to babysit in the daytime. And most of the weekends I'm not home because I just, her and I will be constantly bickering and arguing over the kids, in different ways. (Andy, III)

In the first interview Andy suggested that at weekends the mother <u>ought</u> to take care of the children, and that he kept out of the way to facilitate this. It was important to the development of a "bond" between mother and child. Their seeming lack of agreement over who has responsibility may lie partly in Andy's view that it <u>should</u> be the mother who carries that responsibility; while Carla indicates that she would like him to take some responsibility for housework things, giving her the opportunity sometimes to play with the children.

Finally, Lucille and Don both stated that they share care. "It's 50-50" Lucille said in the final interview. She elaborated:

> Well, we both look after them, we both do a wash when it needs to be done, we both feed them, Don baths them, because I can't right now, but usually we take turns. One night he does it, one night I do it. So it's everything is not one-sided, like I do a lot of the wash but if I can't do it and I'm at work then he does it. I

> usually get the clothes ready for them, with (the toddler's), when I get up first thing in the morning, first thing is I go to the bathroom and I go and pick out (the toddler's) clothes and give them to Don. But after that, he comes down, he washes him, he feeds him and I get (the older child) ready, so we're pretty well 50-50 on it, I would say. (Lucille, IV)

In this extract, however, Lucille is talking of task performance, not responsibility. Previously she pointed to a difference in their attitude to clothes for the children.

> Yeh, I match them, he just throws anything on! *(laughs)* You know like I'm, my mother's in me, right, I want them always dressed proper, and clean, right. And he'll throw, you know, an orange shirt and green pants on, won't make any difference sort of thing, right, where I want everything to be just matched and just so on them. And more so on (the younger child), right now, 'cause (the older)'s to the point that he wants to dress himself, so I let him, but (the younger), I want (him) matched all the time. You know, that they can't never say anything about him. Or (the older), if it comes to that. (Lucille, II)

She feels responsible for the presentation of her children to the outside world, so that they will be acceptable, respectable. In considering the relation between this family and the "they" who might judge the children, we should remember that not only is this family very poor, but the younger child has Down's Syndrome. The relation is both of social class and of disability. Lucille also sets up, and keeps, medical appointments for this younger child.

> Sometimes it's one-sided, like I, I do a lot of appointments, a lot of running around but I have the time off to do it and Don doesn't. Whereas if it was the other way around, he'd be doing it and I wouldn't be doing it. (Lucille, II)

Both parents perform childcare and the tasks, such as cooking and laundry, that surround it. They may well be equal in engagement or accessibility. Yet Lucille is the one who does invisible work, who plans and schedules: and who in the end has more responsibility.

From these families it appears that women are still, by and large, carrying and accepting responsibility. I have indicated some differences in the fathers' participation, from the slight degree of engagement and accessibility of Duncan or Robert or Ted, through to the intense involvement of Andy or Rick or Hugh. Some

fathers do have responsibilities in certain areas, or at certain times, so that the load on the women's shoulders may be partly alleviated. But on the whole, the final responsibility rests with the mother, for basic childcare.

In families with shared-care there are set periods of time when the father is the sole caretaker. I have indicated here that he may feel he takes on responsibility at these times. However, as with Andy, he may still see himself as a "babysitter". Sharing care may not necessarily lead to a sharing of responsibility.

Responsibility is shared, or father takes major responsibility

Departures from the major pattern are, however, possible. In one family responsibility does appear to be shared. Sheila and Simon had agreed from the outset to equal participation in childcare. Their particular division is based on what each likes or dislikes doing.

> Like I like to cook, and I hate to worry about clothes. I won't even buy my own clothes, I have to take Sheila with me to do that, so it's not surprising that she has to buy the ones for the kids too. Um and on the other hand I like grocery shopping and cooking and so I do those, and obviously it spills over into getting food for the kids, and you know we both take care of making sure there's medicine that they need in the house, and things like that as well. (Simon, III)

Simon elsewhere indicated that he takes primary responsibility for the elder, asthmatic boy's health. Making sure that someone takes this boy from his school to his daycare, at lunchtime, is also his task.

In this talk, planning and organization of childcare become visible. Rather than speaking of running washes, Simon mentions "worry(ing) about clothes"; rather than only cooking he is "getting food", and rather than giving medicine, he ensures that the medicine is there, in case of need. In the areas of keeping track of food supplies, medical supplies, and who is the lunchtime-duty parent, he is the one who "knows", the one who is doing invisible work.

Only one other father in the study appears to automatically perform such work. This is Joachim. He is at home with the children, and acts as the primary caregiver during the day, dealing with clothes (laundry included) and food. In the evening, both parents are involved in getting children bathed and to bed, and health matters are discussed between the two: Susan is a physician.

> (I)f you think of me as the husband, then we're not so different from other couples, really. Maybe I do a bit more than most husbands do. But not nowadays. I don't know. (Susan, II)

Both Susan and Joachim make it quite clear that Joachim is the knowledgeable one, the one who plans days around the children's needs, who knows if there are clothes to put on, and where they are.

Childcare and responsibility

It appears that in 14 of the 16 families the mother carries more of the responsibility, in Lamb's (1987) sense, of making sure that basic childcare and associated tasks are being performed. She "thinks it". As we have seen, some task areas may be shared, and there are many occasions on which the mother will ask for, direct, and supervise the husband's participation. Most of the fathers appear willing to help, when asked or directed. Some have routine chores. However if a father will not perform a task, it remains the mother's. She carries the final responsibility.

One woman's comment sums up the feelings of many mothers on their husband's participation in childcare and where responsibility lies.

> I see families where it seems to me the husband does a little more, and I would like that, and I hear people complaining that their husbands do nothing, so I don't think we're too far off the norm. Most people I know the husband has some participation, but I don't think I know any household where the bottom line isn't that the mother's responsible. And we're all, I mean if all was said and done and some disaster necessitated somebody being home day and night I'd probably quit my work. You know, I'm, not Pete. (Rachel, II)

Throughout all the comments, parents gave or implied reasons for their particular division of responsibilities. Several of these I have indicated already: the time available to parents in the house; individual talents; the mother's "taking it on"; the suggestion that it was "natural" for the mother to do childcare things. However several parents, both mothers and fathers, went beyond this, in discussing how childcare duties might be shaped by the social assumption that these were women's work unless otherwise specified. Rachel summed this up.

> I think it starts for my being responsible for everything, and that Pete has taken on for the most part things I've asked him to do, or screamed and yelled till he did, or things that — well especially when they're young, as I say I think I'm the first caregiver or whatever the current expression is, and Pete does those things that are assigned to him, or that we've slid off as being his — he washes the bottles, because he washes the dishes, so he does that. But I mean if I'm hassled in the morning for some particular reason I have to ask him to get (the younger child) dressed, he won't do it on his own, except on very very very rare occasions. Or I'd have to ask him, 'Would you please give (the younger one) breakfast, 'cause I'm going to be late for some reason or other.' I have to ask him to do it, generally speaking. Which isn't to say he doesn't do it then, but I have to ask. The presumption is that it's my responsibility unless I've delegated it or asked for help or something like that. (Rachel, I)

Where men have tasks or even responsibilities assigned to them it may be that women have done <u>work</u> to get them to take on the tasks, arguing, teaching, demonstrating. Asking them always for help is also work. Luxton (1986) comments that some women perform tasks themselves because getting their husbands to help is too much work.

In the final interview I took findings associating women with responsibility for childcare back to the parents, asking them to supply reasons, and these will be considered in Chapter X.

ORGANIZING CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE HOUSE

Childcare is of course not restricted to the production of cleanliness, food and safety. I asked parents who engaged in activities with the children or organized things for them to do. This included the organizing of activities that are commonly seen by parents, educators and policy-makers as "necessary" for the development of intellectual, cognitive or social skills, and so form part of the "mothering discourse" (Griffith and Smith, 1987). Indoor crafts and games, and library and museum visits, came into this category.[1] Outdoor sports and team games form another category, also seen as important.

The most common pattern, seen in ten families, is for women to organize crafts and other indoor activities. Men may arrange outdoor or athletic activities, though some children are too young for these, and in at least one case the man's participation in sports is organized by his wife. The woman will generally arrange trips to libraries, museums, and so forth, although men may do this also; and not all families mentioned this category of museum visits as things children would want to do. There are other possibilities: in four families both parents organize indoor play, and in the two families where the father is the daytime caregiver he is the main initiator of indoor activities, although in one his wife appeared to have responsibility for ensuring materials for play were available.

The actual activities engaged in differ according to the ages of the children. For some families "outdoor activities" are organized soccer and baseball, whereas for others they mean taking the three-year-old outside to play in the fallen leaves.

[1] Not all skill-developing tasks involve conventional "crafts" or specialized materials. The "Primary Handbook" from my children's school suggests "a few ideas on how you may help your child at home with mathematical concepts". "At laundry time let your child identify patterns and the types of designs . . . compare sizes/shapes of items." This would of course add considerably to the time laundry takes. Other suggestions include, "In the backyard — Help your child keep a record from the time that seeds are planted until sprouting occurs", and "graphing the height of the plants in the garden would be fun."

There is also an evident class and educational bias. Professionals are most likely to mention museum visits and library trips. Parents who have trained as teachers, or whose spouses are teachers, describe "craft" activities in more detail and use terms such as "messy play" or "water play", which originate in the discourse of their training. Working-class parents mention rough play or roughhousing, and also playing with toy cars ("dinkies"), which may in a middle-class household not seem an "organized" activity and so remain unmentioned in this context.

Women organize more indoor activities

The basic pattern was explained by Berthe.

> Well in the house it would be me, outside the house it would be Vince. (Berthe, II)

Indoor activities are mainly sedentary "crafts", involving paper, pencils, colouring, cutting. As women speak of these, some of the work of setting up the craft, assisting with it, making sure the materials are there, becomes visible.

> Anything to do with paper and pencils, or not just paper and pencil, paper and paints, finger paints. (Vince) would never do finger paints in a million years. Um — and they love to do finger painting. And sometimes when I'm in the mood, I don't mind it at all. Sometimes — I can't stand the mess! *(laughs)* But so finger-painting, getting the play-dough out, and all kinds of shapes, and I may play with them, roll it out and cut some shapes out, and put together some pieces to form a picture, whatever. Anything to do with pipe-cleaners. Water play, (the four-year-old) loves to do water play, and just pouring from one container into another. (Berthe, II)

There is work not only in setting up the activity, but in putting it away. The activities involve planning and shopping, making sure there are supplies in the house.

> I would do that. Because I'm the one who goes out and buys all the art supplies. And I'm the one that organizes things in the house, so — I know where everything is, so I would get it out. (Sheila, II)

> He likes playing with the playdough, and he left it out to harden. I bought him that. I try to get stuff for him to do. (Brenda, II)

Men appear in these accounts chiefly as onlookers. I interviewed Pete shortly after Valentine's day, and we discussed the production of Valentine cards for four-year-olds, seemingly an essential part of day-care culture.

> Rachel bought the Valentines, and she and (the preschooler) filled them all out. She sat there and I sat here, I was there but I was merely an onlooker. (Pete, III)

Paul has a high regard for Cindy's ability to think up and arrange "craft-y" things, and is an admiring audience for his son's productions.

> (M)aybe cut-outs of books and pasting them on paper and making a story out of it. She set up a little puppet-theatre for him, so that he could get inside this large box that we had that had a hole cut out in it that made it look like a stage set-up, and little curtains inside of it and so on. He would go in and play, and pretend that he was various puppets. I mean he had the actual puppets and he played with them, voiced them. Made up stories. (Paul, III)

The work of organizing play is not always visible. Both Paul and Cindy attribute Cindy's craft participation, described above, to her "natural ability". Elizabeth minimized the extent to which she arranged indoor activities for the children. She said she would make available materials such as paints or playdough, but it would be her husband who spent time, on some evenings, playing games with the children.

> I would tend to be the one that would organize, uh you know, like it were taking them to the library and that sort of thing, but in terms of Duncan being home on a day like this he's the one that would light the fire, make the popcorn, and do all this with them. I would probably tend to putter around and get supper ready and that sort of thing. You know my organized activities with the kids tend to be reading and cuddling and that sort of thing. And as you say, making the other things available. (Elizabeth, II)

During this interview I observed her constantly "making things available", such as crayons, paper and scissors, to her two children under five. She knew where these were, and kept track of what the children were doing throughout the interview. Her husband suggested in his turn that both partners would arrange indoor activities, but that during the week his wife would do this, and that at the weekends

"other events" would tend to take precedence: which left me wondering when in fact he would do those things. This may be another instance of the husband appearing "willing". He would do those things, but Elizabeth is more present in the home and so does them.

Work may become partially visible in the talk of one partner and not the other. Karen initiates all activities, whether relating to house, childcare, or crafts.

> Oh, it would be me. . . like putting on their music, or a story, or getting their colouring books and crayons out, or their chalk, or reading the stories to them, or — you name it, puzzles, toys, their train set out, blocks out — I do, I take the lead once again, and it's probably a personal, personality thing in that I'm just faster at the draw. (Karen, II)

Her husband, however, suggests that both partners organize indoor activities, at a child's request.

> She'll ask either of us . . . Like the kind of drawing and stuff like that, is something that, I always enjoy what she does, so — she'll (ask) if she wants me, or she'll ask her Mum, if she can have another colour of crayon, if she needs another colour, or if she wants some paper — so either of us will do that. (Robert, III)

There appears to be a difference in perception, here, of the work of facilitating activities. Robert appears simply not to see the organizational work involved in everyday play. The activity is there, underway, part of his surroundings, so he will pass the child a crayon. Karen initiates the play, sets up a situation in which crayoning is possible, and makes sure that there are crayons to be used.

For two families, indoor pursuits included activities recommended by professionals for a Down's Syndrome child: signing, speech therapy, play therapy. In both, women were more likely to perform the specified activities with the child, although Sheena explained how she attempts to have her husband, Ted, take part.

> 'Cause I'm always saying stuff like to Ted if I'm going out, I'm like, 'Now, do something with the baby, get out his blocks, show him how to stack his blocks, Ted, do this, do this, this is what they told me to do at occupational therapy,' see, 'cause I'm the one that goes to all these things. So I'm like, 'Do this, Ted, construct a play.' (Sheena, II)

She is the one who knows (from her meetings with therapists) what is to be done for her disabled child, and she coaches Ted. During an interview she reproached him for giving the child a cookie without enough interaction.

> You didn't make him communicate! (Sheena, IV)

Fathers in this group are more involved in outdoors or physical activities, often only with older children, though indoor roughhousing or wrestling may include younger children. In general, children under three would stay home with their mother. Women's outside pursuits tended to be less organized: a walk in the woods, or an expedition to feed the ducks in the park rather than skating or playing baseball.

> He would take them sledding, or he would take them skating, or swimming. Um in the summer he does the slip-and-slide. . . I like to build snowmen with them, and I have done that. I like to take the baby for walks — I like to walk and I have done that. So that's, I guess that would be the extent of the outdoor stuff. Although I also like going to the library — *(laughs)* but that's my books again. (Berthe, II)

Vince links this to a difference of interests.

> I mean I like being outside, and I like physical things and I like athletic things, and I like — you know, and the things I do with the children, many are outdoor oriented, you know. They're — raking leaves for them to dive in and try and make a ring, you know, anything like that, basically. Whereas, and this is just, my wife is a, not that she doesn't like being outside but she's still, she has a far greater interest like for example board games. I detest board games, I hate them, just hate them. (Vince, III)

Paul takes his elder child to skating lessons, every week. Glen goes to swimming and baseball with his oldest child, organizes things to do with "badges for cubs", Brenda reports, and takes out the elder boy and the preschooler; but not the baby. The association of fathers with older children was most evident with Rachel and Pete, with an eight-year gap between the children.

> I think Pete takes more and more interest in the children as they get older and older and older. He's not, I mean he can be affectionate and huggy with a baby,

> but he hasn't any real interest in the baby. As they get older and they do things and he can share parts of his life with the children he's much more interested in them. (Rachel, II)

So Rachel does craft activities with their preschooler, and her husband takes the older boy off to "male bonding kind of stuff": sporting activities, bicycle rides or buying scout clothes, but not buying clothes for school wear. He and the older child together pursue their common interests, such as sailing or skiing.

> (The elder boy) and I got cross-country skis this winter for Christmas, and — that I organized completely, and I shopped around, and found the equipment that was best, and I went with (him), we got fitted and bought the stuff. And well with (this boy) at 12 years old is of course much more able to engage in complex sporting activities like that. (Pete, III)

The man's interest in outside activities and organized sports may be planned and fostered by his wife.

> I was the one that always took (the elder boy) to swimming lessons, and went to all the school things this year . . . So this winter I joined (him) up to gymnastics on Saturday, while I was at work. So then I didn't have to do that, right. And then Ted really got involved, and really enjoyed it once he'd started it. So then when I said, 'Let's put him in baseball,' I said, and he'd be taking him to baseball too, and this way I'd go down and just watch a game now and again, and Ted actually volunteered to be a coach-assistant now! (Sheena, II)

Usually, she says, women organize these activities.

> Even if the man says, 'Wonder if we should put him in baseball this year?' I think it's the woman that phones up and the one that gets him registered. I don't know. I think so. I'd say so. (Sheena, II)

Some children are of course too young for organized sports, and the association of father and older children, father and sporting activities, does not appear. Wayne might take the children out of the house, for a drive, if they were bored, but special trips to playgrounds would be instigated by Lucy. When Karen and Robert take their children to the beach, Karen will attend to the details of providing playthings.

Robert spoke of this, with some real puzzlement in his voice: whether at Karen

or at himself is not quite clear.

> Maybe the mother is more — often in tune with their needs, you know? Like when we're going to the beach, a good example, like I'll like the idea of walking down a path with them, walking on the beach with them, go for a swim with them and all that stuff, and running with them — but don't seem to realize that they may want to take toys with them, you know. Like, you know what I mean? It seems like I'm, sometimes to me (it's) like an unnecessary complication, but evidently to Karen it's like planning for if they get bored or, you know, just being a little more in tune with them. Which seems like the point where it becomes a hassle for me, is probably not a hassle for her. (Robert, III)

This implies that it is easy for Karen, though hard for him, to think of or do such things. Done by the mother, they seem less "hassle", less like work.

Sporting activities are not only associated with the age of the child, however. They require financial resources. Not all parents in the study could afford the cross-country ski outfit Pete gave his son, but most could pay fees for the local baseball team. Don, however, could not, and he is worried about what will happen when his children are older. He sees sporting activity as highly desirable, necessary for boys, but the family has very little money, and none to spare for training or equipment for sporting activities. The older boy will soon be in school, and will want to join in with such activities.

Don's participation in play is less than he would like it to be. There just is no time. He particularly likes to rough-house with this boy.

> Every now and then we do spend some very nice prime-time together, just like (the elder boy) and myself throwing each other around on the floor and (the younger boy) will come over and get involved and be the three of us just rolling around, which happens quite little. It's very rare that that would happen, maybe once a month if we're lucky. (Don, III)

Lamb states that "survey data suggest that 40% of fathers would like to have more time to spend with their children than they currently have available" (1987:17). Several other fathers in the study, notably Ted, Paul and Rick, expressed this wish.

In an exception to the pattern of male association with older children, Simon

takes both his children swimming or skating, and also for walks, or to the library or playgrounds. Sheila also takes them to outside events, but suggested that "her" events, concerts, movies, involved more planning.

> You have to think ahead for the movies and the events, because they're only at a certain time. But swimming and skating, well there are circumscribed times that they're available, it's well I can go or not, as I feel, rather than having to buy tickets and that kind of thing. So that's the difference, is he doesn't like to have to, you know, think about something ahead and make a schedule up, like that. (Sheila, II)

Both partners do inside activities

In four families, parents say that they share the organization of inside activities: in one the father organizes more outside activities, in two they share this and in the fourth the mother is the chief organizer of outside activity. In one family the mother, Donna, points out that often their elder child will require things to be set up while she is busy with meals or providing physical care to the baby. In the other three, the parents use a shared-care/part-time work strategy, so that there is time when fathers look after the children on their own.

Hugh trained as a teacher, and his wife at several times during the interviews referred to his having knowledge of educational activities. Their elder, school-age daughter is highly competent at craft activities, says Anna. After school, she wants to do painting with her mother, or reading or writing a story, but when her father returns at night there are particular activities they do together.

> He's bought this 500 piece puzzle, this ridiculous puzzle! *(laughs)* You know, little bits and pieces. And he likes to do that, so he'll bring home that and, you know, they'll spend a few minutes doing that, and I know he does, he does really organize things like that. He bought (her) a telescope for Christmas, and now, you know, he'll get a book, and he'll take it, you know he'll take the time to set it up and show it to her, and go through all that. (Anna, II)

> I'll come home and (the elder girl)'ll be painting this and that, (the younger) will be doing something . . . (the elder) and I are doing a puzzle . . . We're writing letters, we wrote one to (a teacher) last month, one to her cousins, and one to

> her grandmother, and we're writing one, we were going to be writing tonight, I guess it'll be Wednesday, to her grandmother in Montreal. That'll be me. (Hugh, III)

Of the many types of activities they engage in with the children, some "just happen naturally".

> There's activities where you have your kid help you do what you're doing, which these guys love. If I get a hammer out those guys go bananas, they each have their own hammer and they have their own screwdrivers, they'll do anything to help what I'm doing! And it's the same with Anna. If she's doing anything cooking they're up there, they get a bowl, they get out one of their books — those things just happen naturally. (Hugh, III)

Both parents derive enjoyment from these activities, though as Anna points out, there is work involved in their facilitation. The provision of hammers and screwdrivers is an interesting one. Both parents are anxious to ensure that their daughters' activities are not sex-typed. They referred on several occasions to the challenge of bringing up daughters in a sexist world.

Pursuits outside the house, particularly active ones, are more often arranged by Hugh. These could mean working with him in the garden, or participating in skating programmes. While Hugh often initiates this sort of activity, either of them may register the child, and who takes her is a matter of convenience as well as preference. Anna commented on Hugh's being the one to make sure that such things as registration actually were done. He would remember them, check up on them, carry the responsibility. She ascribed this to his training as an elementary teacher.

For Cheryl and Mike, and Donna and Rick, both parents contribute to indoor and outdoor play, each according to their own talents.

> Donna's a better drawer, if you want a monster drawn talk to Donna, if you want an ugly thing drawn, talk to me . . . I went downstairs and made a boat with him, out of wood, scrap pieces of wood, and he thought that was the greatest thing, all you need is to hammer two pieces together and have yourself a boat. (Rick, III)

> Oh — Cheryl, Cheryl looks after a lot of that, but I do too. We play Monopoly with them, (eldest girl)'s always at (us) to play the games they have, I put this [a small cassette player] together with (the second girl) this afternoon, I bought the parts yesterday, put it together like at lunchtime . . . So I mean, and there was (second girl) got a sewing machine for Christmas, and she's after somebody to teach her how to play, but I'm no good at that so that's Cheryl's job. Quilting or crafts or drawing or crayons or colouring, I mean I'll help them to set it up, and get everything out, but I'm not, I can't draw either . . . Snowmen, making snowmen, I do that a lot or shovelling the walk, they come out and help. Gardening, when we plant the garden it's always like a family thing, and that's usually me, I dig it up and they, they put the seeds into rows . . . Go to the beach we share that, we share locking after them. Or the pool, which is getting harder and harder now because now I feel that the girls should be in the girls' washroom instead of the boys' washroom, so it's a, it's becoming a problem for me to take them out to the pool. (Mike, III)

Here Mike points to a very real social problem in men dealing with young children. Whereas it is seen as appropriate for women to take young boys into a woman's changing room or toilet, it is not appropriate for girls aged five and seven to be in the men's changing room, and their father would not be able to assist them in the women's.

In these families, both parents appear very involved with their children's lives. On occasion, however, a father's involvement may be the result of lack of foresight or planning. Cheryl described how Mike had taken all four children to a football game on the previous weekend. Cheryl would have thought not only of the difficulty of dealing with the children at the game, but of the crankiness afterwards; however she says Mike found it more difficult than he had expected.

> Well he told me he wanted to go this weekend, would I know of a babysitter, so I gather it didn't quite work out! *(laughs)* Well (the third one), let's face it, I mean (the baby)'ll sleep in the snuggli, the two older girls will play somewhere, roll down the field, but (the third one), what do you do with an 18-month-old? She's not interested in football, and she's too small to let run somewhere, eh, *(laughs)* so, and she's not going to sit, so she's the problem! (Cheryl, II)

Once again this phrasing constitutes Cheryl as the expert, Mike as a learner. She <u>knew</u> that it would be difficult for him, and why.

For Kathleen and Douglas, with very young children, outings are to a playgroup, rather than to sporting activities, and tend to be organized by Kathleen. Both parents arrange activities in the house, such as crafts ("the messy stuff") or games. Like Anna, Kathleen feels her husband's support of and playing with the children is unusual, "to the degree and the extent to which he enjoys it".

> I mean it's not just sitting down and well I'll play with the kid for half an hour, you know, I mean he'd play a whole day and just be totally absorbed in whatever it is they do, you know. There's an extraordinary bond in their relationship, it's really special. (Kathleen, II)

However in Douglas' phrasing it is Kathleen who is the primary organizer, the knowledgeable one. "I would work under her direction, more or less." He speaks of the ability to organize or initiate as a skill that requires to be worked at.

> I mean I will say, you know, 'Why don't we go swimming today?' or something like that, but I've had to instill that within myself, it certainly doesn't come naturally to me, that notion of working–playing with children. (Douglas, III)

Here organizational ability comes into view as a resource that can be acquired, through work and practice. There is, however, some ambiguity as to whether Kathleen had to do similar work to acquire the resource, or whether it came "naturally" to her.

Father organizes indoors activities

Where the father is the primary day-time caregiver, he is the more involved in indoors, craft-type activities.

> Say if was play-dough time, (Andy) would wait until (the toddler) was napping, and he'd go out and move everything off the table, and set his stuff up, and teach (their 3-year-old), like he'd make marks with the little knife that comes with it, you know you do it like this, more so than I would. I would be more likely to simply put (it out on) there, and — 'Go to it!' type of thing. (Carla, II)

> I play with them more than Carla does. Oh obviously I get more time with them. Carla goes about her housework and stuff and it's, she has to do that. If she had some time left that's her relaxation time. She does play with the kids, but she won't get down on the floor and play with the cars and stuff like I do. She

> don't — to her, it's just a mess. It's got to be cleaned up later. To me, it's fine, let the kids play and then later worry about it. I'm more free with the kids. (Andy, III)

Comments of both partners place play in opposition to housework: and in this family Carla does the housework. She at times expressed a wish to be able to play more with the children, perhaps to take them out more to playgrounds, which she does occasionally at weekends; but with working the day shift, and having to clean house and make meals when she comes home, she feels there is no time. So Andy is home more, and "does more" with the children. Yet if we examine what he does, it seems again that Andy's participation is almost entirely on the level of engagement and accessibility. He is there for playdough: but it was Carla who noticed that they needed more of the material.

> We have to get him some more, it's getting hard. Carla just mentioned the other day we should give him more. (Andy, III)

Playdough is the chief table activity, mentioned by both parents several times as being "educational". This boy does some crafts at an elderly neighbour's, things he cannot do at home in case his little sister got hold of the items used.

> He gets a potato and sticks some raisins in it, and nails and screws and stuff, and she's not allowed anything like that, it's dangerous. So he comes down here expecting to do the same thing, and we both say, 'No.' He's got to realise that up there's fine, down here isn't. (Andy, III)

There is no place he can play in their small apartment where she will not also be. A limiting resource, for this family, is space.

Both Susan and Joachim initially described Joachim's involvement in activities on the level of engagement.

> He'll set something up on the kitchen table for them to do together. Which I tend not to much, I mean they might draw a bit, or whatever, but mostly they get on with things by themselves . . . Or he'll maybe do something like that with (the boy, a preschooler) and uh I mean they'll be down in the basement making something, while (the girl) and I might be reading a book, that type of thing. (Susan, II)

However as we spoke of outside activities, Joachim's planning, initiation, "thinking it", suddenly came into view.

> Mostly Joachim because he's here . . . Oh we try to do things all together, too, on weekends. Go feeding the ducks or walking on the rocks, or going tobogganing or what have you, but there again, you seem, I'm terribly lazy . . . it's more often him that thinks up things, and then we'll do it together, or uh, I'll take them to the playground, the museum, or whatever. Not as often as he does. (Susan, II)

> When Susan's off work then she tends more to relax and do her own thing. But planning the day or the weekend is usually my business. (Joachim, III)

Again, Susan compared their division of organization to other families: not too different, she suggested, if you looked at who stayed home and who went to work.

> It's usually the mother that does stuff like that, isn't it, driving the kid round to hockey and all that sort of — If you think of Joachim as the mother, then we're just the same as any other family! (Susan, II)

Responsibility, in this phrasing, is part of mothering. "Planning the day or the weekend" is what mothers do. Joachim is doing "mothering". Andy, though immersed in his children's daily care, is not.

The organization of trips, short-term or long-term

As we have seen, in many families outings may be conducted by either parent, although there is a strong association of men with sporting activities. But the organization of an outing begins at home with dressing small children or setting out their clothes, readying food and spare clothing, packing a bag with the necessary equipment. Small infants can require as much in the way of clothing and equipment, with their diapers and playpens, as dedicated 8-year-old hockey players. The packing and readying occurs not only for large family outings, but for one parent to take even one child to engage in any activity.

If the mother is taking a child out, she generally also gets the child and the bags ready to go. If the father is taking the child out, he will generally receive at least

some help from the mother, and sometimes she will do all the preparation, with "driving" seen as constituting his share. In many families this is seen as a practical breakdown of responsibilities. The mother knows where food and clothing are, and through dealing with clothing every day will have a better idea of what is required.

> Clothes ready and suits ready, and towels ready. And I guess Elizabeth will be responsible a great deal for things like that, because she's getting their clothes ready, and she knows where things are and she knows what, what they need to go swimming, whereas I may be more responsible for getting them in the car, and getting to the swimming pool . . . I mean she's the one who puts the clothes away, she knows where the clothes are, I wouldn't have a clue where to begin. She knows what the kids have in outerwear, what fits and doesn't fit, and I just get terribly frustrated starting to look through all this stuff because it's just, I don't deal with it all the time. If I don't deal with something on a consistent basis I really don't know what's going on. Um food exactly the same way. She knows what we've got and requires as far as the food, and what's fresh and not so fresh, so. (Duncan, III)

Fathers appear less good, less competent at planning the outing.

> (H)e wouldn't do that much planning ahead, he would take, you know what he thought he needed and if he didn't have what he needed he'd just do without it or — just they [fathers] don't give as much thought to getting ready to do something. Or anticipating what will happen while they're out. (Lucy, II)

Again, the "planning", the thinking of what to take, the responsibility for the success of the outing, the knowing what is clean, possibly washing clothes ahead of time to be sure, constitutes "invisible work" of the kind referred to by Devault (1987).

> Oh there's a bag, if (the elder child) goes to playgroup we have to have a bag with extra clothes in it, when he was a baby and we went out anywhere we'd have to have the food and the stroller and the playpen and the toys, oh it's endless, and ah if we go away on a holiday or a break and go up to my parents' place there's the food, there's the clothing, there's the — safety articles, the first aid, you know when we went camping Douglas was saying 'Now we're out here, we don't even have first aid,' and I was saying, 'Well, actually we do, you know, I packed the thermometer and the creams and the, and the bandaids and all that —' Oh. *(laughs)* . . . It is hidden [work], and it is time-consuming. But then you see having taught and all of that and gone on field trips in a way it's second nature, and sometimes I'm very quick to see to all that . . . it's sort of trained into me, so it's done. (Kathleen, II)

Both her experience of being the one who is generally responsible for clothes

and so forth, and her training as a teacher, Kathleen says, lead towards her doing this organizing. Note that she terms it "second nature". It would be much harder, this implies, for Douglas.

> Maybe if I didn't do it for a while, then he would do it. But it's not a big problem. Same with all the work women do, that we *(laughs)* just say, well it's just as fast doing it . . . Of course I think it would be hard for Douglas just trying to figure out what to take and all of that, he really has to think, you know, rather than just run to a drawer and start pulling stuff out. (Kathleen, II)

When the children go out the door, the mother feels responsible for making sure they are properly dressed. This again requires organization and forethought. The child's appearance reflects on the mother's skill. If the child is not presentable, or if the child gets sunburned, or cold, the mother is at fault. Children do not always cooperate in this, so that a strategy has to be devised to ensure that they are properly dressed. This again is work.

> I always make sure they got their coats, the boots, the hats, the mitts, you know before they go anywhere. . . And right now it's to the point that (the younger child) likes undoing zippers, so you just got his coat on and next thing you know he's got it off. He can take his coat off great, you know. So you got to try to get him last. *(laughs)* Get him zipped up as he's going out the door. (Lucille, II)

There are, however, four families, three professional, one lower-income, where the father generally prepares for his own activities, though in three he may sometimes need assistance in finding clothes.

> Lately — by lately I mean in the last year or so, it's really, when Simon's taking them swimming, he will usually pick things up. . . although you know if he can't find the swimming trunks then I've got to help him because I'm the one that puts the stuff away . . . but generally he's pretty good at, you know, just getting them ready and filling up the back-pack with things that he needs, you know like the juice and whatever. So you know he's pretty independent about that. (Sheila, II)

For this family and those of Donna and Rick, and Cheryl and Mike, whoever is taking the child makes sure they have what is required, and that the child is properly dressed. The organization of family outings is shared.

> I may worry about whether (the elder boy) has his mask [for dealing with asthma], or his inhaler, or whatever he's going to need . . . when we went up to Shubenacadie to the Wildlife Park I can remember making peanut butter sandwiches, so I was handling that, and putting apples and raisins in the bag . . . If it's going to be like a long trip I have no confidence that I'll remember to take the right sets of clothes for the kids, which is usually the critical issue, how many changes of clothing do you have, did you bring the right beachwear, that sort of stuff. And that thing she always handles. (Simon, III)

When Susan takes a child out alone, she may have to ask Joachim where to find, for instance, clean socks. In this she is similar to many fathers in the study. She does not know what clothes are available; but Joachim does.

RESOURCES AND PARENTHOOD

I have already discussed the "invisible" nature of the facilitation of home-based activities. Several respondents informed me that there was no "organization" required: children would arrange the activity for themselves. Susan and Joachim said that to use the word "organization" at all about their household was very misleading, but its casual, low-key, friendly atmosphere does involve work and planning to maintain. A parent, probably Joachim but perhaps Susan, will "remember" to buy crayons. In all households, someone is "remembering", but elsewhere this someone is usually the mother.

Men's association with outdoors or active pursuits can take several forms. Hugh appears to include the children in most of his activities (as does Anna) even though this will slow down the performance, in the case of, for instance, carpentry activities. He plans this and facilitates it by making available children's tools. He has responsibility for the activity. Other fathers include children in some activities: raking leaves is a favourite[2]. Many of the male activities with children, however, are "set piece" affairs that involve taking children somewhere with a specific end in view and

[2] This activity of course occurs only for a few weeks per year. However many interviews with men were conducted during October, November and December, so that this activity was in the minds of fathers who had performed it with their children.

for a particular period of time. Skating sessions are an example. They may involve intense engagement or they may just involve the father waiting around for a lesson to end. Sometimes they have been set up by the mother, and in many cases the mother will make sure that whatever is needed for the outing is available: that is, while the father is accessible or engaged, the mother still has responsibility. Further, the activity takes the father as well as the child out of the house, thus making him unavailable to deal with other aspects of domestic labour.

The mother's activities also may involve engagement, but in many cases they require her as facilitator, and as being available if needed. They often take place in the home, and the mother can take part in something else, whether it be looking after another child, cooking dinner, cleaning, doing laundry or catching up on paperwork from her paid job. It is useful here to refer to Chapter VI. A great source of irritation, for mothers, was the constant feeling of responsibility, of being "on call", of having to drop whatever they were doing to attend to a child's needs, whether for assistance with play, or for basic childcare. The work of being a mother, as many mothers pointed out, has few or no breaks.

The kinds of activities in which children engage occur routinely, within a framework of basic childcare, as part of everyday life. Their organizing is bound up with the question of what it is that mothers and fathers do, what they can do, and what they feel they should do to help their children. Many of these activities, particularly the indoor ones, could be classified under a heading of "readiness for school", and their performance or its lack, as Manicom (1988) points out, in part constitutes the work that the children's teachers have to do.

The performance of these activities, and the ways parents talk about them, is in part constituted by social class. Berthe or Rachel or Hugh may give detailed accounts of children's crafts. In working-class accounts these become condensed into "colouring" or "paints", and while Lucille and Sheena and Andy do make

available craft-activities to their children (and indeed are sometimes reliant on these for a few minutes' peace), still they do not talk about them in quite the same way as the middle-class parents. Andy's talk seems very restricted to "playdough". Professional, and some middle-income mothers, and some fathers, have more resources available, not only in terms of the material (paints, paper, crayons and so forth) but in terms of skills with these materials, and knowledgeability as to their use. Professional mothers speak of such activities as contributing toward the overall cognitive growth of the child, and observing this growth, as shown in Chapter VI, they find enjoyable. Indeed for many of these mothers it is the best part of motherhood. In facilitating the child's development of skills they are actively "growing" the child, and enjoying the process. Working-class mothers when they spoke of "being needed" were referring instead to basic childcare, clothing and feeding their children, keeping them safe.

Many respondents, fathers especially, feel that sporting activities of some kind are essential, particularly for boys, although several mentioned both boys and girls. This is again easier if the family is relatively well off. Pete goes out to buy his son new skis. Don worries about the non-affordability of sporting activities for his children. Financial resources, like space and time resources, increase options available to parents and their children.

Resources, however, are not only class-based but gender-based. The skills and patience required to organize activities or plan basic childcare are resources which women are said to possess to a greater extent than men. These resources are spoken of as determining who will do what, which means that as well as facilitating childcare they limit or restrict who will perform it. Men may praise their wives' organizational talents, but generally do not emulate them. Possession of the resource, the skill, the patience, means that the woman is the expert, and is expected to do the job. The resource is seen as a "natural" talent, not to be

emulated. Rather than conferring options and choices, the woman's perceived possession of the resource acts to restrict choice.

When we consider chores, childcare and children's activities, it seems clear that women are doing considerably more household and family work than their husbands, with few exceptions. It is even more clear that the responsibility for these items of domestic labour, whoever performs them, remains in most cases with the woman. In the final interview I asked parents why this was so, and in Chapter X I examine in detail how they spoke of resources and of this gendered division of labour. First, however, I return to a consideration of the intersection of home and paid work, looking at what happens when work/childcare strategies are disrupted by the sickness of a child.

IX. IF A CHILD IS SICK: A BREAK IN THE PATTERN

Sickness of a child may pose a major problem for parents' labour-force participation. Families are not equal in the extent to which sickness influences daily life. For some parents, sickness represents an occasional problem to be dealt with when it arises. For others, sickness is a major structural element of their lives. This is particularly evident when they have asthmatic children.

According to a spokesperson for the Lung Association, asthma affects around 10–12% of children in Nova Scotia, and hence a greater proportion of families, as in many families one child will display asthmatic symptoms. Its incidence is increasing. The proportion of asthmatic children in this study is somewhat higher than the Lung Association's figure but not unduly so. I made plain to parents of asthmatic children that I had some knowledge of their concerns and of the work involved in dealing with such a child, in terms of making sure there was medicine in the house, checking environments for potential triggers, making sure someone knowledgeable could be available to the child in an emergency, and structuring household routines around the need for the child to be in the right place to receive medicine, often through a "mask" (not to mention the disruption occasioned by visits to the hospital emergency department, and the hours of sleep lost by parents on a fairly regular basis). My elder son displayed asthmatic symptoms for several years.

To obtain figures for prevalence of asthma among Nova Scotian children I spoke with several hospital or medical personnel, telling them I was "doing research on families" some of which had asthmatic children, and that I was interested in the work occasioned to the parents by the child's asthma. Three people, including the spokesperson from the Lung Association, commented that as the current medical advice was to have asthmatic children behave like other children, engaging in the same activities, no extra work was involved.

Two families in the study have a child with Down's Syndrome. In terms of the organization of daily life, this involves weekly medical appointments attended by the child and a parent, usually the mother; regular appointments with developmental specialists; and daily practice of various routines or activities designed to "stimulate" the child. There is agreement among both parents and professionals that these do involve "work". In addition, the two children are sick more frequently than most other children, giving a further hidden work component.

All 16 families are faced to some extent with disruptions of working life, posed not only by sickness but by regular medical checkups, immunizations, and dental procedures. Each family has its own solution. Where there is a housekeeper, she deals with minor ailments, so that only if a child were very sick indeed would a parent require to be home. In families with staggered work-hours a parent is already home, but the sickness might introduce more complications into an often already-complicated schedule. Daycare-centre parents have to decide who would stay home if a child is absent from daycare for any reason, and children who are feverish or infectious may not attend.

In the first interview, parents described how they coped when a child was sick. It soon became obvious that their means of coping were highly complex. Further, in their talk, as they mingled discussion of parents' own abilities with comments on workplace sick-leave, class-based patterns began to arise. In the final interview I asked parents about their own and other people's coping strategies and had them explain how these worked. I will examine some of these comments in the second part of this chapter. First, I will describe how they dealt with children's medical arrangements.

THE MANAGEMENT OF ILL-HEALTH AND HEALTH

Almost all parents suggested that if the child were very sick the mother would stay home. Both mothers and fathers referred to resources that women were said to possess: she had more expertise, including for eight families professional expertise[1] ; or she had more patience, or the child would want her, or she would be unable to concentrate on her work, so might as well be with the child. Four families cited negative attributes of the father (not good at coping with potential messes such as vomiting, wouldn't have patience) to justify this distinction. This emphasis on maternal care for very sick children may arise partly from an association of women with caring, partly from the idea that sick children need not only physical but emotional care. Emotional and psychological care from Bowlby's day on has been seen as the prerogative of the mother (Dally, 1982).

There appears to be little literature linking gender to staying at home with sick children, although Luxton (1986) indicates that the women she interviewed saw this as their responsibility. I however found that in the case of minor illness, or the child's being home for any other reason (babysitter sick, school in-service day), most parents suggested either partner might stay home. It would depend on work commitments and flexibility of schedules, and especially on the relative ease with which parents could take time off from work without loss of pay. There were, however, families where one parent would be more likely to stay home. First I will examine families where the mother would deal with sickness (and one where the father disputed her claim to do this), then those where care was shared, and lastly those where the father would be more likely to stay home.

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[1] The professional expertise accrued to one physician, two nurses, two physiotherapists, one laboratory technologist, two elementary teachers. The expertise of fathers as medical researcher/physician, physiotherapist, hospital orderly, trained teacher, and ex-daycare worker was not similarly cited.

Mother deals with sickness

Four women appear to deal with almost all aspects of sickness and the maintenance of health.

> Certainly that's up to, you know that's all Elizabeth. I have got appointments and that's it. As a general rule your day is, you've got certain things to do but they're somewhat flexible, many hours they can be done in or not. (Duncan, I)

Elizabeth, working from home, handles sickness and medical appointments. Duncan cannot take time off from his practice during the day, when doctors' and dentists' offices are open, to take children there. Elizabeth tries to schedule medical appointments so as to maximize convenience, utilizing times when the elder child are in school or preschool if possible.

> I generally try to arrange it so I have the minimum number of children. Ah — if it's for (youngest child) we go in the morning while (eldest child) and (middle child) are at school, if it's for (middle child), I've almost accepted by necessity it's usually um (middle child) and (youngest child) . . . If it is (school-age child) then we get the whole works! (Elizabeth, I)

In an emergency she may try to get a babysitter, or as a last resort ask a friend to help out. I asked this family, "What would happen if Elizabeth herself were sick?"

Mo: Come on Jenny, you know what happens if I'm sick! *(laughs)* If I'm dying, Duncan comes home from work. If I'm not dying, things go on as before, I just get a little more —

Fa: I don't think we've ever where I've got to take time off. You've been pretty sad —

Mo: I've passed out on the floor. No that's not true . . . When I was pregnant with (youngest child), (a neighbour) found me crawling down the floor because I couldn't stand up one day, and at that point she put me to bed with a hot cup if tea and called Duncan —

Fa: I think that's the only time I've had to come home. (Elizabeth and Duncan, I)

Where there is a housekeeper, and where children are rarely sick, the situation is simple. The housekeeper looks after most small illnesses. The illness, however, is located as the mother's responsibility. Karen's housekeeper calls Karen during the day, for instructions in dealing with minor illness. She would not think to call

Robert.

Cindy describes how she instructs her full-time babysitter.

> If they're really really sick I'll stay home that day, because I have to take them to the doctor. But uh if they've been sick for a few days with a cold or something like that, well I don't stay home but just say, 'I'll call you, could you take her temperature at 11 o'clock' or whatever and then we'll see from there, I'll call the doctor. (Cindy, I)

She might meet the babysitter and the children at the doctor's. She could then take a "family illness day" from her work, her husband explained, adding, "And I've taken one only." If he took time off there would be problems at work.

> [T]here's a very heavy male influence like, and the two partners, their wives, they don't work . . . one of their wives is working now but the child is also going to school and everything so — I kind of tend to think that they wouldn't be too enthusiastic if you started taking too much time off, you know. For that reason. (Paul, I)

Indeed Cindy is generally more involved in all aspects of dealing with sickness.

> I'm usually the one that'll call the doctor and make the appointment or give them the drops or whatever, take their temperature. Get up at night, you know. (Cindy, I)

She attributes her responsibility to her "motherly instinct". Fathers' participation, in these accounts, appears limited to night-time emergencies.

> I do it all, everything. Oh, except for the middle of the night. If there's a middle-of-the-night that goes to the emergency that's Ted now. We always used to both go, like when it was (the elder boy), kind of thing, and he was the only one. But now that (he) is in school and that, there's no reason to wake him up if (the younger) has to go down. So Ted usually goes to Emergency in the middle of the night. But every other appointment . . . I make all the appointments, I do all that stuff. (Sheena, I)

"Because I'm at work", her husband adds.

Both making appointments, and taking children to them, is women's work. Karen deals with regular appointments in such as way that these do not affect her paid work.

> (The elder girl) has a dentist's appointment and I, I schedule them for like 7.30 in the morning, 8 o'clock, and then I take her, before work, so try a little as possible, to not let it interfere with my work, and while it's never really been voiced, I think it's appreciated, by my employers, that I don't uh use up — you're entitled to so many days a year, but I don't know how many, but many of the, some of the others in other areas of the hospital, some mothers will intentionally use up all their children, child-care days. But I've never used it, not even one, yet. (Karen, I)

Sheena's younger child has Down's syndrome, and appointments add up to a lot of time and a lot of work.

> (He) has physio, every month, speech therapy every month, occupational therapy every month, there's parent-and-tot session at the progress centre once a month, I have two home visits from the progress centre there, twice a month. He has his eyes checked — oh . . . every two to three months. He goes, has a hearing test every three months . . . Just trying to think of the calendar. Ear doctor, clinic, the eye doctor . . . And then my support group, for (this child). That's for (him) but it's the parents, that's one night a month also. (Sheena, I)

These constant appointments, she says, are a strain.

> Mentally I find it hard. Not so much the running around hard, you know what I mean, it's like just — like last summer I finally said, I have to have the summer off, like I called the physio and speech and everything and said, 'Can I have 2 months off?' and they all said 'Sure!' like you just have to have a break every now, now and then. So then I felt good that they understood that I just needed — But now it's, even though with only the one day a month for each thing. (Sheena, I)

And then there is sickness, with eye infections and croup associated with common viral infections for this child. Sheena recently sat a driving test and received her licence, and says this younger child "made me get my licence, really", so that she could take him to appointments. I asked what would happen if she were sick. She replied, "I'm not allowed to get sick, Jenny!" Nor is her husband, as his job gives him no sick-time. Her mother, however, would help if necessary.

> 'Cause you can't take the time off. . . you can't stay home if I did get sick. But uh — But now I'm lucky with my Mum, because Mum is very handy like I said now that she's off. Since October she's been off. (Sheena, I)

In one family, while Vince takes some part in dealing with sick children, Berthe disputes his claim to do "as much" as her. The housekeeper deals with minor illnesses, and some medical appointments. Last year the baby was very sick, and Berthe took time off. She sees to most medical appointments, although this was easier for her before "the administration changed" at her work; she now has to use an official half-day of family sick time to cover the appointment.

Vince can take time off unofficially, but his schedule makes it difficult for him "to not go in a day". However he says he does as much, perhaps now more than his wife — unless of course a child is very sick. However despite this claim, Vince said in some surprise, "Did I take a day?" when Berthe detailed an actual occasion of sickness.

Mo: I would take the time off, if I haven't had to take, like if it's two days — If I had to take five days off, I would probably take three of them, and you would take the other two, maybe. . . We did it, now when (the baby) was really sick there in March we did do that.
Fa: Did I take a day?
Mo: You've taken it, you took a couple of days. Because I was being hassled, I mean I really basically had to punch a clock last year, which was really crazy. (Berthe and Vince, I)

The implication here is that if she hadn't been "hassled" by a school principal questioning her sick-time, she would have stayed home for all five days. Vince pointed out that she doesn't "abuse" her sick-time, but only takes it when absolutely required; the result is that there's "always a pot to reach in" when an emergency arises.

They discussed the requirement for parents for time off to take children to the doctor, at some length, and indeed returned to this also in the final interview. Vince finds the requirement that such visits be deducted from sick-time, for his wife's job, rather ludicrous.

> Oh Jesus, we even give our secretaries that time, I mean . . . If they want they take, they take an extra hour at lunch because they've got to take a child to a dental appointment, providing they're not setting them up deliberately

> *(laughs)* in the middle of the afternoon so they can't come and go, or something! (Vince, I)

However this is given the secretaries, he feels, because they are mothers. Medical appointments are things mothers do.

> I mean certain people they expect certain things, I know that it's not as much as it used to be but I still feel that, to some extent that there are certain expectations that the mother is going to make certain appointments and make certain arrangements and those sort of things. I know they're less than they used to be but they, they're still there. You know, it's much as I cut the lawn out here, I mean there's certain expectations around. (Vince, I)

In a further three families, although sick children are seen as essentially the mother's responsibility, both parents take time off. In one of these families the children are occasionally sick. The second has two asthmatic children, who have had a number of visits to the Children's Hospital. The third has one asthmatic child. Comparing the three gives an idea of the structuring effects of health and ill-health, and their intersection with the parents' hours of work, here including shiftwork.

When Lucy and Wayne's children are sick, Lucy usually deals with it. But on days when she is employed she has probably left the house before the sickness becomes evident, and so Wayne has to cope. As he points out, even though he can carry out much of his work, as a salesman, from home, there are problems associated with his taking time off: his boss, like Paul's, doesn't like it.

> It affects my schedule. It doesn't really, it doesn't really affect what I have to do . . . Where it gets to be a bit of a problem is where you have somebody, you know my boss has my home number and my office number on speed-dial, and if he doesn't get an answer at one he's just as inclined to call here. . . it's sort of the political, the internal politics . . . I have to admit that we took a bit of a, suffered a slow and painful experience with the first year with (their daughter) where we had to, you know we had to face up to the facts that it's not built into the performance systems, you know, corporate performance systems and things like that today, it's not quite that acceptable. You know the Mr Mom salesman concept is sort of at odds with the corporate, with the corporate thing. So you know we got, there was a lot of negative feedback and stuff. (Wayne, I)

Doctors' appointments during the day are dealt with by Lucy, if she is not at work: Wayne if she is. On occasion she has met Wayne at his office, so that both of them are available to deal with a doctor's appointment. The elder child has stayed in the office while the younger went with Lucy to the doctor's. On the evening before the first interview, they had all paid a brief visit to the local children's hospital because the elder child had an ear-ache.

Fa: Last night I got home 6, 6.30, (the girl) says 'I have a sore ear,' and uh you know at 7.30 we were all in the car going to see the doctor . . .
Mo: You made the phone calls —
Fa: Yup, I called the doctor.
Mo: While I got (the toddler) dressed and washed, and then we all went together. (Lucy and Wayne, I)

Brenda and Glen, employed in a hospital, can both take family sick-days.

> Our contract entitles us to five family-illness days each, that's ten between us during the year. . . And beyond those ten days even if you got to, you can call in absent and not get paid, you can take a day off without pay, or . . . you have the availability of trading shifts if you find somebody to do it for you. (Glen, I)

They have needed this flexibility: two of their children are asthmatic. It is however more often Brenda who stays home, especially if a child is very ill.

> When (the eldest child) was sick all the time, when he wasn't that sick with the asthma, Glen would stay home, and then as he got sicker I would stay home. (Brenda, I)

> As much for the love of care, as much for her own concern. Because she just wouldn't work, she wouldn't be able to work, if the kid was very sick she wouldn't be able to function. (Glen, I)

This mother's expertise as a nurse was also given as a reason for her staying home. "Her training also made it a lot more sensible for her to be home", said Glen. Brenda agreed.

> You couldn't really determine when he was getting worse, either. And if the baby's sick, if she's you know got a high temp. and she's really sick, I stay home, I don't care. (Brenda, I)

When it comes to medical check-ups for the children, she says, their sick-time covers appointments, so "Well we argue over which is busiest, if we're both working".

This family has had a number of emergency visits to the children's hospital, especially in the middle of the night. Generally the whole family is involved. On several occasions a child has had to stay in hospital for several days, and one or other parent remains with the child.

> He would stay the night and I would stay the day. See, (the second child) was in as a baby when he was three months old, I had to stay there 'cause I was breast-feeding, and I would go home at night, he would sit there at night. (Brenda, I)

Brenda takes time off to cover these hospital visits, and can make up her work hours by doing overtime. This way she always has some extra "time off" in reserve, for such emergencies.

> See we started this when (the elder boy) got sick, and I would go to work and he'd be home sick or he'd be in the hospital and I'd be a wreck. By the end of the day I would be ready to shoot everybody in the unit. And it got that I decided I had to pick my job or my family. And I picked my family, I thought, I can't do this any more, and I'd feel guilty because we were calling in [sick] all the time. And I thought, well, that's it. I'm not going to feel guilty any more if that kid's sick, I'm phoning in absent, they can dock me, they can do whatever, I refuse to go to work. . . what I would do when (he) was asthmatic, bad, was I would work overtime, do double time and take the time. So I always had like four or five days in time owed, and then I'd call in absent whenever he got sick, and ask if they would cover it 'cause I used up my five days in about two months and ask if they would cover it with time owing. Which they did. (Brenda, I)

The most recent midnight-visit to the hospital was occasioned by the younger boy, who had an infected hand. Other visits, for the two older children, both boys, were caused by asthma. So far the baby has been relatively healthy, although she has "gone through a lot of yeast infections and stuff like that" according to Glen.

Clearly for this family children's sickness plays a major part in the organization of daily life. The boys are described as "controlled asthmatic", and although the

elder is no longer displaying symptoms of his virally-induced asthma he receives medication when he has a cold, as a precaution. The parents can recite a long list of medications he previously took. The second boy has had two sessions with a "mask", at home, and twice been admitted to hospital. At least one of the medications, his mother says, "makes him hyper as hell".

Carla and Andy's older child, aged 3, is asthmatic and has allergies. His sicknesses were a major factor in Andy's deciding to work half-time so that the parents could stagger working hours. Daycare could not deal to the parents' satisfaction with the child's condition, and sick children were expected to stay home.

Fa: He got applesauce, by accident, because they didn't check the chart, in big red letters. . . . And with his asthma, they were out on days of course that were damp, or whatever. And that could kill him.
Mo: And his medication wasn't given to him properly. Not dispensed.
Fa: Medication. That's the worst part. They have too many kids for each worker. If one kid is sick they expect you to keep him home, so that you can give them medication. But you're still paying for the time he's down then. (Carla and Andy, I)

With their staggered work-hours, one parent is available at home to provide sick-care. The younger child has never required an emergency medical appointment: the elder, asthmatic child has. In the evening a neighbour would stay with the younger child, allowing Carla to go into the hospital emergency department with the little boy, taking a cab to get there. During the day Andy would call Carla at work, and she would come home and take the child in. Neither parent has family-sick days that they can use, but they can both apply for "compassionate leave" although they would each have to demonstrate to their employer that no other person (including the other parent) would be available to look after the sick child. Medical check-ups would be covered by Carla.

For Lucy and Wayne, sickness is an occasional break in the pattern — hard to cope with, but infrequent. For Brenda and Glen it is an eventuality against which

Brenda's work hours must be budgeted. For Andy and Carla, sickness, together with the expense of daycare, appears as a structuring element affecting everyday life.

Both will stay home, taking turns

Three families are in this category. One middle income couple has a shared-cared arrangement, and the father has some flexibility in his job attendance. In two professional families, the parents are able to organize their work so as to do part of it from home, and cover each other's lecture times or scheduled appointments.

For Sheila and Simon, at the time of the first interview a babysitter looked after the younger child during the day. Minor illnesses of either child could be dealt with by her. However Sheila commented that:

> If (the elder boy) got sick right now, we'd probably end up at least being home part of the day just to help out, during the hard hours. (Sheila, I)

The "we" could mean either or both of them. This elder boy is asthmatic. His asthma has not been so much of a problem of late, but his father states that in past years:

> The first thing on the top of the hierarchy was (this boy)'s wheezing badly and needs to go to the hospital, and you know at that point we just dropped everything and he goes, you go to the hospital with him, and um — because a lot of that happened right after (younger boy) was born, basically I would spend just you know like 3 days in the hospital with him. (Simon, I)

This child has been hospitalized several times. The parents used to take turns going into hospital with him, but after the birth of the second child this became Simon's task.

> I mean if she was nursing (the baby) you're not going to bring both of them into the hospital, so I was spending most of the time in the hospital. (Simon, I)

Simon takes primary responsibility for seeing that supplies of medicines are on hand, wherever the family goes, to combat the asthma.

Both partners teach at a university, and have more flexibility in their work hours,

and control over their jobs, than most other people in the study. This flexibility could be used also in the less serious, but more frequent case where the elder child was wheezing, but not so badly as to necessitate a hospital visit. They described how they would handle this situation.

Fa: If, if (he) was wheezing a little bit and needed masks, we could stay home, um then we would leave him with the babysitter if we could and, and come home —

Mo: Come home and both give him masks, and check on him and make sure he wasn't getting any worse.

Fa: We were trying to do that sort of twice a day, or three times a day or whatever. (Sheila and Simon, I)

They could take turns, avoiding their lecture times.

Shortly after this interview the younger boy was accepted into daycare, and from then on one or other parent stayed home when either child was sick, dealing with chickenpox by taking half-days each. This was facilitated by the proximity of their home to their work, together with their flexibility in work-hours. This is the only family where neither parent suggested that in case of serious illness the mother would necessarily be the one to stay home.

For the other two families, sickness is a relatively rare circumstance, though there have been periods when children required care for a number of days. Rachel and Pete have considerable job flexibility, and one parent will stay home, depending on their schedules.

Mo: Depends who's busier.

Fa: Yeh, depends who's busier. . .The past year I had two days I didn't have classes, on Tuesdays and Thursdays, I only had classes Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, so —

Mo: When (the younger boy) was sick I stayed home Monday, Wednesday, Friday, you stayed Tuesday, Thursday with (him). (Rachel and Pete, I)

More recently, this younger boy had chickenpox, coinciding with the chickenpox of a colleague's child. Pete shared care with the other child's mother. Rachel explained why, or when, her husband would stay off.

> I mean there have been situations where the children have been sick and Pete stayed home with them, not me, because of our relative schedules at that particular moment in time. (Also) when (the elder boy) had chickenpox and I was working before, Pete took the chief responsibility for it, largely because I was being paid on an hourly basis and if I didn't work I didn't get paid *(laughs)* . . . He wasn't very sick, mind you. If he'd been really sick I don't think Pete would have taken responsibility. I mean if he'd been throwing up or feverish. Pete is nervous of physical problems, so I think if there'd been anything disgusting or squeamish-making going on, it would have been my responsibility. (Rachel, I)

The elder boy is in Junior High school, old enough to be alone in the house, and if a sickness appears to be, as his mother put it, in "the 'I don't feel too good today, I don't want to go in' category", they leave him to his own devices. However when he had scarlet fever, a parent, initially Rachel, had to be home with him.

> I think if they needed nursing I'd have to stay home, because (Pete) certainly wouldn't know what to do. Or would pretend he didn't know what to do so *(laughing)* I would stay home. I think I stayed home a fair bit with (the elder boy) when he had the scarlet fever, at least at the beginning, till we were sure it was not going to be anything. (Rachel, I)

This illustrates sharply a difference with the preceding family. Knowledge of procedures for dealing with sickness have become a resource that Rachel possesses, which defines responsibility as ultimately hers.

Anna and Hugh arrange routine medical appointments around Anna's schedule: she works evenings, and so is available during the day. Emergencies are dealt with by Hugh, who has the car, and if necessary can "just walk out of work".

> If it was scheduled, a lot of cases, scheduled in advance, it would be scheduled to work around her schedule. If it's not scheduled then I just pick it up, there again it's the easiest way to do it. (Hugh, I)

Sick children are looked after at home by whichever parent is there; Anna during the days, Hugh on three evenings. Until recently both worked days and they had to take time off, for instance during an outbreak of chickenpox when they shared the care.

> I think I took 2 or 3 days. But the same thing, we just split the days up. Again that's not just because it's a sharing of the work-load, it's a matter of how much of a little dent do you want to make at your work-place for your kids . . . actually last year I kept track, I took four days off with kids last year, my sick days. (Hugh, I)

Who would take the time off depends on pragmatic considerations; who last had a sick day, whose schedule will be least affected. Anna cannot be called out of work (as a waitress) unless in "quite a bad emergency". However, she can plan to stay off, if required.

> I have a job where somebody else can do my job, if they know ahead of time to go in for me. He can't do that, although he can just take off an afternoon or a morning. (Anna, I)

In this family, different types of job flexibility become resources upon which the parents can draw to deal with a difficult situation.

Father is more likely to stay home

There are five families where the father appears to be more likely to stay home unless the illness is very serious. Partners give various reasons. The mother, if classified as a part-time worker, will lose pay; she finds it harder to cancel appointments; and in one case the father is the primary caregiver, at home during the day. Three are lower-income families, two have professional incomes.

> He's the one to flex, because of pay. Because if I don't go in to work I don't get paid. (Kathleen, I)

Kathleen's statement is typical of the part-time women workers. Douglas immediately added that this was also occasioned by the nature of their jobs: his wife's presence is essential to many other people.

> My job is simply at base a clerical job. People are not indisposed. Whereas Kathleen's is such a, a prominent position in her job that, almost sort of !, I have this vision of, *(laughs)* of a small riot resulting if Kathleen doesn't show up to work! So it's far more important for Kathleen I think to go in because she has to deal with people, make decisions dealing with people, from the moment she steps, foot in the door. (Douglas, I)

For Cheryl and Mike, both would lose pay, but it is harder for Cheryl to cancel appointments.

Mo: It would have to be Mike.
Fa: I can be home.
Mo: I'm in an appointment-booking situation, and I can't take stay home . . . My income is so directly proportionate to the clientele, sort of thing, that I mean —
Fa: So is mine but as I say mine, I can cancel mine a lot easier than her. (Cheryl and Mike, I)

Both Cheryl and Kathleen, it should be noted, tend to deal with appointments for medical checkups.

Lucille, working full-time hours, is classified as a part-time worker with no sick-time.

Don gets paid for sick days, I don't. So sometimes he'll call off sick. (Lucille, I)

As he does not have family sick-days he would use his own sick-leave, and call work to say he himself was unwell. Their younger child, with Down's syndrome, is often ill, and Don therefore often has to take time off. However if a child becomes ill during the day and has to be sent home it is Lucille who goes to collect him, and stays home for that day.

> If I'm at work and they call, the daycare, I go. Even if I don't get paid. I went to a meeting once at work, and the daycare called, (the younger boy) was sick, and I said, look, I'll be there, I'll be right there. And they can't say nothing, because I mean it's a sick child. And if they won't let me go off for that, fine, I'll fight it. Because my children come first, and they know it. But Don's place is a lot different, everything, If his boss knew that he was calling out because one of the kids are sick, there'd be hell to raise. You know. (Lucille, I)

She goes because he cannot, without letting the employer know that it is for a child: but also she goes because "my children come first, and they [her employers] know it." This couple have not yet had to cope with a long illness, and dread the onset of one such as chickenpox, which would require a child to be out of daycare for more days than Don could take from his sick-leave. In the final interview Don explained, with reference to his wife's recent illness, how he has to lie to employers,

how difficult it is for him to take time off work if it is known he is not himself sick.

> Lucille was rushed to the hospital at 3 o'clock in the morning with her throat closing over . . . the next day I was out of it and didn't come in to work. And then a few days later saying, well, you know, I mean I asked for something, for other time off, something for (the younger boy) or whatever, and he said, 'Well, you're taking too much time off already, what about the other day that you took that day off?' Well, Lucille was in the hospital, I was really upset. 'Well, you weren't sick, it was your wife!' (Don, IV)

For the two professional families in this category, the situation is explained differently. For Donna and Rick it is just simpler for the father to be home. Donna's paid work is highly scheduled, with a limited number of family sick-days, and until recently she was still taking qualifications, whereas Rick has more control over his work hours.

Fa: If something comes up it's usually I that take the time off. (The elder child), well he had the chickenpox last year.
Mo: He had the chickenpox. You were —
Fa: Yeh, I was on sabbatical, and I could stay home.
Mo: You were on sabbatical, and I was in school, and it was, what? — during the last month of school, and Rick stayed home with (the elder child) during that time when he had the chickenpox.

They explained:

Fa: I usually have more flexibility and I can say that I can work at home —
Mo: Yeh, if he's not teaching —
Fa: — if I'm not teaching, I can work at home, and I can cancel any other meetings, and most other things are committees, they can live without me for that day, and I usually can bring my work home and do it here, so I usually take the time. And uh —
Mo: Couple of days we did half and half. I would, he would stay home in the morning, and I would stay home in the afternoon, or vice versa. (Donna and Rick, I)

In the case of their daughter's being sick, Donna said she would probably stay home, giving as reason this child's age, five months at the time of this interview. But Rick made plain that he was available to take time off when required, as he took paternity leave when his daughter was born.

> So right now it's like if something happened with the kids I'll just say fine, I'm at home. And I'll just get, I won't get as much done, I think the epitome was when I stayed home with (the boy), the one day I was working on a paper and I guess he was a year and a half old and he ate one of my papers. I said, figured I had to trash it, I'd worked on it for about a month, I figured if he didn't like it, why work on it, so I just spent more time with him . . . things get done, they might not be as fast as I want to be done, but they'll get done. (Rick, I)

Susan and Joachim's elder child is asthmatic. He has been taken to hospital on several occasions, and has twice had to stay there for several days: his father stayed with him.

Mo: He had to go in — Well once was when I, the first time he had to go into hospital (and stay there) was when I was in hospital with (their daughter). And he had a stinking cold, and two days later (he was wheezing). And there was me, and newborn (daughter). What was it, all day Saturday and Sunday night, you were in with him, observation?

Fa: Yes. Yes, and then there was one time when he, he was hospitalized and was in hospital for five days. But Susan was still on Maternity leave. (Susan and Joachim, I)

So he could go in with the child. Recently there have only been brief visits to the emergency department.

> We go to the (Children's hospital) and come back. Recently he hasn't had to stay in. If he did, it would now be more difficult, because someone would have to look after the younger child. (Joachim, I)

Joachim, at home during the day, deals with most health problems, including giving a "mask" to the elder child when required. He takes the children for appointments, although Susan has done so when these were outside her working hours. Susan has taken time from work, as permitted by her contract, when required because of family sickness. As she is a physician (although not in paediatrics), she would stay home in the case of severe illness when her expertise was required.

The structuring of sick-care: some contributory factors

Throughout their discussions of dealing with sickness, parents were giving me "reasons". Most often these were why on occasion the man would stay home. That

is, the the woman was assumed to be the primary caretaker of sick children, with the man as her stand-in, and it was the stand-in's part that required to be explained. However it was evident that many fathers did take a large part in dealing with the scheduling problems occasioned by having a child unexpectedly at home through illness, though in general they had less participation in the planned medical visits occasioned by regular check-ups.

As parents spoke of staying home with their children, a number of structuring elements become visible. These included the nature of the paid job, and perceptions of employers and co-workers as being "put out" by absence; job hours; and the type of childcare used. However in almost all families these appeared in tension with perceptions of the mother as "naturally" responsible for the care of children, and with ideas of her skills and expertise.

WHO DEALS WITH SICK CHILDREN? GENDER AND CLASS-RELATED VIEWS

The question of who takes time off when children are sick illustrates some linkages between home and work, and intersections of class and gender. During the final interviews I used as an example the situation of the father, Don, in the poorest family, who had used up all his sick-days on his disabled child (his wife having none to take), and I encouraged parents to both comment on this, and explain their own situation.

There were evident class divisions in how parents spoke of both their own situation and that of Don. Professionals discussed job flexibility and official sick days, and perceptions of women and men who took time off. Some adopted a "managerial" approach towards employees who were frequently off work for family reasons. Middle-income parents tended to focus on the employer's views in terms of the difficulties these might cause fathers. By and large they assumed that mothers would be able to take time off. Working-class respondents focussed on pay and its

loss. This division reflects the control the parents in these categories tended to have over the conditions and hours of their working lives, from being able to take time when required, to losing pay, or even losing the job altogether because of absences.

The professionals: employers and employees

Vince, a government-employed lawyer, claims to have just discovered that he is entitled to family sick-time, "five days like for example for taking your kid to the dentist, or you know your kid breaks her arm". As he points out, he does not need this because he organizes his own time anyway. Berthe, a teacher, by contrast has to claim time off officially, and can do so under specified circumstances.

Mo: [I have] a special, special five days, a year. But if I have to take one of the children to the doctor, well not to the doctor, (the housekeeper) could do that, but to the hospital, it's a little bit more serious, then that has to come out of my sick-time. And actually it's not supposed to. That's a time supposed to be just for me.
Fa: You can't take it out of the five days?
Mo: Well, those five days are supposed to be for serious illness.
Fa: That's all they are?
Mo: Yes. Serious illness or death in the family. (Berthe and Vince, IV)

Vince found his wife's work's system unnecessarily rigid. However he has concerns that family sick-time could be misused — by other people, of course, not Berthe.

> There are people, and maybe for legitimate reasons, but there are people who are continually sick, or kid's sick, or thing's sick or everything is sick, you know, it's just a, it's a continual thing, and we have very deep suspicions that some of these sicknesses are, are just too routine, you know. (Vince, IV)

He looked at the situation of Don from a managerial position. To an employer, Don may be a liability. Hiring practices, he implied, ought to take into account the potential problems that such families cause an employer.

> I think that's the sort of situation that an employer has to make a special concession — although I think that, although I, this is hard to say, but I think it's

> the type of thing that has to be sized up when the person first comes to work for you. The person has to tell you. Because I'm not — I don't think that that's necessarily the employer's liability, you know. I think the employer has to sit down and decide whether this is going to interfere with the job, the amount of time that might be necessary. . . (Vince, IV)

He returned to the question of abusing sick-leave provisions. Some people are honest about sickness, and should be given special consideration in an emergency, he suggested, but many are not.

> You know the employees that you can trust, and the employees that you can't trust, and there are many people who look at sick-leave as a, as an extra few days vacation . . . I think it's garbage, I think it's cheating . . . everybody has an illness, everybody has a time when they're having some difficulty coping, you know, and you seem to know the people who are honest with those things, you know, are the same people you're going to go to bat for on the other things, and you will. There are many different days we lend sick-time, regularly, that people don't have, and it's justified. But the other time we have a person who we think, who has continually taken advantage of the other situation whenever they could, every time they had a headache that was grounds for being sick, or the secretary every time her boss was away that was a good time for her to take a sick day, and those people we've reached a stage where some of them we've made them take leave without pay, period. Too bad! (Vince, IV)

Duncan and Elizabeth made it plain that expectations as to who would stay home with sick children affected hiring practices, their own and other people's.

> (That's) why you don't hire, why younger, childbearing-age women are not hired, because the boss assumes that it is going to be them that is going to stay off with the child, when the child is sick. (Elizabeth, IV).

> We are also in the same situation of employing people. And we have specifically kept away from employing anyone who has had younger children at home, that may not be able to make it in, simply because since we have such a small business, requiring somebody at the front, secretary or receptionist, I cannot do without that person upfront, at the desk. (Duncan, IV)

The "anyone" that they would employ, however, relates to women: all their employees are or have been women. They have taken chances on some women with young children, and always been disappointed. Although I had raised the subject by describing a father, Don, their answers were constructed around the

assumption that women had responsibility for dealing with children's sickness.

> It is one of the realities of the workforce, and that is that if you have children under 12, if I were to go into the workforce now, I think I would have probably a fair amount of difficulty from now until the time that (the youngest) got into school, and probably for a few years after that. It is one of the realities of life. And it doesn't mean you like it that way, but that's the way it is. (Elizabeth, IV)

Duncan said he could not take time off if their children are sick. He had patients with appointments, and an office to maintain. All professionals with appointments, men and women, were in the same situation.

> My lawyer's a female, my accountant's a female, and I can call them up at any time and I know that they're going to be there. Because they are uh very committed, they're all self-employed professionals and they're going to stay there . . . regardless of who's sick in the household, they will make other arrangements, just as I will, or my spouse will [for me]. (Duncan, IV)

So the expectation that women will take time off does not apply to professional women: it has a class basis. Professional women still have responsibility for children, but are expected to arrange matters so that this does not interfere with their working lives.

Karen's practices of hiring a housekeeper who will cope with minor ailments, and scheduling medical appointments before the start of her work-day, appear as an illustration of Duncan's claims for professional women. Yet Karen's talk reveals an immense tension between responsibility for health, and responsibility to her profession. At her place of work both women and men have taken time off to be with sick children. She had earlier expressed some pride that she has never yet had to take family sick-time. She does view family sick-time as positive, on the whole .

> I think it is nice to know that if worst came to worst that you could say that, on a phone, to somebody, that 'my child's so sick I just can't come in', and not be reprimanded for that. (Karen, IV)

However she is somewhat taken aback by co-workers' absences, and views male and female absences differently.

> Some of the fellows at my work . . . they, they say 'Well I wasn't at work yesterday because Timmy was sick,' or whatever, and so you don't, I guess it does cross my mind like 'Oh, I wonder what your wife was doing?' It's my almost immediate reaction. And then of course you then, the next thought is, oh right, well you have the accommodation of sick-time for your children and so it's obvious why you would, the husband would stay home, but it's always, there is that little bit of thought-processing that goes on. But even with women who end up staying home with their kids, there's another type of thinking. You don't wonder what happened to the husband, why didn't he stay home, but you wonder if attempts have been made to get somebody else to stay, how sick was the child? So there's always a bit of a — concern for that. It's very subtle, in my case, because of course I understand it. (Karen, IV)

So the gendered view of female responsibility for sick children does persist. She wondered how she would cope without her housekeeper

> In fact I might introduce the idea that (the child) spend a fair amount of the day in Robert's office, if she wasn't too sick . . . I would initiate and plan what would take place, and he would pick up the lead from me and if it required that he stay home he would do that. Because by and large he has a bit more flexibility than I have . . . first line of attack would be to phone somebody to come in . . . (and) there's the possibility that I'd either stay home myself or ask Robert to alter his plans. *(laughs)* But the planning always seems to fall on my shoulders, almost routinely. (Karen, IV)

She explained this routine responsibility partly in terms of individual personalities, partly in terms of "socialization".

> And he'd suggest it's partly socialization anyway, that men are kind of brought up to, not to consider the trivial, everyday things as much as women are! *(laughs)* I think we get the rotten end of the stick in some ways! ((Karen, IV))

This explanation, phrased as her husband's rather than her own, goes beyond her own situation, linking her to other women with children, who also have to juggle work-hours and problems of childcare. Her definition of childcare work as "the trivial, everyday things", is one that I shall return to in Chapters X and XI.

Donna, another hospital professional, says that most of her co-workers are women, and this may have created an atmosphere where taking time off to be with sick children is accepted, and viewed as a necessary part of life. This acceptance,

she says, extends to male workers.

> When a man, one of the men says, 'Well my child has chickenpox, I have to stay home,' it's sort of — 'OK', and you just sort of understand that. You understand it, that's part of the working parent, that they have to stay home sometimes, because kids are sick. (Donna, IV)

Yet this is the situation Karen found problematic. Donna, however, does not view herself as having total responsibility for sickness, as did Karen.

Susan, also a hospital professional, has five days family-sick time, although she has rarely had to use this because Joachim is at home. These five days apply to both men and women, although, she says, women more often take them. Asked whether men would have more problems than women with taking time off, she said,

> I think hospitals are different from businesses. One hopes there is more perception that people have families and so forth. There are certainly several couples who all work at the hospital, I mean it's the local industry, so [the] whole family work there. Um — but it so rarely arises, that a man will ask for time off because of family illness . . . But I don't think it's like businesses, and so on, where you're almost not allowed to have a family life. (Susan, IV)

Rick, Donna's husband, reported problems from male colleagues at work who comment unfavourably on his taking time off.

> When I took paternity leave and I made it official, I got some resentment from faculty, especially male faculty members, saying that 'Will you be in at a meeting on Wednesday?' I said, 'No, I'm on paternity leave,' and they said, 'Oh, come on, you're going to be at the meeting on Wednesday, aren't you?' I said 'No, I'm not coming in, I'll be in on my days to teach.' So I did get that resentment that I was carrying through on something that they might perceive to be a wimp, to do that type of behaviour. . . but I don't really care what they think. It's more what I want to do and I have the ability to do it through my collective agreement. And at the same time if one of the kids are sick, I know probably it's that I'll get the same type of thing is that I shouldn't be going home, but I don't really care what they think. (Rick, IV)

His colleagues, he feels, expect his wife to use up all her sick-time on the children. This to him is neither reasonable nor fair; but it is how many people think. Rick was one of the few parents to suggest that no special expertise or "mother's instinct" is required to deal with sick children.

> Childcare's not one sex, it's related to people that have brought them into the world, they should be able to handle. And there's no unique thing of holding a child when he's sick and, you know, he's — 'Excuse me, I'm a woman, I'm only allowed to do it, come on, eh!' I've sat with (the boy) at 3 o'clock in the morning, so that's, Jesus, and (the baby girl) not yet but just as much. Is there something different that you do with them that I don't do? (Rick, IV)

A change in social thinking was required, said Donna.

> Well, it isn't tradition for a man to stay home with a child when they're sick. So we have to change the views of the corporation . . . and society, that it's OK for the dad to stay home, especially if two parents are working. (Donna, IV)

Most parents, however, expressed the view that the mother's care <u>was</u> different. Rachel and Pete illustrate this point. Each is in a situation where there is no-one who would complain about their time off.

> I suppose (my boss) might under his breath wonder why the hell Pete couldn't stay home with them that day or something, but they certainly wouldn't say anything to me, and there's nobody to say anything to you! (Rachel, IV)

However a child's attachment to the mother, the mother's "wanting" to stay, her expertise, appear in their answers.

> Mo: I think if it were (the preschooler), and if he were really sick, it would be me. I don't think Pete would stay home and, you know, for, if he were really sick, I think I'd probably, well I would probably want to stay home.
> Fa: Well, because it's just a function of his age and the fact he's very attached to his mother at the moment. (Rachel and Pete, IV)

I asked if Pete had ever received comments regarding staying home being women's work. He indicated that he had not, and pointed out that colleagues might not know that he was not at work. His wife added, "Anyone under the age of 45 in a university is so conditioned to be liberal about things like that that even if they thought it they wouldn't say it!"

In general, Rachel considers that women would usually have responsibility for sickness, and sees their position as problematic. On the one hand it is "more socially acceptable" for women to take time off, while on the other the employer may

resent this, even while granting its necessity.

> I mean I think an employer is still annoyed, a lot of employers are still annoyed when women take time off to take care of sick kids. There's still a feeling that that's a day she would have worked otherwise. You know, but uh — they still do accept the fact that mothers, motherhood is sacred and a mother's, you know, *(laughs)* need to be with her child when she's, when he's ill is an essential part of life. (Rachel, IV)

Sheila and Simon produced a more elaborate analysis of the structuring effects of gender and class. They can themselves schedule work hours in order to take time off when required. Colleagues are not a problem, said Simon.

> I mean I never think twice about them when I'm walking out the door and (the chairperson) says, "Where are you off to?" 'cause (his) office is next to mine, and I never think twice about telling him that I'm off to sit with chickenpox for half a day. (Simon, IV)

Sheila pointed out that her absences may not be viewed in the same way as Simon's.

Mo: I think that people sort of expect women to be less productive and because they have to stay home with the sick kids, and I sometimes feel like I wouldn't want to say that I'm going home because I have a sick kid, simply because I feel like I'm fulfilling these stupid expectations that people might have.
Fa: Whereas if I say that I'm going to go home and take care of a sick kid I'm just a —
Mo: Knight in shining armour, right.
Fa: — liberated man. (Sheila and Simon, IV)

Both men and women, they said, may be restricted by ideas about who should look after sick children. Other professionals — Karen, Rachel — had described such pressures as a fact of life. Sheila and Simon saw them as gendered, and as problematic.

Fa: I think it cuts both ways, I think you know I can imagine a situation in which the boss will get upset if his male worker disappeared to take care of kids, because he thinks that should be women's work and why isn't there someone at home doing that for him. But on the other hand as Sheila was saying, if a woman is trying to be a professional, in a career sort of position, and she starts taking time off to take care of the kids, you know, this is the topic of sort of popular situation comedies now, and she's stigmatized as clearly being an inadequate junior executive or whatever, because unlike the junior executives who do

> have wives at home to take care of the sick kids, she has to go do that . . . Um — maybe the defining characteristic is when women are working in positions that have been traditional male roles and are competing in the quotes 'male environment', you know in executive positions, in teaching positions or sort of senior positions in businesses, they may be expected as you say to show this 'flaw' of wanting to take care of their kids every so often, and people may look for it and use that against them. Whereas I don't know what happens, I mean I don't have the experience, I mean I don't know what happens in fish-plants where women are working regular shifts, if one of their kids are sick does the supervisor think that's perfectly normal that she would take off the day to go take care of sick kids?
>
> Mo: Oh, I think it depends on the supervisors, I mean it's kind of hard to generalize, too. Between one boss and another.
>
> Fa: I guess we've got to ask fish-plant workers. (Sheila and Simon, IV)

Women in lower-income groups, who suffer docked pay for missed shifts, could have enlightened them on the pressures faced by working-class men and women who stay home to look after their sick children.

The middle-income group: the intolerance of employers

Talking to the middle income families gave me a sense of sick children being seen as women's work, by definition: the definition, however, might be that of the employer rather than the parents. Indeed in talking with families in this group I had a much stronger sense of the control exerted over the parents' lives by the employer than I did with professionals. Wayne commented on his boss's techniques for discouraging him from staying home with a sick child.

> My boss would probably cover the fact up that that's why I was not available, but he would probably drive me crazy for the day, calling, you know, about everything under the sun. (Wayne, IV)

His wife, Lucy, sees a difference in how employers and co-workers react to men and women taking time off for family reasons.

> Men are very intolerant of other men having anything to do with it, and I think for working women it's difficult but I think it's even worse for men. (Lucy, IV)

Yes, because men had to earn a living for the family, Wayne explained.

> Over the course of the average person's lifetime, average family's existence, the male, the man, will be the breadwinner, in for the largest portion of it, the wife's income will be supplemental to that, and maybe . . . it may provide the whole standard of living, once you get all the bills paid and all that it may provide you the complete enjoyment, enjoyable part of their incomes picture, but the point remains that in most cases there is one person in the family anyway that is the breadwinner. And it's like anything, you don't mess with that! (Wayne, IV)

So men will not take time off, because that might jeopardize their status as providers of a secure basis for family living; and employers will be displeased if men do take time off, because they see that as women's work. Further, because men are breadwinners and reliable, employers will be reluctant to hire women, who prove unreliable not only from taking time to be with children, but taking time off to have those children.

> I know people that I deal with, if they go out and hire a woman for a job, you know, the next thing she's having children, and she's gone, you know, for three or four or five months. Well what does the person do? I mean there is a business to run . . . How does that person get around that? How do they deal with that? So therefore . . . if you're looking for somebody who is in the sense of, the eyes of somebody hiring a person for business that is quote unquote "reliable", not reliable as getting up in the morning to be punctual reliable, but *(laughs)* I mean, you know, just not going to get pregnant and be off work for five months. (Wayne, IV)

He gave an example.

> In our company we have one girl who processes contracts. She's first person in 10 years has been able to process our contracts, and handle that particular function, and do it to everybody's satisfaction. She's going and taking maternity leave for five months. So for five months, coming up, I know that we're not going to be able to get any contracts approved. (Wayne, IV)

This is the point that Duncan and Elizabeth made, from an employer's perspective. Lucy in reply took the employee's standpoint.

> So what are you suggesting, that they should have originally hired a man instead of her? (Lucy, IV)

She suggested employers, rather than women, were not being realistic.

Women are working, and more women are working, and women are still

> having children and there are still families, and you know you have to, you have to have contingency plans, you have to plan around that. You don't just say, gee, I wish we didn't have this problem . . . you have to be more realistic about it. And I don't think employers are. (Lucy, IV)

She located the problem with the many male employers or managers who had never themselves had to face the problem of simultaneously dealing with work and home.

> They never worked in a world and never lived in a world where, you know, women had to work, you know, like they just won't understand. And that, they're well acquainted with the news, the information but it doesn't mean anything to them because, you know, when they were working to feed their family, their wife was home. And they really don't understand. (Lucy, IV)

Paul also finds that his employers have little tolerance for men staying home to deal with sick children. His view of this is closer to Lucy's than Wayne's.

> I find like if you were to say at work, 'Well, I want to take the day off because my son, this is going to be his first day at school,' like, well, they'd be just so upset because they're, 'We've got a lot of work to do.' But we're always going to have a lot of work to do. But they would be upset. And they wouldn't see that as being sort of a, the right thing to do, especially for the man. And there's a lot of other instances too . . . Cindy can't stay home every single time they're sick! And yet I'm, I feel guilty if I'm, I want to stay home with them, I feel like I should be at work, and they're all a lot of guys there that are at the head of it, and they wouldn't, they would think, 'Well, that's kind of sissy, why isn't his wife staying home looking after the children?' You know. (Paul, IV)

He suggests this as an area where the government could help "shaping the attitude of employers, and them being a very big employer, you know, can take a role, take a lead, a leading role." The government should set an example, as an employer.

Paul did take one day off, telling employers his son was sick and that his wife had used up her sick-time. He would not tell them that again. Instead, if necessary, he would lie, just as Don had to.

> The people who are the partners in our firm, they have had wives who have stayed home, OK. And so I think they tend to look at the world a little more narrowly, and since they've never had to do it they almost project or take the

> same narrow view and say, 'Well, say should anybody else have to do it? If they stay home a day, that's money out of our pocket.' (Paul, IV)

In the case of a female employee, he said, "I think their attitude would be a little different. I think they could understand a little more why she had to stay home."

Cindy, like Brenda and Glen, as a hospital worker, has official family sick-days, and takes them as required. These do not cover all eventualities. If the babysitter does not come i. for instance, Cindy has to take a vacation day, or lose pay. Paul pointed out that "your union had to fight for that with the government", for the right to take days off when children were sick.

Anna and Hugh discussed how people's different work situations led to solutions in having to stay home with sick children.

> My job is pretty easy that way because there's always somebody to cover your shift, you just call up. (Anna, IV)

She would lose pay, though, unless she could exchange a shift with another waitress. Her husband calls his office, and although he has no official family sick-time, he tells the office a child is sick and nobody bothers about it. But if he was in another situation, at a different workplace, he would lie, to be able to take the time off. "If you have to lie, you have to lie!" The children, Hugh and Anna agree, come first.

Hugh suggested that even at his place of work a combination of gender and job position might make a difference. Although he has no problems, a senior male colleague might.

> He's a couple of levels up, if he called in saying he's taking a sick-day because of his kid I don't think that would be acceptable. I'm pretty sure it wouldn't be acceptable! . . . If you are further along in a career track I think that's probably considered, uh we're paying you enough money you can find some other means, the kid doesn't have to have you home, you get your wife to do it, she's making half as much money as you, you get your wife to do it, or you've got a babysitter, don't you, takes her five days a week, get the babysitter to do it, pay her extra to do that. So I can see that, yeh. I've never actually thought of that. (Hugh, IV)

The lower-income couples: part-timers have no benefits

For the lower-income couples, the choice of who stays home is generally guided by a very practical consideration: who will not lose pay? More families in this group were employing a strategy of caring for the children at home, so that one or other parent would be at home for most of the time in any case.

Both Douglas and Mike take time off. Their particular circumstances make this a practical decision. Other families might run into more problems, with sick-care seen as women's business.

> I think it's just very standard to think in tradition, that sorts of thinking such as that man [Don] encountered. Yeh, I do find that, I know the women at the program mention that. Yeh. (Kathleen, IV)

> Like if I was a C.A. or a lawyer or a doctor, I mean you just can't get up and leave, you got heavy, heavy workload, right, and if you take time of in the day you have to make it up somewhere else, like a lot of, a lot of busy professionals are working like 60, 70 hours a week anyway, so. It's easier for the woman to say, 'I'll take some time off,' you know maybe she doesn't have that type of pressure job. (Mike, IV)

It is "easier", Mike supposed, because in many families the woman's position is less senior, or her job less important to the family. Mike was discussing professionals, but this is the situation of Sheena, a cashier, and Ted, a warehouseman. If an emergency were to arise when both parents were at work, it would be Sheena who left work, partly, she said, because her work is less important to her.

> It's pretty easy to get a part-time job. I mean for what I, kind of part-time job I'm getting, you know, if you just go out. (Sheena, IV)

She has no benefits and so loses pay if she is absent for any reason. But her husband's job has to be secure and pay the bills: they regard him, in Wayne's terms, as the breadwinner. It is difficult for him to take time off because he is still considered "on probation" as a warehouseman, and will not be a permanent

employee for another year; so his benefits are not those of full-time employees. However he has stayed off on occasion. A superior, knowing of his situation with a disabled small child, has advised him to "just call in sick", in other words to say he himself is ill. Ted points out, though, that "If upstairs were to find out, I would have gotten the chop."

Sheena thought men had more difficulty in taking time off than women, in general.

> Yeh, I still believe they probably still do. Hopefully it's changing. Like you know. But there are still people though that don't think that their men should have to do any of that. You know. They should take turns! That would be a good way to do it. If nobody got in any trouble and just take turns each time they were sick, the other one. (Sheena, IV)

Andy is home with the children during the day, Carla is home in the evenings. However under some circumstances, such as hospital visits, two parents are required to deal with a situation.

> When it's something like that, a hospital thing, I take the time from work, 'cause Andy will not take the two of them down there. (Carla, IV)

If Andy is at work, she will call him. Both parents are eligible for compassionate leave if a child is sick: Andy says he is eligible "because I'm the foreman" even though his work is part-time. There may, however, be problems involved with claiming leave, as Carla described.

> I even got that, that hassle at (the workplace) once too, with (the boy) the first time he had his asthma attack. I applied, I had no vacation left, and you weren't allowed to take vacation off the following year's holidays unless they thought it was a very good legitimate reason, right. So sure enough, he has an asthma attack, but at the time they didn't know what it was, and I, I never even thought, I mean (her son) came first, I went to the hospital, I said, I phoned in, 'I'm sorry I won't be in, I'm here at the hospital with (the boy), blah blah blah,' and Andy was sick at the time, he had the flu. And I applied, I asked if I could have two days vacation, and my, the manager said, 'Why would you want that?' I said 'because I only need a couple of days off, and I'm asking if I can have those two days as vacation days.' I thought they were legitimate. And he said, 'Why? That is nothing to do concerning you, right, that's not concerning you!' I mean that's my child, right? So I got there, and I said, well, you know, tough

> bananas, so. Anyway I wrote the coordinator of the (workplace) a letter, through our union. And it was, they didn't grant me a vacation, they granted me compassionate leave, so I didn't have to use vacation, so I got it. (Carla, IV)

Andy's supervisor is not sympathetic to people taking time off work to look after children.

> My supervisor says she's brought up her three kids and had a full-time job. She never had that problem . . . I think it's all bullshit to me, because there's no way that she went through the kids' diseases and everything without worrying about them! She looks at us, and says, 'Well, I had three kids and I held a full-time job too, and I had no troubles like you guys are having.' (Andy, IV)

They described the problems that can arise when time off is seen as a privilege, compassionately granted by the employer, and not a right. A colleague was not granted compassionate leave because in theory her husband could have stayed home; except that his employers would have said, similarly, that his wife could have stayed.

> There's a girl at work, works in my department, same rules for her as me. Her husband works at the docks. Same rules for him, and at that time she had to request the time off, because there was no-one else, her husband wasn't sick but his employers were saying, 'What?' And our union found out that their union has the same, you know — and there was a whole bunch of trouble, and she never got paid for her days off. So. I mean she didn't get fired or her fingers slapped, she just was docked, that type of thing. (Carla, IV)

Neither partner was able to claim sick time because in the perception of the employer the spouse was available to do sick-care.

Don and Lucille have to contend with the combination of daycare, a child who is often sick, low pay, and Lucille's having no benefits. They know of companies where both men and women are granted sick-leave, even "the men getting maternity leave". This impressed Don.

> I mean that's progressive, that's like men getting maternity, they can claim, OK this is your three months, you go and spend it with your baby. So I think it basically comes down to who you work with. (Don, IV)

He described his own situation in terms of individual personalities, and the problem of having a superior who was "difficult".[2]

> I happen to work for a per n who's not, you know . . . not family orientated, and then the concept is company-orientated. And any time that you take off, is, is about having a difficulty. (Don, IV)

There is no suggestion, here, that the provision of family sick-time might be more than a matter of chance. Some people have it. Some people have sympathetic supervisors. In this family's talk, they are lucky, and Don is not.

Autonomy and control

As we move through the families in the three income groups, the sense of autonomy, the ability to control one's own life, decreases. All professional families indicate some ability to determine both their futures and their daily lives, at least as a family unit if not necessarily as individuals, in the sense that someone is able to stay with children when necessary. Middle-income families are more subject to the rulings of employers, and possibly also more affected by what co-workers have to say. Several parents in this group have formal family sick-time, which they use, and this together with hours worked may decide who stays home. Lower-income professional or self-employed parents have some flexibility in the timing of their jobs, though this may be tempered by loss of income or goodwill. With the final three working-class families control appears to rest almost entirely outside the family,

[2] Lucille had earlier told me of problems with this superior, who was not giving Don permission to take time off to attend a conference connected with Down's syndrome, even though the "big boss" was putting up some of the money for their travel costs. She spoke with the supervisor, asking him to permit Don to attend. When he refused, she asked if they could still have the money to permit her to go, perhaps taking a friend. The superior, laughing, asked if she was to take "a big black stud", which effectively controlled Lucille's participation in the conference as well as Don's as she became angry and walked out. This family seem extremely subject to this kind of petty control: in this case control through a discourse which is both sexist and racist, and which indicates one of the ways in which the social concept of race affects the lives of the families in the study.

although strategies may emerge by which the parents become able to describe themselves as "choosing" to do certain things: taking part-time work to stagger work-hours (and Lucille is moving to a part-time situation); defining one's work, as Sheena does, as of little account, so that it does not matter if it is lost.

Dealing with sick children, then, for working parents, is constituted by social class. The employer holds direct power over the poorest families, in terms of the pay packet. This in turn will help determine who takes time off: who will not lose pay, who will not lose their job, whose job matters least if lost. Mothers and fathers make pragmatic decisions which may reinforce or resist ideologies of gender.

Parents' talk illustrates class patterns of discourse. There are three modes of speech parents use to describe dealing with sick children: the managerial, the academic, and the employees'.

Duncan and Elizabeth as employers, Wayne as a white collar employee who aligns himself with management, Vince as an employee in a managerial position, and to some extent Karen as an employed professional, give voice to a particular perception of class and gender that has wide implications for others in the study and outside it. The employer assumes that male employees will work unless they are themselves incapacitated. There is room for some flexibility, compassion, paternalism, at the employer's discretion. Women will, however, take time off, and so are less reliable employees, both "naturally", and resulting from the social pressures of different roles for mothers and fathers. To be considered seriously they will have to demonstrate "male" loyalty to the employer (as does Karen) by not staying home with sick children. Duncan and others make plain that though many professional women will do this, receptionists, for instance, will not. This perception affects hiring practices. The ability of the potential employee to organize a babysitter, and her personal or occupational interest in the firm, are not addressed in this discourse; still less addressed is the idea that her husband, if she has one, might also have a

responsibility for the children's health. What are addressed are the very real problems faced by an employer as a result of her absence. In this formulation the female employee's loyalty is opposed by her "natural" attachment to the child and her responsibilities for sick-care.

Most of the working-class and middle-income respondents and the remaining non-academic professionals discuss sick-time in terms of a right that they have or do not have, and in terms of difficulty in applying for it or being considered as eligible. The discussion is very pragmatic: Who can more easily pick up sick children? Who can take time off without penalty? Who will be "found out", and possibly lose their job? The concept of maternal care as "natural" does still hold, but enters their talk chiefly as regards dealing with very sick children. However much parents may believe maternal care to be superior, practical and material considerations of pay and hours worked are predominant.

Both women and men can be seen here as actively constructing a strategy for dealing with sickness, on the spot, in whatever way they can; but their pragmatic responses, translated into the managerial discourse, justify and reconstitute the practices of the employer. The "solution" of part-time work may be a doubly beneficial one for the employer. Not only does the employee have no benefits if she takes time off, but because of this she is less likely to take time off, and the problem of dealing with an absence becomes one to be coped with elsewhere, by a different employer, whose opinions about the unreliability of the labour force as a whole, men and women, are reinforced, particularly as the male employee generally does <u>not</u> state that children's sickness is the reason for his absences.

Academics appear in a highly privileged position. With much greater flexibility and the ability to do some of their work from home, and salaries that enable them to afford high-quality daycare, their talk demonstrates a greater degree of autonomy than is available to other participants. Yet precisely because of that flexibility, it is

here that gender relations can be seen constituting their practices. All three male academics do half or more of the sick-care, and their talk is of their job flexibility and the importance of the children, and fairness to their (full-time employed) wives, with possible objections viewed as prejudiced and out-of-date. Sheila, as the sole female academic, comments that in a liberal/academic milieu it is good or noble or self-sacrificing for fathers to take time off, but mothers are still regarded with suspicions about their commitment to work if they do so. This suspicion structures her practice of not reporting her reasons for absence.

The ability to control one's life, to define what is to happen, what the possibilities are, is power. It is clear that very few parents have this kind of control where sick children are concerned. Men in managerial or self-employed professional positions can afford to ignore the sickness and proceed with their planned professional life: and this ability to distance themselves from the "trivial details" of everyday life both arises from and contributes to their status as successful male professionals, and is underwritten by the assumption that someone else will cope in whatever way possible. For the majority of parents, their talk makes evident the need for negotiation between the partners as to who can stay home, or who can go to the hospital. As we move down the income scale, this negotiation moves from the highly flexible academic situation, through one of official, union-negotiated sick-time, to one where the employers or supervisors of both partners, and their gender and class-based whims, are the main determining factor in who takes time off to be with sick children.

X. HOW PARENTS ACCOUNTED FOR THE DIVISION OF LABOUR

So far, I have indicated something for the organization of domestic labour in terms of the basic structuring of days (Chapter VII), the allocation of responsibility for chores, childcare and arranging children's activities (Chapter VIII) and the question of who stays home when a child is sick (Chapter IX). Responsibility for tasks associated with childcare lies on the whole with women, and this responsibility is structured by class and gender, via resources of time, space, childcare and household assistance, money, and skills which parents perceive as available to them.

In the final interview I attempted to examine parents' perceptions of these resources, and the sets of relations of which these resources form a part, by asking the partners together how they would account for women's continued performance of and responsibility for domestic tasks. We focused first on laundry, as a task many families had spoken of as in women's domain, and I then inquired about other housework and basic childcare in general. Although we began by discussing why "women" did laundry, parents most often discussed situations and relations within their own household.

THE CASE OF LAUNDRY

Four main reasons were given by both men and women regarding who does laundry. Some couples gave more than one. Men would get it wrong, seven couples suggested: associated with this was the sense of performance of laundry as a special skill that women possessed, that they practised and often enjoyed. Four families suggested that it was "just" a traditional division of labour, with men doing other things; in two of these, fathers used the terms of role theory, saying that men had not been "socialized" to do laundry. (They saw laundry as not important, and as

an inappropriate task for them, and they did not know how to do it.) Women and men in many families spoke of individual preference: "He hates it, and I don't mind it." They often combined this with other types of response, although for two couples preference was the main reason given. Other practical answers were given by the two families where the man did take major responsibility for laundry: the location of the washer in the household and its relationship to where people did other work; and one parent having most to do with the children's clothes in general, and from this knowing what needed to be washed.

"Laundry" is a term that covers not one task but a related series of chores. As parents describe it, dirty clothes have to be gathered up, and usually put into a hamper. They are carried to the washing location, sorted according to type of fabric and often by colour and placed in a machine, the correct amount of detergent is added, and the machine switched on. In some households, chiefly working-class, bleach is added. In one household the machine is a "spinner-washer" requiring an attendant to transfer the clothes physically from one part of it to another, at the correct point in the wash cycle. Clothes are removed from the machine and loaded into a dryer, or placed in a hamper and carried outdoors to be pegged onto a clothesline, or hung on an indoor drying-frame. Finally they have to be taken from the drying-location, sometimes ironed, folded or placed on clothes-hangers and put away.

Laundry then involves a series of tasks requiring active participation, the physical labour of sorting clothes, lifting clothes and pegging them on a line, or transferring them from one location to another. The time taken varies according to the particular operation performed: putting clothes into a dryer is much faster than hanging them on a line (Luxton, 1980), but hanging them out, several women say, gives them a feeling of pride or achievement. "I like to see it blow", one woman said, and several others commented on organizing their washing line in order of colour or

size of article. Washing so displayed is in public, an indication of their skills and expertise.

Time while clothes are in a machine or are drying is not spent in active participation, and the doer can perform other activities, but the washing is not yet "done" and will require more attention later in the day, at a time determined by the machine. The doer of laundry is conscious, on one level, of the machine, of keeping small children away from it, of having to hang out easily-crushable items as soon as it stops, of (in an extreme case) making sure it is not leaking. Although some items cannot be machine-washed, my respondents did not mention this. Their talk is of machine-washes, and they do many of these in a week.

Small children will require at least one complete change of clothes per day, possibly more, and bedding may have to be changed often also, in extreme cases almost daily where there is a young infant or a pre-school child who is not yet "dry" at night, or (in one family) an older child with a urinary tract disorder. "The laundry I do is phenomenal", one mother said, and others mentioned 12 loads of wash, or more, in the course of a week. Laundry takes up a sizeable proportion of the time spent at home. Loading and unloading a machine may together take perhaps ten minutes. Similarly, there may be another ten minutes for loading and unloading a dryer, or twenty minutes (at a conservative estimate) spent pegging out clothes, with ten minutes for taking them in again. Already we have from twenty to forty minutes per wash, or possibly as much as four to eight hours per week, not including time for folding and putting away, or ironing, or just carrying clothes around. During one interview, the mother was folding clothes: this took her about thirty minutes, but represented several loads of wash. It was not unusual for me to see baskets of clothes sitting, waiting to be put away, when I entered a house. Sorting clothes may take another fifteen minutes, again covering several washes but repeated three or four times a week. To our four to eight hours, we may therefore add another two,

perhaps more. Ironing is still not included in these figures, but in at least some households ironing is something to be done only when absolutely necessary: however, one woman speaks of ironing her husband's shirts, adding several minutes per shirt to the total. The time spent putting away clothes will depend not only of the volume of laundry but on the state of organization of drawers and closets, and I will not risk an estimate here.

Tasks performed with small children around, of course, may take longer. I must add here that on occasion "hanging out the wash" may represent an escape from the demands of small children, and provide a valid reason for asking the father to "mind" children for half-an-hour, if he is present.

Laundry also has its "invisible work" component. Parents have to know what clothes to wash first, based on an evaluation of what items are most urgently needed. They have to plan for time in which to do washes, and sometimes watch the weather for good days. Sorting clothes requires consideration and judgements to be made. Finally, putting clothes away requires a knowledge of which clothes belong to which person, and where they should go. In one family, when Ted gets this wrong, Sheena has to do further work to reorganize the drawers.

Laundry then is on-going and time consuming. Women do it. How do families account for women's continuing performance of this set of tasks?

Men don't know how to wash

Several parents claimed that the man "doesn't care" what the clothes look like at the end.

Fa: You see when I used to do my own laundry, before Sheila, there was a simple rule, which was that I didn't buy anything that I couldn't put altogether in the one load, and if I made a mistake I wound up with blue T-shirts . . . everything went into one load, and I never learnt anything else about doing laundry, and I didn't really want to.

Mo: No, I think women tend to have more complex clothes, you know, in terms of taking care of them, so they have to do, some can't be dried, and some have to

be hung up, and you know those kinds of things.
(What about the kids' things, I asked.)
Mo: Um — Well I think, since I'm doing ours, then I just go ahead and do everyone's. (Sheila and Simon, IV)

However, Simon had done two loads of washing that morning. He will do laundry if required, and he then does it to Sheila's standard of performance.

Rick's "different way" of doing laundry was not acceptable to Donna. As a result, he says, he "surrendered" the task.

Fa: Well, I got tired of getting yelled at! *(laughs)*
Mo: I never yelled at you! *(laughs)*
Fa: Yes, you, 'Don't put the pinks and the pinks, don't do that, don't wash out the colours!' I wash cold-cold, see she goes cold-hot, you know —
Mo: Well, he did put a, when I was gone you put (the baby's) red pants in with her white diapers, and her white shirts and everything.
Fa: So it came out pink . . .
Mo: He has a <u>different</u> way.
Fa: Different way of doing it, so I went through a period, when she was away I did it, and I, I did it every night, and I had no problems doing it. But then it gets into a pattern. I think you surrender certain things after a while, you get, you almost get into a routine yourself, saying well look, it gets done, well I'm not going to, why upset it, if you start doing it, then you end up having a debate of how to do it, and that's one of the things I won't, you know it's a small enough thing saying, OK, fine, if you've got a better way to do it, *(laughs)* I'm not going to deal with it. Why, you know, life's too short to argue over something like that. So it's a, it's no problem for me to do it, but it's just that almost, it's I guess I surrendered it. *(laughs)* I gave it up and then you took it over, so — I can take it back, I can do part —
Mo: Over! *(laughs)* Take it <u>over</u>! (Donna and Rick, IV)

For several professional families, this one included, when they were first married and had to use a laundromat the partners went together, but once they bought a washing machine laundry became a female task.

In one middle-income family, laundry is divided: the father washes his own clothes, the mother those of everybody else. The father is willing to do laundry, but his wife, he says, likes to do it herself. She claims he does not know how to do it. She has a special knowledge of clothes and materials: her parents were tailors, and

she grew up surrounded by talk and expertise related to clothes and materials.

Fa: If you asked me to do all the laundry if I had control over all the kids clothes, yes I would, *(laughs)* and she knows that, that's a, that's a control thing too, it's —

Mo: *(laughs)* They would all be brown!

Fa: It's not the amount, not the amount or type of work, to me that's just a chore like doing the dishes, I don't see it as one or the other, just I, it's not something we can share, it's going to be one of us, or the other does that one. And Anna won't let me do it . . .

Mo: Because you just don't know how to do it. (Anna and Hugh, IV)

A lower-income mother also pointed to women's expertise, and the danger of men ruining clothes.

> I think in a lot of women's cases even though they'd like to have help with the laundry, they don't trust their husbands to put their silk blouses . . . like I know what things in my laundry run, eh, like the kids have a few pieces of clothes that run, and I, I've come across them — And I would be very upset to have someone else ruin something of mine as opposed to myself! *(laughs)* (Cheryl, IV)

Her husband pointed out that there are some tasks involved in doing laundry that he does do on a regular basis. "What do you call, where does the laundry stop, right?" He would gather dirty clothes, put them in the laundry basket, and when they have been washed and dried empty the drier and take the clothes in their hamper upstairs. Then a problem arises, and Cheryl's expertise is required.

Fa: I take it upstairs, put it on the kids' bed, and I say tell the kids to put their clothes away, which they do, but I don't know who, who gets what . . . Their clothes have been around so long now, that the same clothes that (the eldest) wore, (the baby's) wearing now, so that it's hard to say where the cut off is.

Mo: Whose is what, eh? *(laughs)*

Fa: Yeh, whose is what! And socks and — So, I suppose because Cheryl spends more time buying the clothes and looking after the clothes that she now is, has got so —

Mo: Aware of the clothes, and it's a game.

Fa: Yeh. If I was more involved from the start, maybe it would easier to do, do some laundry. But I don't mind doing, doing the laundry, I don't mind folding the clothes or moving them from the washer to the dryer . . . (Cheryl and Mike, IV)

He mentions the location of washer and drier, in the kitchen, as important in this. The washer is close to where he is doing other tasks, so that it is easy for him to move clothes out of it, and also to know that they require to be moved. Cheryl agrees. Going up and down stairs, with the volume of laundry they have, would be much harder. They are constantly running out of space to put clothes, and there are always clothes to be put away.

Fa: So we have to wait till they dirty clothes, get them in the hamper, so we can put their clean clothes in the drawers and then we can — so there's always the big float of — *(laughs)* . . . But Cheryl always says she doesn't mind doing laundry. It's, it's —

Mo: Well, doing it I don't mind, it's putting it back that's a big problem, getting it back where it came from! Because if you don't get it back there then when the kids are looking for something to wear they start going through the laundry, and them all of a sudden we have, this is dirty, this is clean — it's all over the place, and nobody knows where anything is! (Cheryl and Mike IV)

Brenda claimed her husband, Glen, left clothes in the dryer when he did do laundry, and so did not complete the task. In two lower-income families, fathers had very definite ideas about why men did not do laundry.

Fa: 'Cause most men are too stupid to do it! It's true! . . . Too much detergent, not enough detergent, separate the whites from the darks, when they use the Javex, when they use the bleach! Girls are brought up at home that they do these chores, so they know at a very young age.

JB: They're in practice?

Fa: The guys just never learnt to do it! You start ruining $50 pairs of jeans, and people get a little upset. Most of the men, in the old days, used to be the bread-makers, they would bring home the money while the women were at home. Times have changed. The men haven't, but women are changing, men aren't. (Andy, IV)

Don likewise "gets things wrong". His wife claims she enjoys doing washing, and so would rather do it herself. Don, however, says he has no problems with the idea of doing the laundry: as a child he saw his father do housework.

Mo: I'd rather do the laundry than have him — if I'm really tired, and you know Don wants to do the laundry, then that's fine, but I would rather do it myself . . . I just like doing the laundry! *(laughs)*

Fa: I keep putting things like Javex in the black clothes, and stuff, the dark clothes. I

don't know why it would, it would upset her, but where things like that seem to upset her, she —

Mo: Or hanging shirts by the collar —

Fa: By the collar, and things like that —

Mo: — like sort of hanging a shirt like this, or something, hanging it by the collar, like this! *(laughs)* You know, the men's dress shirt, hanging by the collar tips! *(laughs)* I mean I've just gotten my way of doing it, I look at it and go, you know —

Fa: . . . I didn't do wash for the longest time because I was a hanger-on and lived home for years and years and years, and had a nice Mum that would do it . . . I tried to stay there as long as I could but she kicked me out . . . I found Lucille, I thought she would do it all for me, and I was wrong! *(laughs)*

Mo: *(laughs)*

Fa: No, but in that situation, like I was seeing [his father doing domestic chores] it didn't seem out of place but for the thing, I didn't know how. Somebody showed me how! And then like, you know, once I started doing it I made my mistakes like putting my Javex in, I still do some crazy things, I don't know why it would make a big deal, but it clearly does something to clothes if you hang them up with the collars! (Lucille and Don, IV)

Lucille takes a pride in her wash and her clothesline.

I do a wash and I hang it out and it's all towels, and it's, you know, all the towels are together, and all the shirts are together, all the underwear's together, all the socks together, and he goes towel, shirt, towel, shirt, underwear, pair of sock, you know. *(laughs)* And I don't, I'd rather have it all together than scattered all over — I mean it dries the same, but it's, it's just me. I like a neat clothes line! *(laughs)* (Lucille, IV)

In one family, while the father claimed to be unable to operate the washing-machine, his wife did not accept this explanation.

Mo: When we didn't have a machine, Pete did the laundry as least as often as I did, when it was a matter of going out to a laundromat, especially when I was pregnant, you know before we bought the machine, I would say Pete did it at least as often and in general it was something we did together . . . But that's true, that's one job he's — I mean in dire situations he will fold, but I don't think, except when I was in the hospital I don't think he's ever run the machine. And I don't know why!

Fa: I fold most of it.

Mo: You fold most of it!

Fa: I do! You do it because you're the only one who knows how to run the machine — I don't know how to run the machine.

Mo: *(laughs)* He knows how to run the dishwasher, he knows how to —

Fa: Other than that, it's not — she makes the machine run —

Mo: — run a radial-arm saw, but he doesn't *(laughs)* know the clothes-washer!

Fa: — I do the folding.
Mo: You don't do the, occasionally you do the folding.
Fa: Quite often I do the folding. Do you think the clothes get out of the drier?
Mo: I don't know why [women do laundry]. Maybe because it's dirty and smelly, I don't know? (Rachel and Pete, IV)

I asked why I might find this pattern of the man doing washing that had to be taken out of the house, but not within it.

> I guess because it's physically, it's heavy, you know, is part of it perhaps, and it was heavy, and at least in this house the largest period of time that we didn't have a washing machine I was pregnant. (Rachel, IV)

It seems remarkable that men, some of whom evidence great competence in other spheres, appear incapable of learning to sort clothes or operate a push-button machine. In the concluding sections of this chapter I will examine how this appearance of incompetence functions for men. Some research indicates that where women accept men's performance of chores without much criticism, the men "do" more (cited in Thompson and Walker, 1989). It is not clear why women accept or criticize in this context, but there would appear to be grounds for criticism if clothes have to be rewashed, or especially if they become permanently creased or colours run. Malperformance makes more work for the woman, sometimes very much more work involving bleaching clothes, or shopping for new ones. Expense is also a major consideration.

Part of this dynamic may be, as Hugh suggests, "a control thing". Women may not always welcome their husband's involvement: while male participation may ease the workload, it also removes an area over which women exercise a measure of control, and which results in a public display of their skills. For some men part of the problem may lie in the need for the man to abide by another's definition of what constitutes adequate performance. It may seem a loss of power.

Tradition and Socialization

Don had commented that it seemed all right for him to do housework, as he had seen his father doing it. Most parents saw men's not doing housework as a traditional pattern. Four couples spoke of a traditional division as the basic reason for their present pattern.

> The traditional male view still holds true in a lot of things. I don't, I do on occasion ask Duncan to help me with the laundry when I get particularly swamped, but he doesn't ask me to change the oil in the car, and I usually don't ask him to do the laundry. *(laughs)* It's an ongoing job. It's never, it's never finished, you finish it for a brief period of time. There are generally other jobs that Duncan can do and has the skills to do that I do not have the skills to and have no real inclination to acquire. (Elizabeth, IV)

Some men did do laundry, said Lucy, though not her husband. But she thought in general it was the women who did it. Men did not "place the same importance of laundry".

It was a standard division of labour, said her husband. Why, he did not know. There were things men did too.

> Uh — I don't know, I don't know why. but you know, why do you have, on the division of labour, you know, I think I used this example when we first started out, how many women mow the lawn? (Wayne, middle-income family, IV)

A number of women in the study had mentioned mowing the lawn (and still doing laundry), although I had not asked specifically for this information: not all people studied had lawns. However, a woman's mowing the lawn was clearly a novel idea for this father.

Fa: I don't know. I don't know one family, one person, other than oh somebody we knew that the wife mowed the lawn. Where was that?
Mo: Greg's wife, in Winnipeg. (Lucy and Wayne, IV)

The traditional pattern was learned in childhood, these parents suggested. Two fathers specifically used the term "socialization".

> Socialization, I think, as children, you know. Even (his elder daughter), I mean she's got dolls and she dresses and undresses them, thirty times a day. You

know, like — You grow up to expect a certain . . . you know like if there's sort of physical work to do the men usually do it. Why is that? (Robert, IV)

I had found that to occur less consistently, I told this couple. Karen agreed.

I would say it's less consistent too. Like I cut the lawn, and do the shovelling. (Karen, IV)

Her husband minimized this. "Sometimes, very little on that".

Cindy suggested that men had little expertise dealing with materials, never having the chance to learn, or to sew, and that they saw their mothers doing laundry when they were young, and thought of it as something women did. Her husband commented on the general cultural association of washing with women in cultural images.

Mo: Just a learned childhood behaviour. Their mothers always did the laundry, knew which clothes went, which material, like Paul washed a wool tie the other day and I said you never wash wool because it ruins the tie . . . They may not be comfortable with materials, never having sewed or — is that true, Paul?
Fa: I think pretty well. It's probably like, I think it's a socialization thing. I mean if you look in old magazines when washing machines first came out they'd always show like a woman, which a skirt on, or a dress on, doing the wash, or an apron or something, right. And you never saw men going around doing that. And then there was always like a lot of diapers and stuff like that, which a man — earlier didn't have to do it.
Mo: They'd feel that it's not masculine to do laundry?
Fa: Yeh, say for instance women's underclothes and stuff like that. And, you know, I think there's probably an association with that was, it's not a very masculine thing to do. Although —
Mo: Whereas like the dishes you just send them over to do. . . .
Fa: . . . I can even remember when these, they had those scrub boards, and I can, in my mind right now I can see pictures of a woman bending over the scrub board, and that's the way the advertisement was.
Mo: But I get Paul to help me and like tonight I asked him to put a wash on, I said, 'Please help me fold this laundry,' like it's just, it's overwhelming some nights, three loads, trying to fold it and put it away. (Cindy and Paul, IV)

Clearly parents have a sense of activities having been handed down from the past, perhaps through a specific learning/socialization process. The parents who voiced this view did not appear to question it. Nor did they compare the continual,

never-finished nature of laundry responsibilities with the brief and discontinuous "male" tasks mentioned — changing oil, cutting grass — although Cindy commented, rather helplessly, on the overwhelming workload:

> I'm trying to think of a way I could cut down on the laundry, because I must do at least 12 loads a week. Three on tonight, and then several times a week. I don't know how to cut down on it. (Cindy, IV)

Many other parents proffered the idea of a traditional trade-off between male and female tasks as a partial explanation of their own practice.

> Well, I guess it's the same reason that, you know, Vince would paint the fence. I just wouldn't do that. (Berthe, IV)

He doesn't like it, and she doesn't mind doing it

Two couples gave explanations based mainly on personal preference. Some of their arguments have been heard before: hanging clothes out on the line as a source of enjoyment for women, for instance. In Halifax there are many days in a year when hanging clothes out is not possible, due to rain, snow, or cold temperatures, so that those women who spoke of hanging out clothes must have had an alternative drying arrangement. I was struck by the number of times that men gave "I hate it" as a valid reason for not doing laundry, or indeed other household chores. Vince mentioned having had to hang out washing as a child as a reason for not liking to do it now: for a woman this would constitute "training". Similar childhood experiences are given different, gendered, meanings.

Asked why women generally did the wash, Vince commented, "I don't know, but it's true here, isn't it? I hate it!" Clothes washing, he said, was necessary, but not immediately necessary, and hence more optional than food preparation. As it did not have to be done right away, he could choose to not do it, based on his dislike.

> Fa: But cooking's a different thing, you can't leave the cooking. you know what I mean? If someone's out, you can't wait around . . . Clothes don't have to be washed, I guess. Maybe that doesn't make — any sense. I buy clothes for the kids, now, that's, I can shop for the kids for clothes quite easily.

Mo: Yes, but you don't, most of the time, I would say 90% of the time I buy their clothes.
Fa: I don't know if that's true . . . But laundry. I hate laundry.
Mo: And I don't mind it.
Fa: I guess kind of, I mean I have a personal thing, when I was a kid I used to have to do laundry, and I still hate it for that. Used to hang the stupid stuff on the line, used to hate doing that.
Mo: And I love it. I love hanging clothes out on the line.
Fa: (The housekeeper) likes hanging stuff on the line, on a nice sunny day . . . She likes nothing better than to hang clothes on the line. Believe it! I can't believe it! *(laughs)* But anyway.
Mo: She loves it. I do too, though. I could do that all day long, wash and hang the stuff out on the line.
Fa: Hormonal. *(laughs)* (Berthe and Vince, IV)

Sheena cut short my explanation of findings. "Yeh, I know who does the laundry!" She does it, and Ted sometimes puts it away.

Mo: I always have clothes round the house. Like you'd notice every time you come. I don't mind washing it, I don't mind folding it, but getting it, put it away is like —
Fa: I don't mind putting it away.
Mo: Actually we had a thing for a while that — I would do it and leave it folded on the counter, and when Ted came home from work he would put it away. Just because it's the one thing that I —
Fa: You really do hate putting it away, like you'll often do dishes, and I'll put it away.
Mo: Oh, yeh, I'd rather do like three loads dishes than put away the laundry!
Fa: I hate dishes <u>and</u> laundry.
Mo: . . . I don't mind doing it . . . but I don't know why I — it's like OK, there is it, and I just have it all over the place. And I hang it out on the line, all in colours, you know like I get out there, you know what I mean. *(laughs)* And the longest thing out first, and all this, and then it sits in the baskets forever, in the bottom of the laundry basket. Till it's all dirty again!
Fa: You used to be really bad at that. (Sheena and Ted, V)

Like Lucille, she mentions hanging it out in order of colours or items. Ted had earlier said that dishes were his responsibility. He goes along with a trade-off between dishes and putting away clothes, although from time to time Sheena has to reorganize the drawers, when he gets the allocation of clothes wrong.

Berthe also was "not so great at" putting laundry away.

> Although I'm certainly better at it than Vince is, I mean he would let it sit in the hamper for weeks on end, he wouldn't even think about it until he ran out of something and then he'd dig through it and find what he was looking for, and

then let it sit there for another month. (Berthe, IV)

Several couples gave preference as a secondary reason, such as perhaps an excuse for men's not persevering to get it right.

Mo: And you know, I don't mind laundry really. There's some —
Fa: That's the other thing. *(laughs)*
Mo: There's some things that you know we have just agreed on, because the other person absolutely hates it. And I don't, it's not that I love doing it, but I don't mind it that much.
Fa: What about peeling potatoes?
Mo: Right, which I can't stand, so Simon does that. (Sheila and Simon, IV)

"Practical" reasons

In two families the man had taken on responsibility for laundry, in one very recently. These partners' comments are interesting in the light they shed on the division of labour elsewhere. They tend to emphasize practical aspects: one person having knowledge of clothes, and time in which to do the task; one person "noticing" what required to be done because they are the ones who deal on a daily basis with clothes; and the location of the washer and its relationship to where people are performing other activities.

Susan linked her non-performance of laundry tasks to her being out of the house and at work while her husband was home with the children. "I'm the man in this house", she said.

> I mean, I'm slow, and I, in many ways in this household I'm, not the man, but the husband. I don't notice when things are in a mess. Joachim cleans them up. I don't do — And it's the same with laundry. I mean I've told you before, I will sort of wail, 'Are there any clean socks for (the girl)?' if I'm getting ready to go out or whatever. I guess if I had to do it, I would, but while there's somebody else doing it, I hardly even know how to work the machine. I do, and I do occasionally do a wash, but very rarely. It would never occur to me. (Susan, IV)

There is no suggestion here that an inability to operate the machine keeps her from running the wash. It is the other way round. She is out of practice. Away from the house during the daytime, she "doesn't notice" if a wash needs to be done. In

many other families this was said of the man. Her answer implies that responsibility for the children's needs in one area may lead to another, and that their structuring of domestic labour is around time and practicality, preference and individual characteristics ("slowness"), rather than maleness and femaleness; but elsewhere, "slowness" within the house appears as a characteristic of men.

Douglas was by now doing most of his children's laundry. The partners discussed this in terms of where the washer was located: both perform paperwork from their paid job at home, and it was convenient for Douglas to tend the washer while he worked.

Mo: I put a load on today but it was a real exception. I can't remember the last time I put laundry on. So I don't know (why women mostly do laundry). *(laughs)* No idea.
Fa: Nor have I. It's very annoying not to find clothes for the kids, though.
Mo: I know, I was constant, like I shirked it for so long, Douglas took it over. I was so exhausted in the evening, I couldn't bear it, and I just had enough of having the laundry on during the day, and because the phone would be on, I'd be on the phone so much that I'd never think of getting it on at any normal time. And Douglas would consistently come home, I don't know how many months, eleven o'clock at night and the laundry's still not done . . .
Fa: But I should say that I basically do the children's laundry . . . Our own laundry is another — question. (Kathleen and Douglas, IV)

Douglas points out that in other households the place where laundry is done may be defined as women's space, and the man may not feel comfortable there.

Fa: I suppose in many households there's the 'laundry area' or the area to do laundry is so distinct, that for some reasons either the male doesn't feel comfortable in that area or doesn't go into it. Our laundry area is right by our entrance round the back and usually what I find is when I work in the evenings, by myself at the kitchen table, I'll put the laundry on because it, it's ten feet away, so I might as well do it when I'm working.
Mo: I don't, I crawl into bed and work. *(laughs)* It's just what I do.
Fa: That is a basic distinction, I mean I find it much easier to work at the kitchen table and Kathleen tends to work up in the bedroom. (Kathleen and Douglas, IV)

These reasons, however, indicate that Douglas does laundry because it is less convenient for Kathleen. They may even suggest that she had defaulted. "I shirked

it". she says. That is, laundry would be the women's task, but here special circumstances apply.

SETTING THE SCENE FOR CHILDCARE

In general, I had found that while both men and women did some childcare tasks, it was women who set the scene for these to occur, by organizing or themselves performing household chores, and arranging for children's activities. As with laundry, I asked parents during the final interview why this might be. Most responded by explaining their own situation, with only a few venturing to discuss families in general. However, several of their replies relied on supposedly general characteristics of men and women — men don't notice dirt, women won't stop doing housework, men plan ahead more than women, women focus on small things. I have categorized the responses here according to what seemed to me the main drift of the argument in each case, though it must be remembered that partners might hold different perceptions of both the amount of housework each did, and the reasons for their division. Several families gave more than one explanation. These included: training for housework, which women were seen to have, and the example of their parents; continuance of a basic or "traditional" pattern through both training and example; women's "natural" gift for organization; basic time constraints; personal preferences; and more complex arguments based in social pressures on parents to live up to expectations, or "programming" for parents to want to do certain gender-appropriate activities.

Training and example as explanation

Kathleen saw "training", added to the childhood example of what their parents did, as the key to much of women's performance of domestic labour. As a child she had seen her mother doing household things, and learned about routines, setting

the table and so forth. She has since practiced these skills. Her husband, she says, was not expected to help out in the house as a child, and so may now find organizing housework and childcare confusing and difficult.

Mo: I think the amount that you actually put in now is quite commendable, compared to the kind of training, but —
Fa: Well, not in the house, no, not in the house —
Mo: — the actual thinking ahead and planning and knowing that on Friday's the doctor's appointment, you're going to have a problem with the structure of the day because of, you know, all of that, and thinking about it in enough time to solve it. It's just plain training.
Fa: In some ways, but —
Mo: I feel you must feel responsib— and it comes from feeling a responsibility for something. I mean we don't act on these things unless we feel we really have to, because they're such, such crummy things to have to deal with. Shopping and laundry, lugging all these sort of things. I mean they're not the world's most wonderful things. (Kathleen and Douglas, IV)

Personality traits were a factor in who initiated household work. Again, Kathleen said, women were trained to feel responsible, with adult practice building on childhood socialization.

> To some degree it's like who does, who starts it, right. I mean, and so maybe it has something to do with personality, temperament sorts of questions, like how long can you wait before something can get done, you know, and then who's going to be the first to initiate it and if you sort of initiate something then you think, oh someone's going to handle that, you know what I mean? And if you have enough on your plate then it's, oh good, they're doing that! You know, I mean — Like getting in the routine that I would shop every week was no big deal, because you know I would just sort of plan it when I'm doing it or something . . . I think it's training, everything is really inbuilt, built into women to be, to feel responsible for all of that stuff. I can feel responsible for it all!

Both came from backgrounds where the mother did all the inside domestic chores.

> I mean both our mothers would say, they would feel responsible, whether they had to be or not, they took it upon themselves, they would feel responsible for the on-going, food in the fridge and clean clothes in the drawers. Some degree of tidiness. You know. (Kathleen, IV)

In one working-class household the father, Don, appears to perform a

considerable amount of housework, cleaning, tidying, cooking, although not as much as his wife. He says he had to learn how to do it, as an adult, but he has never had problems with the concept of a man doing housework. He saw his father doing it. (He is the only man to report that his father regularly did housework.)

Fa: I got to thinking like maybe if somebody was growing up and they didn't see their father doing this, and they didn't know, and might not think, well what the heck, I'm not going to ask. I didn't feel out of place by, bent out of place by starting and asking, and the more I got into it the more I do, and now it seems like almost like we share the responsibility. Lucille seems to do most of the cooking, you know —

Mo: But you look after the kids while I cook.

Fa: Cleaning and stuff like cleaning up, like I find myself not too often cleaning up but I do do it as it just seems the way things work out. But I don't feel bad about doing it, say, 'oh shit, I got to clean the floors now, darn, I got' — throw a load of wash in downstairs, or whatever. It's part of the deal you chose. But like I didn't, like coming out of my family and being the last one of the family coming out though it was that something I had to do, but I didn't know. So that might have something to do with it . . . But it's really none of my business what somebody else does or what they do, I'm too busy, you know I can't get my nose bent for their sake. (Lucille and Don, IV)

In his argument, the example of his father appears as enabling his performance. He is still, however, less in practice than is Lucille. Often he "doesn't notice" what requires to be done, and has to be asked to perform household chores. If Lucille starts cleaning, he will get up and help. Once again the woman is organizer, or supervisor, of the household. When Don is on his own, he may or may not do housework: it is optional.

Fa: I'll go in there, sit down all night, with a cup of tea and cookies, and watch TV, I *(laughs)* — maybe you've got to kick me in the butt to get me up to do things . . . I know when I'm sitting there, tunnel vision again, I'm out of it, and haul me by the nose and throw me down to the basement, I'll do a load of wash. The weekends when you're not here, like sometimes I'll wake up and go crazy [cleaning]. Other times I won't do anything. And the place looks ten times worse'n it was when she left. Just —

Mo: There's days I come home from work on Saturdays, the place is immaculate, and there's other days the bomb hit it . . . I got to be trying for last [time] to whisk him to the basement. *(laughs)* Unless I get down there and start it myself, won't get done. Then he'll get upset. 'You shouldn't be down there doing that!' And he'll come down and give me a hand. (Lucille and Don, IV)

Tradition as explanation

Several families relied on an "it's traditional" explanation of why women in general did housework, referring to a division into male and female tasks. In one professional family this took an interesting tack. The father changed the subject from why women by and large "set the scene" within the household for childcare and daily reproduction of labour to take place, to how men created the context within which this could be set, by providing the money, or by "pianning" the lifestyle. His wife at several points reminded him that in their household both were employed. She is currently earning more than he. However, he still claimed that both in the general and their particular case, the man's "planning" was all-important, and attempted to point out to me, in the first paragraph included here, that I should not take a one-sided (one-eyed) view, even if it was now 'fashionable" to look at what women did in the house.

Fa: That's really accurate generally (that women do scene-setting activities). I guess though they're on a different, scenes within scenes, you know, I mean I think it's important to remember that the four walls of the house, and just the four walls of the site, and just to kind of, working to make money so that the house can be a house, so that there is a house to come to, and then there is, there are, I mean it's important not to — I mean I know it's very fashionable now to construe everything in a kind of, to close one eye, and — the other eye now.

Mo: Better recall that the both parties are making money in this situation, not like the past where the man —

Fa: But there is planning, I guess I'm saying there is planning that goes into, lifestyle planning and planning, you know, what, where the kind of lifestyle, finished, you know, to be shooting for. There's a lot of effort goes in.

Mo: Uhuh, yes.

Fa: And it's, you know, I think it's also traditionally a lot of that kind of thinking or creating a context, I mean it, it's, you know my family's situation it was that way. And at a certain point when we had gotten to be teenagers there, the whole of what kept my mother busy for so many years got collapsed into being sort of ultra-fastidious about vacuuming the floor six times a day. Whereas my father was actually, you know, still trying to, having still to make a living to keep the whole thing, he was hoping we could go to university and all the rest of that, so.

Mo: But that's not the case with us.
Fa: No. But as far as planning, I think more of the kind of general lifestyle planning, not so much on that scale, I think we wouldn't have a place in the country if I hadn't caused it to happen, we wouldn't have had this house if I hadn't found a piece of land that we could afford, and gotten it, rezoned it, you know . . . (Karen and Robert, IV)

Robert's comments devalue not only his wife's continual organizing of daily activities, but his mother's work in the home when he was a child. When I brought the subject back to daily chores and organization Karen commented that her husband was "quite defensive about all this. He's more defensive than he likes to believe he is." Robert then explained that at the end of a working day they were too tired to bother about who (mostly Karen) did what, and that I should not "oversimplify" those things.

Fa: I mean, when you, when you, talking about these things when you're so tired you can hardly stand up, it becomes a bit of a, a moot point. When we both fall into bed at the end of the day, and, you know, get up the next morning without having had enough sleep, you know, I mean, how dead can you get? You know, *(laughs)* what's the difference? I mean it, you know. But I think it's, it's a, maybe you're right, you know, maybe —
Mo: Uh, priorities.
Fa: Yeh. But it's all part of a big puzzle that I think has many layers to it. You know, I don't, it's important not to oversimplify. You know, I mean —. (Karen and Robert, IV)

In this account all work relating to daily organization disappears, leaving only task performance to be counterpoised by the man's long-term planning.

Lucy and Wayne mentioned tradition and social pressures. It was "traditional", they said, for the woman to take care of the household chores, the man finances and the exterior of the house.

Mo: It seems to me perhaps maybe men feel more of a responsibility to organize like maybe the financial matters of the household, or — I don't know, things of that nature, whereas the women does have her responsibility to make sure everything is, have it in, you know, for the kids, and the food and laundry and that kind of thing. You know they just <u>think</u> along those lines more.
Fa: Well, let's face it, I mean it's the tradition, in traditional roles, it's the modernization of traditional roles, I mean you know for no reason . . . Your

mother did, your mother did laundry and my father did things, you know, out in the yard and made sure the house was painted outside, and you know however he did it, whether he, you know hired somebody and supervised it, or did it himself, or whatever. You know, that's what dads did. Dads looked after getting the cars fixed . . . And you know 20 years ago, as for as I would ever guess, you know it would be unheard of for the wife to go out and actually start a lawnmower. Wives were, you know it was considered too dangerous for wives to do that, for women to do, operate a lawnmower, it was too dangerous for them to use a rototiller or whatever, I mean. You know, I don't think it's anything more than just, you know, some retention of traditional roles.

Mo: And a lot of changes are of necessity, probably, as much as anything.

Fa: I don't think anybody ever really sits down, you know nobody ever sits down and defines what's fair. So it, nobody that I know ever sat down and said, you know, 'what's fair', you know, when you got married, the day you got married, 'OK, well job number one, now that the honeymoon's over, we'd better divide up the, you know, the responsibilities' . . . (Lucy and Wayne, IV)

Lucy gave an example of social pressures pushing people into traditional patterns.

Mo: Even though a lot of people don't start out with traditional ideas, you're sort of forced into it. I can remember before we had the children, I was taking a course which was very intense for about 6 weeks and I studied night and day and I totally neglected the housework, and I wasn't working, I was just taking the course. And I can remember a, the gentleman next door coming into the house and I was not there, I was somewhere else in the house, and I could hear you apologizing for the condition of the house and I remember thinking at the time, you know, it reflects on me, like you know people don't really think, you know anything, like they don't expect Wayne to do the housework, they just think I'm not doing the housework. I don't think you can get away from that . . .

Fa: I think a lot of it is, I think you also have to look at, you know, that's your own guilt trip, because you, you know, you yourself demand that things be in order, now.

Mo: Yes. And if you live in a neighbourhood where the, you know, lady next door stays home and keeps her house clean all the time, then you know you sort of put that on yourself too. (Lucy and Wayne, IV)

These comments illustrate several points. Even as Lucy speaks, very perceptively, of outside pressures, she devalues her own pursuits. "I wasn't working, I was just taking the course." Wayne turns her perception into her own "guilt trip" and hence her responsibility for the house into her own choice. Lucy, and women generally, are busy because they choose to be. Further, Wayne's comment that

"nobody sits down and defines what's fair . . . " is contradicted by several of the other parents in the study, who clearly do think about, and discuss, such matters.

Sheena and Ted also agreed that it was generally women who did the scene-setting things: food in the fridge, clothes in the drawer, house reasonably tidy, and the necessary material available for children's play. Ted had already taken a "separate spheres" approach, saying that he saw these as essentially Sheena's responsibilities, as she was employed only part-time, and Sheena had made it clear that she did not consider her part-time cashier's job as serious work. Why should it be women in general, though, who did these household things? They relied on a definition of division of labour as traditional, though Sheena said "it's getting better".

Fa: I think it's — probably a lot, like especially in the older days, the men were out working and the women were taking care of the household. And it's probably just a thing that's been passed over, where the men were used to being out and working while the women were taking care of the house, it's like they think they know more how to take care of the house also.

Mo: Yeh, yeh — I suppose. I think it's getting better. Like in Mum's day, she worked and did everything in the house, like everything. And with the kids, plus worked full-time. See your Mum was home. (Sheena and Ted, lower-income family, IV)

As they spoke of the "traditional" division of labour in Ted's home, they mentioned how his father on his return from work had regularly slept on the couch, causing the family to tiptoe around him.

> Father's asleep on the couch! I remember like when we first started dating it was like don't call Ted's house between four and five because his Dad's lying down then. But I know it wouldn't have been the other way around. If his Mum was lying down! Oh your mother wouldn't have been! But if she was from four to five! (Sheena, IV)

Here Sheena refers to something few others mention: the question of where power lies within the family, expressed here in terms of who can decide to rest and indeed is granted by the family the "right" to lie down, and to enforce quiet on the household. In comments such as these she appears to contradict her expressed

wish to be a traditional "mother at home", calling instead for changed gender relations.

Andy gives a "traditional" explanation, but also appears to criticise it.

> Most of the men, in the old days, used to be the bread-makers, they would bring home the money while the women were at home. Times have changed. The men haven't, but women are changing, men aren't. That's the way it is. Men are still in the dark ages, thinking they should be outdoors and the women should be at home. (Andy, IV)

Time pressures and hours of work as explanation

Duncan, like Ted, cited his wife's hours of work as reason for their division of labour. This begs the question of why she, not he, worked part-time.

> Fa: I think that, going back to what we had talked about with respect to Elizabeth working for me and for us, her hours are somewhat more, much more flexible than my hours, and as a result she's the one more likely to go out grocery shopping, for large grocery orders. My hours are such that I'm not home usually until five o'clock at the earliest, and perhaps as late as seven o'clock, and we both decided that it really isn't worth it to take the children out with us grocery shopping, because they're too tired, and they want too many things, and so especially now since Christmas, it certainly seems to make sense, or more sense for Elizabeth to do it during the day when she's only got one child, instead of going out when she has, in her estimation, four, me included as a child.
>
> Mo: Not only that, but doing the majority of the cooking I also have a better idea of what is needed.
>
> Fa: That's right, and so when things run out, I mean, you're more likely to note them, and to get them. (Elizabeth and Duncan, professional-income family, IV)

Duncan's comments imply that he is, child-like, not competent to shop, and does not notice what is needed. He also assumes that the possibilities are Elizabeth shopping with one child, or with four: that is, he does not appear to see himself even competent as a babysitter.

Several other couples mentioned the woman's part-time job hours: Sheena and Ted, Lucy and Wayne, to some extent Anna and Hugh. However, it appears that in these cases the woman considers she is in part-time work in order to have time for more childcare things. As Lucy said during the second interview:

> Why would I do that? I would be inclined to say, because I work only part time, but I know that if I worked full-time I would still have that responsibility. (Lucy, II)

We have seen that in two middle-income families the woman is planning to move to part-time work, job-sharing, in order to have more time at home; although in both cases, the woman is at present the higher wage-earner.

Several couples spoke of hours of work and time constraints with a different emphasis; that having both partners in the workforce meant that both were required to participate in domestic labour. Rick and Mike spoke of "fairness" to their wives.

> I know how much work it is to look after four kids, 'cause I do it enough to know. And I think that's the biggest problem with husbands and wives is the husbands don't spend enough time to know how much time it, how much, I don't mean just physical work, I guess mental stress, of dealing with the kids all the time. I understand that, and so. I try to help a little more, as I say I don't want to give too much. *(laughs)* Or she'll expect more. But I don't want her to have a nervous breakdown either, so! (Mike, lower-income family, IV)

This retains the idea Mike "helping out", while Cheryl remains the supervisor.

Natural abilities of men and women as explanation

Several parents, women and men, including Cheryl, mentioned the never-ending nature of housework. You could never say that the job was finished. However, Mike had other ideas, which led to a discussion of "men" and "women" and their different perceptions of the job to be done.

Fa: I mean like that's the problem with most women, they get all uptight about this, now —
Mo: No, no, but it's never finished.
Fa: — but I could come in and the place could be a mess, and I could say it's finished for today, you know, I'll tackle it tomorrow, I'm going to lay down and have a rest right now because I'm tired. But a woman won't do that.
Mo: *(laughs)* I think that's a difference between, basic difference between men and women. Except —
Fa: Women won't do that, they won't, they say, Jesus, house is a mess, I got to run around and clean it up, you know and get in a panic and they work all day, and then they don't get any rest and they complain. And then they're howling, but — you should just say, if you want a mess I think I'll just lay down, sleep for —
Mo: See, it doesn't bother him.

Fa: — a couple of hours, and then get up and, and work on it.
Mo: *(laughs)* It doesn't bother men like it bothers women, they like to have some kind of order to their life, whereas I think men —
Fa: Oh, men do too, a lot of men do too but I mean —
Mo: No, but they don't, they're not as, most men are not as keen on the order as —.
Fa: I like to have order, I like to see the house clean, but I also like to have time off, and when it comes time to have time off —
Mo: Which is, which is more important, eh? Priorities.
Fa: That's right, that's her, she doesn't think like that. She won't go to bed until all the dishes are done, the kitchen counter's clean and everything.
Mo: Well it's like Saturday night, I'm tired on Saturday night 'cause I've worked all week, but by the same token I would like to push myself a little bit harder and try to get most of the laundry through and things generally clean so that I can have Sunday and Monday, just a buffer zone and to spend some time with the kids and do some things that are, you know, that are other than, than the maintenance of the house because I mean, it's never-ending, I mean God, it'll last, don't have to worry about it running out! *(laughs)* (Cheryl and Mike, IV)

There are a number of general claims being made, here. Women will not stop doing housework. Men do not care so much about order, and dirt does not bother them. Women are too fussy about these things. This tends to locate tasks as following from particular attributes of men and women generally.

Cindy and Paul discussed women's talents for "organization" and their seeming ability to deal simultaneously with domestic and outside jobs. Childbearing gave women greater natural responsibility for their children, said the mother, and her association with childrearing tasks followed from this responsibility.

Mo: I think where the women actually have the children, too, sort of you take it on as some kind of, their responsibility, you know. That bonding is there, like, they feel more responsible, take care of the child.
Fa: Well, it's just nice if the women do two, two jobs. They can somehow take full responsibility for getting all that stuff organized for the children, then they go, they get everything, you know, do whatever they have to do at whatever job they have. Whereas a man, and again this is very subjective, but his total uh — he's totally concerned, I'm totally concerned, with what I got to do at work and how am I going to get organized for that, and so on so forth, so I'm preoccupied with work. And I, I allow, this organization of the family, I've got less, less of it creeping in. Whereas Cindy some way or other can balance the two better, and does a good job. (Cindy and Paul, IV)

Cindy's ability here becomes "natural" and not a little mysterious to Paul. Men,

he implies, could not do this. Did Cindy think she could indeed "balance the two better"?

Mo: Yeh I do. I think I can get small chores done more efficiently. And I think I'm better organized. Type of work I do at work is very organized, and I sort of have that kind of mind, so, carried over at home, too. I always have a mental list running, and I try to get things done right away, and not put them off so they don't pile up. I think you have to be organized for them, just things arrive.
Fa: Well, Cindy's very well organized. Again I say I tend to get preoccupied with what I have to do for work, and as opposed to allowing my mind to be free once I get, you know, home from work, to concentrate on what has to be done at home.
Mo: And sometimes I wish I wasn't so organized, that I could just forget about things. I just can't seem to do that. (Cindy and Paul, IV)

Despite her talent for organization, she was hoping to find someone to share her laboratory-technologist work, to have more time at home. She felt overwhelmed by coping with the job and the house. Paul speaks highly of Cindy's organizational talents, but the effect of this talk is to leave domestic labour with her, "naturally".

Personal preference as explanation

Vince attempted to disassociate my finding of women's greater responsibility for scene-setting from his household. His wife did not agree.

Fa: I don't think that's true here, for us.
Mo: Well in the home situation it is.
Fa: I make sure that there's food every week, I do the grocery shopping every week and make sure —
Mo: That's the shopping, but that's not planning the dinners.
Fa: But that's important, that's . . . I'm planning the meals ahead of time. When I buy, say when I go out and buy the groceries, I'm thinking of at least four night's suppers, when I go out to do it, I'm thinking meals when I go out to do it, I'm thinking lunches when I go out to do it. I am.
Mo: Yeh.
Fa: I'm thinking breakfasts when I go out to do it. You know, when I go and do the shopping I'm thinking for meals. (Berthe and Vince, IV)

I have already indicated that these comments make visible normally-invisible work. This couple had similar disagreements about many areas of childcare, such

as clothes-buying. There are areas, however, in which Vince does not participate, and he generally gave "I hate that" as reason for non-participation.

Mo: Packing to go away for the summer, summer holidays. I would do all of that. The whole thing. You know write reams of things down that all, everybody needs. I would organize all of that.
Fa: Packing, yeh.
Mo: Packing it all up.
Fa: I hate packing.
Mo: Although, then Vince takes over and packs the car itself, but —
Fa: See I don't like packing, so you do all that packing stuff. Organizing all this stuff, that sort of thing.
Mo: Well, because I would know what the kids would need. He'd have no idea of what to take, you know, one pair of pyjamas, or —
Fa: No, I think I could figure all that out, but I just, —
Mo: You can't be bothered, though.
Fa: I can't be bothered, I would do it if I had to. (Berthe and Vince, IV)

Note that Berthe suggests, above, that she has expertise from practice. Where Vince has "no interest" in performing an activity, he does not do it.

> If there's some sports equipment needed, or something going to be for skating or baseball, this'd be boys or girls, making no difference, that I would think of, because that's what I do with them, basically. If it was craft stuff, it would be you, if it was playdough needed or that . . . if they didn't have any crayons to colour with I probably wouldn't notice, because I don't do it with them, right, and you would do that more with them. Or school supplies, that's, all the school stuff, you do . . . I guess I don't have any interest in it, you know? (Vince, IV)

Susan and Joachim also cite personal preference as a reason for their overall division, along with availability and time constraints: if shopping is required during the day it has to be Joachim who goes, but this is difficult with two small children. So most food shopping is done by Susan, who enjoys it, in the evening.

Mo: The only thing I do is cook. And occasionally the dishes. Not even half the time the dishes. I used to live in indescribable chaos when I lived on my own, and continue really in the same pattern . . . I enjoy grocery shopping, and you hate it, so the big grocery store stuff, Sobeys and stuff, I do. But then I like it . . . What we both hate is thinking up what to eat. We more or less share that, don't we?
Fa: Oh, yuh. Cooking works quite well.
Mo: Cooking works well. He's the one with the genius for producing food when we actually haven't got any! (Susan and Joachim IV)

Russell (1983) describes his "highly participant fathers", those who did as much or more childcare as the mothers, as under some pressure to conform with a more traditional division. This couple do not talk about social pressures on them to make a choice more in conformity with the "traditional" model mentioned by other parents. However, Susan pointed out that as immigrants they did not share a "North American ideology" of masculinity defined by distance from house and children.

Complex arguments as explanation: social influences, training, and personal preference all affect division of labour

Several parents combined ideas about preference, training or socialization with external pressure to conform to social norms. Lucy had done this to explain the maintenance of "traditional roles": other people would assume that housework was her job. Simon also gave an example. When this couple interviewed babysitters, the prospective employees had expected that Sheila, not he, would ask the questions and in fact be the employer.

> Part of it was simply the way the babysitters treated us, which was that they talked to you, they wanted to find out what you wanted and what you expected, and I wasn't in the room, I was sort of like, it was like they acknowledged my existence if I said something to them but they clearly thought that they were going to be hired by you, and that was the only issue. And I think I got influenced by that, to some extent, and that sort of helped shape our, that process. (Simon, IV)

Sheila's and Simon's specific areas of responsibility have been discussed already. Were these coloured by "stereotypical kinds of roles" more than they thought, they wondered? They discussed several concepts: training, personal preference, social pressure to conform even when they did not wish to, in terms of both their own and other households.

Mo: It could be that uh there's some vestige of these stereotypical kinds of roles that have you know sort of been around for a long time, in the sense that while men and women participate now in both things, the women still have the responsibility, in some sense, where the men don't. Not that they're not participating and helping out, and everything, but there's just something about

making sure it gets done, as opposed to who's doing it . . . And it may be that while we've agreed to share all duties, that responsibility is still is more stereotypic than you would imagine.

Fa: It may not only be this vestige but also — just early training. I mean like when you were a little girl, and I suspect still, little girls spent a lot more time dressing and undressing dolls than little boys do. For whatever reason. And I, you know I don't, I basically didn't get a lot of training in dealing with clothes and ironing — and neither did you, apparently — *(laughs)* and I mean that never was an interest of mine. (Sheila and Simon, IV)

Early socialization may be important, they said, but cannot account for all divisions. Their own situation reflects both a wish to avoid a "traditional" division of labour and their personal preferences for particular tasks; but the social assumptions are still present.

Fa: I hate doing the dishes. Well, we used to share it, before kids again, we used to share, I remember it was like one day of you cooking, me doing dishes, one day of me cooking, you doing dishes.

Mo: I know but you never grumbled about the dishes, then. I guess you generally grumble about them now.

Fa: Mm. It's because I've got used to doing the cooking and leaving the mess. But I mean, I would —

Mo: I think, I think the difference is whether you feel responsible for it or not, and I, I just think that a lot of that is still on the woman for certain things and on the man for other things. I mean even if we are quote "liberated" I think that people still expect certain things of each person, and whether or not you agree with that you're still affected by all that sort of social pressure. (Sheila and Simon, IV)

Personal preferences, training, and social expectations are seen also by Rachel as influencing her family's broadly traditional division of labour. She sees their division as very practical.

Mo: I think it goes back to the fact that everybody still assumes that the mother is essentially responsible. And I mean I essentially look after there being food in the house . . . And I wash, you know, I buy the kids' clothes generally and I'm responsible for laundering them and repairing them, such as it is . . . our whole economy is built on the idea that division of labour makes more sense, I mean why should both of us waste time knowing how to do every single thing around the house? He can't sew, and I can't saw, I mean, you know, we, essentially, you know. And there are, those divisions are still very much determined by societal values that we grew up with. But the fact remains that I'm, I don't think either of us are essentially unhappy with the broad override, I'd rather sew

than saw. (Rachel, IV)

This analysis, with its implied balance of responsibilities, however, again omits the continuous nature of traditionally-female domestic tasks.

"I'm a product of my environment," said Anna. She and her husband gave many reasons for their division of labour. Upbringing and socialization, personal preference as a product of that upbringing, and different value systems were important to them.

> I think women, women sort of traditionally worry about clothes more than guys do . . . most guys just don't worry, they weren't brought up to be very fashion-conscious . . . Just you've always grown up, you know, you grow up and you dressed up, you know, it's alright to see girls dress up and wearing your clothes, I mean the girls are always in my closets . . . I know boys would probably love to do the same thing but we discourage them, I mean our parents discourage them, kind of thing, boys don't play with dolls, and it's all, you know, environmental, and the way we were raised, boys do this and girls do that, and that's all it is, and even though mentally, you know, or theoretically, you know, I don't like that, I call myself, I think I'm a feminist, I believe I'm a feminist! *(laughs)* It's still in me to, you know, girls do the cooking and girls do the laundry, and — that doesn't mean he can't do it, but I'm still, I'm still a product of my environment, how I was raised, no matter how much I, you know, theorize about it I still don't want to work on a car . . . I've been programmed to go the other way, and I know that. . . I kind of enjoy, it's like a remedy, you know I enjoy cooking, you know, it's fun and it's, it's something I enjoy doing. (Anna, IV)

They have different ways, said Hugh, of approaching tasks like cooking. His is "the minimum amount of dishes, the minimum amount of fuss, the quickest most nutritious meal." Anna's cooking is much more elaborate, and she does most of the cooking. With laundry it is similar.

> Say we decided OK we're going to split this clothes chore, no male, no female, we're going to split it right down the middle, all these clothes, all the laundry, all of this, right down the middle, I wouldn't be able to take it! 'Cause I'd be going — you're spending all this time doing like, you're sorting these little things and you're picking up the pink — 'Oh, I remember when (the elder girl) used to wear this shirt!' and all this kind of stuff, and I mean, I'm in auto-mode here, I'm like — it's 15 minutes or less, and, OK, so it shouldn't have went in with the whites, what the hell, we'll bleach it next time. So I don't, I don't think, it's one of those, some of these tasks. Now dishes, Anna and I don't do dishes same way

> either, but we put up with each other's results. I do dishes very extensively, and she does them very sloppily! (Hugh, IV)

Hugh asked if I had found physical childcare to be much shared in other families. Most men, I said, were willing to bath children or change diapers, though generally not as often as the mothers. He found this interesting, and important. As an advocate of men's involvement in childcare, he expressed some scorn of a man who apparently drew the line at changing dirty diapers.

> *(laughs)* I'll change wet ones but not dirty? Well that, it's a sin though, 'cause in actual fact he's missing a lot, right, he's missing something that women get that is a sin because women get it but they have to go all the extra work to get that extra — loving and care. So he's just missing it so he's just, it's like going to a baseball game and not having any sound — (Hugh, IV)

This led to a debate over why he and other men he knows did participate in childcare, when their fathers had not. Pressures on men were shifting, he said, and this enabled men in some ways to redefine their masculinity, as he had done.

> This is a time of change and people don't have to sit there and people can have, people's attitudes towards gay people, people's attitudes towards about everything's under theoretical attack, or whatever. So you don't have to sit there and follow a mould, 'cause there isn't a mould there any more. And if there isn't a mould and you can do whatever you want, well Jeez it seems pretty, pretty unfair to have mom come home from a full day's work, make dinner, feed the kids, give them a bath and put them — that doesn't seem very fair. And if there is no real mould, like I'm not, you know, the three guys that live on the street when you sit around after a night out on the porch and drink beer and make jokes about the wife, now that just doesn't go on, in the crowd I hang out, though from what I see on TV or from my father I know that went on. You know, there's a lot of peer pressure there, like you got a good ten guys and you just, 'You can't be like that, my god! You a namby-pamby queer? What's wrong with you?' So that — there's a lot of the, that's just kind of thrown, opened up, we'll see where we all come down in two generations. So you can follow your instincts in the matter. So I don't think it's any great change, just a little more freedom to do what you want. (Hugh, IV)

They reverted to housework, viewing it as "a waste of time", as Anna said, which had to be constantly repeated, unlike many more typically male tasks which had lasting results. Hugh points here to the socially defined nature of housework

tasks and performance. Floors have to be cleaned to "an acceptable level". Cowan (1983) and other researchers have pointed to the changing nature of these standards, of what is acceptable, as different technologies for domestic work have become available.

Fa: Anna's right, I spent Sunday morning cleaning up this place, washing dishes and I stripped the floor and I waxed it and I stained the door and all kinds . . . That's the, that's the entire Sunday morning that — I mean all we're doing is just getting, getting the major dirt out of the way so it doesn't look disgusting, we're not getting the place clean, we're just getting it up to what's considered an acceptable level of some sort. When you think about it that's an entire morning out of the only two mornings I have out of a week. I can't say I got a lot of pleasure from it . . . one week later, I did this, I stained and re-sanded that door, it's going to be there for the next two years, I can look at it and think that that's a nice piece of work!

Mo: *(laughs)*

Fa: I can't tell I did any of this floor, 'cause I had to do it twice and yet — I did it two weeks ago —

Mo: It's endless, it's, it's (all the time) working —

Fa: And then the kids went around with the wrong kind of shoes there, (the younger's) going around with a pair of her old shoes, just tore the hell of it.

Mo: Just marked up the whole floor, oh God.

Fa: So I didn't get, I haven't gained anything by doing this work. All I do is get it up to where it was two weeks ago, and that took me like two hours. (Anna and Hugh, IV)

These comments position Hugh and Anna in a way that is very different from most other parents. Housework has to be done, but is messy, boring and time-consuming. Parents have a duty to be "fair" to each other. If we compare Hugh's "that doesn't seem very fair" with Wayne's "nobody asks what's fair", we can see ways in which fatherhood, and motherhood, vary dramatically from one household to the next.

COPING MECHANISMS, AND GENDER STRATEGIES: PARENTS' EXPLANATIONS RECONSIDERED

Parents' descriptions of what they do, and the "explanations" they give for these, have to be regarded with some care. My interview tapes do not contain records of actions performed by parents. What they contain is the parents' descriptions of these, in their own words; their talk. The "explanations" are also talk. Rather than describing their motivation, this talk may be regarded as rationalizing or justifying, to me, to themselves, and to the other partner, their particular practices, their particular division of labour, and are based on whatever particular descriptions of society, of motherhood, of fatherhood, they have available to them.

Some of the "reasons" parents give contradict each other. Socialization for traditional roles is in opposition to freedom of personal choice. Early socialization is emphasized when it coincides with a traditional division of labour, but Vince's "training" in hanging out laundry when he was young is now given as reason for him to "hate" it. In adulthood daily practice of skills increases women's ability to perform domestic labour; but men appear to continue to make the same mistakes, or constantly have to be given instructions.

Contradictions arise both between and within families' and individuals' accounts. For instance, Anna and Hugh discuss problems of housework and its constant nature, and the unfairness of the "traditional" attitude of leaving it to the woman: but Anna "insists" on doing laundry and considers Hugh would not perform this adequately, and Hugh in turn gives every indication of resisting Anna's definition of acceptable performance.

Parents' "reasons" can be analysed in several ways. Backett (1982) discussed similar talk in terms of "coping mechanisms" which enabled parents to overcome discrepancies between their ideal picture of how a family should be organized and

the everyday realities of their lives, in such a way that these were not seen as contradictory. Hochschild's (1989) conception of "gender strategies" is somewhat similar. Both authors present the partners in their families as engaged in a constant process of negotiation: but when situations arise which cannot be dealt with by negotiating, and hence have potentially disruptive effects, some means of avoiding the disruption is required. This is where "coping mechanisms" are employed.

In all couples Backett studied, the woman was described as having overall responsibility for home and childcare. Participants explained this partly in terms of its being a "stage" in their family life. Unlike my respondents, all the women had given up their jobs to be at home with young children, and expected to return to work at a later date. However, says Backett (1982:77), "coping mechanisms on an everyday level (also) came into operation where the man was seen as available to participate equally, but as not actually doing this". She continues:

> Paradoxically, one set of such coping mechanisms (i) relied on a belief in the husband's competence whilst another (iii) maintained that he was in certain respects, incompetent. There was also an intermediate set of coping mechanisms (ii) which implied that competence existed, but that it was constantly undermined by a lack of awareness. (p.78)

Under (i), she lists the husband's appearing as willing to do certain things; or having done them in the past, or being able to do them if required. The last of these, she says, "not only supported beliefs in fair division of labour but it could also be seen as a kind of theoretical safety net for the lack of human resources of the nuclear family" (p. 79). Under (ii) she describes both husbands' and wives' statements that the husbands would do things if only they knew they were required to be done. This implied that the husbands simply did not recognize what had to be done in the house or for the children. Under (iii) she says "There were numerous examples where a spouse claimed a lack of knowledge or skill in a certain activity" (p.80). Husbands did not know where the children's clothing was, or wives did not

know how to dig the garden. Backett terms these mechanisms "myths", and comments on their precarious nature: all family members collaborate to sustain them.

These mechanisms will by now be very familiar. I will deal first with the concept of husbands' incompetence. In the case of laundry, it is quite clear that the men who spoke to me about their own shortcomings were indeed using these as a way out of performing the task. There is no essential incompetency of males when it comes to sorting and running washes: two men did perform these tasks on a regular basis, with apparently no complaints or problems. Rachel refused to participate in the construction of the myth of male incompetence when she exclaimed:

> He knows how to run the dishwasher, he knows how to run a radial-arm saw, but he doesn't *(laughs)* know the clothes-washer! (Rachel, IV)

Several of the men themselves came close to "blowing" this myth. They explained to me, in careful detail, just how they would "get it wrong", indicating greater knowledge on their part than they claimed to have.

> I keep putting things like Javex in the black clothes, and stuff, the dark clothes . . . (Don, IV)

> Too much detergent, not enough detergent, separate the whites from the darks, when they use the Javex, when they use the bleach! Girls are brought up at home that they do these chores, so they know at a very young age. (Andy, IV)

Several professional or middle-income men took a different line, claiming that their "incompetence" was a function of their not wanting to spend time on a task they considered unnecessarily complicated, or of their not wanting to operate within a definition of performance provided by their wives.

> If you asked me to do all the laundry if I had control over all the kids' clothes, yes I would, *(laughs)* and she knows that, that's a, that's a control thing too. (Hugh, IV)

While they could learn the task, they saw no need to do this.

Backett's first concept of "showing willing" is similarly present in these interviews, particularly in areas directly to do with children. Men feed children while their wives are at work, they take them out, to baseball or hockey, they express interest in their doings (particularly with children past the toddler stage), and in some cases they stay home when the children are sick. All respondents, both men and women, expressed a belief that men could look after children, in most cases as well as women could, with several interviewees saying that some men might give better care than some women.

There were also, however, suggestions that care might be "naturally" easier for women, who were "closer" to their children, or who had been "trained" or socialized for the job. "I think the amount that you actually put in now is quite commendable, compared to the kind of training (you had)", said Kathleen to her partner; and most women in the study expressed a feeling that their husbands were interested and involved with the children, and did for them, by and large, what they could. It should of course be pointed out that not all women did have "training" in childcare and housework, and conversely that some men did; and that housework tasks have changed since these women's childhood. The men who apparently do most housework and childcare, Joachim, Simon Don, and Hugh, had no childhood "training", but learned their tasks on-the-job, as did the women to a large extent.

If a women's performance of household chores, or her ability to "notice" these need doing, is seen either as "natural" or as due to early training, then her performance of these chores, and particularly the ability to do several at once, may come to seem easy or of little value. If a man does them he is going against nature, without benefit of training, and the performance is harder. His doing of one housework task may then be equated with his wife's performance of many: he means well, he is trying hard, he is attempting to take an equal share in household responsibilities (although not succeeding). Male "incompetence" may even function

to show his willingness to help. Men's participation in chores in such a way that the chore is done "improperly" (from the woman's point of view) may then lead to a situation where the women's responsibility for the chores is confirmed (her definition of its performance is upheld, and it is seen even more as something that is easy for women but hard for men), while defining the man as willing.

The idea that men would perform tasks if they "noticed" that these required to be done likewise constructs the husbands as willing to participate. But we have seen already, notably in Chapter VIII, the invisible nature of "noticing" and how it connects with responsibility. People who have responsibility for a task are the ones who "notice" its need.

These "reasons" are more than piecemeal strategies on the part of men for avoiding domestic labour. Women also give them. It is Kathleen rather than Douglas who makes reference to her "training". It is Donna, rather than Rick, who gently disparages his doing of laundry in a "different way". Certainly the women are employing these "reasons", or going along with them, as mechanisms for avoidance of friction, as Backett suggests. But these small mechanisms can be built up, and combined with others into an account and a justification of a family's lifestyle.

Major reasons not dealt with above are the ideas of "traditional roles" and individual preferences. A recourse to the "it's traditional" argument may act to absolve parties, men and women, from responsibility in decisions as to their division of labour. If the pattern is handed down from the past, through socialization or training, there is not much that can be done except, sometimes, to "help" a spouse who seems overburdened. The "traditional" explanation does not only act to further construct "willingness", but can create an impression of even-handedness, or impute inevitability to the division. The parents are just doing what parents <u>do</u> do.

Alternatively, and in contradiction to this, the division of labour is based on personal choice, with both women and men "choosing" the things to do that they like

best. This "reason" is an interesting one. It occurs throughout many interviews, with some couples giving it as their main or even only reason for the division of responsibilities in the home. It is somehow easier to accept as a reason when the couple have in some way broken the mould, as with Simon and Sheila, who have divided housework tasks between them, or Susan and Joachim, who have adopted an unconventional division with Susan as the main wage-earner, or Anna and Hugh, who are attempting to raise their girls to be able to both "sew and saw", in the words of another parent: and yet some of these parents are the most critical of this definition. Sheila states that they divide tasks according to preference, but wonders if their choices are more stereotypical than they imagine; Anna comments that she has been "programmed" to "want" to sew and cook, rather than fixing the car.

Other parents uncritically offer the reason of preference as a complete explanation. Paradoxically, both "tradition" and "preference" serve a similar function for the couples who use them, acting as another kind of coping mechanism. They remove any suggestion of power or compulsion by the other spouse. The lack of discussion of direct power by parents is noteworthy. Partners may imply that the other partner expects or assumes tasks will be done, but there is no suggestion that the partner is compelling or constraining performance.[1] Rather it is society dictating the "role", or the individual partner voluntarily "taking it on". This use of "reasons" to avoid discussing power is yet another mechanism for coping with daily interaction. Yet the workings of gendered power can be observed in partners' practices, as we shall see.

In her examination of women's performance of "the second shift", Hochschild (1989) outlines major "gender strategies" of both partners. Like Backett, she sees

[1] Indeed, only twice in the series of interviews is immediate gendered power referred to directly: by Andy in discussing (disapprovingly) Carla's first husband and the constraints he put on her life; and by Sheena, speaking of how Ted's father could nap on the sofa after work, quoted in this chapter.

parents involved in negotiation, sometimes more overtly than others. Strategies are developed in response to the other partner and the resources each partner and the family as a whole can draw upon. She describes several less-than-successful attempts by women to alter their partner's strategy in the direction of his providing more "help" in the house. Eventually such women have given up, adopting strategies that legitimate his non-performance of tasks, and making such arrangements in their work lives (e.g. taking a part-time job) as are required to permit them to carry the burden of domestic labour. In a few cases Hochschild identified a grand "family myth" that underpinned the behaviour and talk of both partners.

Again looking at my study through her framework, I can discuss parents' descriptions and explanations in terms of major strategies. Thus it is possible to categorize families into those where the woman fulfils most of the home-and-childcare responsibilities while holding a part-time job (Sheena and Ted, Elizabeth and Duncan, Lucy and Wayne); those where she still does the childcare but also a full-time job (Karen and Robert, Rachel and Pete, Cindy and Paul, Brenda and Glen); those with an expressed commitment to sharing, and part-time work for her (Kathleen and Douglas, Anna and Hugh); those with shared of tasks and some sharing of responsibilities, whether partial and forced by circumstances (Lucille and Don) or undertaken as a deliberate choice by both partners (Sheila and Simon); with "role reversal" (Susan and Joachim); or with a very traditional division of household labour combined with non-traditional child care (Carla and Andy); those with two full-time jobs and a verbal competition as to who is the more involved in childcare (Berthe and Vince); and those with fathers relatively highly involved in childcare, though less so in household tasks (Donna and Rick, Cheryl and Mike).

In discussing parents' "reasons" for the division of labour, we have seen gender strategies at work. Parents' give a variety of reasons that link together as a

legitimation of their lifestyle. Wayne and Lucy, for instance, construct a picture of Lucy as skilled, competent, patient and nurturant, with time at home because of her (also nurturant) part-time job, as naturally "closer" to the children. In her comments on her motherhood Lucy positions children and childcare as central to her life. Wayne appears in this account as a good provider, as caring, supportive of Lucy, willing to help though with fewer domestic skills, and turning to Lucy for final decisions on childcare. Family life appears balanced, evenhanded, fair, on the whole, despite Wayne's claim that "nobody asks what's fair . . ." Power is not mentioned, except in one area: this family even provide their own ground for disagreement, safely outside the home. They argued, at length, about women's jobs and the way employers view parents who take time for their sick children (see Chapter IX), Lucy taking the view that women should be treated as any other employee, Wayne taking an employer's viewpoint. Lucy says they have many discussions like this. It is safe to do so. It does not cause disruption of their family life. After all, Wayne does stay home with sick children.

Each family could be examined in the same way. For reasons of space, however, I will give only one further example. Hochschild's work is important to me for its emphasis on linking the material circumstances of the families studied with gender strategies, but also for its concept of "family myths". As she uses the term, it relates to a set of legitimating beliefs and shared definitions, to which both partners subscribe, that appears to underpin every aspect of family life, every decision, and is offered to the interviewer at all times to account for family practices. To the interviewer it appears a precarious construction, contradicted often by details of the participants' talk, but the contradictions are not evident to the participants.

I have only one example of a full-blown "family myth" of this type, an extreme development of the concept of equal contributions, shared by both partners. That example is, I feel, sufficiently important to deserve a section to itself.

A FAMILY MYTH: THE MAN AS LIFESTYLE-PLANNER

Throughout the interviews with Karen and Robert, their "explanation" of the division of labour was maintained with great consistency. They maintain that they have a large measure of equality in their household: though Robert's participation in housework and childcare is very limited, his real contribution to family life is on a different "level" from what Karen describes as the "trivial" details of daily life. This is the level of lifestyle planning.

Karen is a hospital professional, defining herself as a feminist "in the true sense of feminism" (II). Robert runs a private professional practice, earning slightly less than his wife. Both are highly involved with their professional life, and both express the idea that this kind of involvement is appropriate for women as for men. When I tried to talk about women's involvement in childcare responsibilities, Robert stated that my comments were quite accurate: women did do much more household and childcare. But this had to be viewed in a context of the man's "planning" of the family's general lifestyle. "There is planning that goes into, lifestyle planning and planning, you know, what, where the kind of lifestyle, finished, you know, to be shooting for. There's a lot of effort goes in", he said, rather incoherently. Women's work became trivialized in this discourse, as we have seen.

> (T)he whole of what kept my mother busy for so many years got collapsed into being sort of ultra-fastidious about vacuuming the floor six times a day . . . (Robert, IV)

Karen maintained the myth even when I interviewed her on her own. Each partner had their areas of particular skill, which she linked to their personalities. Hers was daily organization, described as "a compulsive tendency that I have", his that of overall planning.

> Robert tends to move slower. It takes him longer to *(laughs)* eat his cereal in the morning, takes him longer to get out of bed, it takes him longer to brush his teeth, and so by the time he would consider what, what has to do next, I have it

> done. And so, bit of a neurotic, a compulsive tendency that I have that he doesn't have that I just am one, one step ahead of him the whole time. That's my impression! *(laughs)* At that level . . . but on the global level of planning not for the next millisecond, not for the next hour, or day, but in terms of the years and in terms of lifestyle, then he's generally, he sets the tone in terms of overall lifestyle and I set the tone in terms of just getting through each day. (Karen, II)

> Robert's not at all lazy or disinterested, it's just that he doesn't seem to be as tuned in to his environment generally, at that level. Probably completing something at a completely different level. (Karen, II)

> Just occasionally the myth proved insufficient and she became exasperated.

> Tomorrow morning Robert has set up a meeting at 8 o'clock, Wednesday morning, with a client of his, breakfast meeting, and he takes (the elder girl) to (preschool) on Wednesday mornings. He has taken her to school on Wednesday mornings for a year or so! But it just still hasn't dawned on him. So when he told me about this meeting I said, 'Well, I guess (she) will go to the meeting with you.' 'Oh, right, (the girl), right, school!' — as if it was the first time that it, he had to deal with this. And it just blows me away. (Karen, II)

Karen sees Robert's "slow" personality, and her own "neurotic, compulsive tendency" structuring their daily life. But Karen and Robert's division of labour in the house is generally typical of most couples in this study, and fits the pattern shown in time-budget studies of women's continued responsibility for home and childcare (see, for instance, Michelson, 1985). It is certainly possible to see, as does Hochschild, parents' "explanations" as justifications of particular circumstances arising from material demands and a partial failure of negotiation between partners. However, the justification, in this case the "myth", is itself a construction, and it comes from somewhere. Parents' highly detailed explanations, whether or not they reach the status of "myths", are actively created by the partners out of whatever they happen to have available to them: ideas, phrases, concepts to which they are exposed, and which remain within their talk. And these concepts, phrases, ideas are the ones available to them as they process their environment and their experiences and actively determine what they will do next.

"REASONS" AS DISCOURSE

It is tempting for the observer to think of the rationalizations, the justifications, the myths as an ideological overlay that somehow masks the realities of experience from the participants' real selves, that can be stripped away. The participant — Karen? Robert? Lucy? myself? — will then have true perception, will see things as they are. But this is to divorce experience from perception, and to rely on what Cameron (1985) terms "some central core of human nature" that stands apart from the daily practices of people's everyday lives. Rather than this, like Cameron:

> I agree with the semiologists . . . that our 'personalities', our desires, our needs, our ways of behaving, are constructed in our interactions with the world. These constructed elements are our real selves, and not just some kind of false consciousness that can simply be stripped away. (p.169)

Rather than conducting "the search to define the authentic self" (Potter and Wetherall, 1987, 107) to understand what Lucy or Karen "really" thinks of her family's division of labour, we can examine how her talk embodies a set of discourses which are themselves constitutive of the parents' daily practice (which they also, of course, have the effect of justifying). Within these discourses, women and men appear, as mothers and fathers, positioned within social relations in ways that construct their work as self-evident or "natural", performed for the sake of others or because they enjoy it or because it just has to be done. We could of course rewrite the explanations in different discourses. At times most of the participants do this themselves. Lucy does domestic labour, she says, because she works part-time. Alternatively, it is because she "takes it on", or because society causes her to feel responsible.

Positioned within a discourse of, say, the "mother's role", and within a situation of a child asking to be fed, Lucy or Karen will construct both her behaviour and its legitimation accordingly, and the behaviour derives meaning from the discourse.

In discussing how sociologists can use the concept of discourse to understand behaviour, Bilmes (1986) states that:

> (T)here are four general propositions that together provide a basic framework for a discursive sociology of action:
>
> 1. Behaviour gets its meaning (in part) from and within a system of discourse.
> 2. Behaviour gets its meaning (in part) from and within a situation of discourse.
> 3. Behaviour is constructed to fit the system and situation of discourse, that is, to 'make sense.'
> 4. Interaction is ordered according to the rules and practices that members use in interpreting and organizing behaviour. (p. 197)

"Members" are people who share a discourse. This could refer to Robert and Karen, with their family myth embodied in so many ways of talking and acting, or it could be the numerous parents who cite "roles" to describe their division of labour, or who describe the "natural" bond of mother and child, or how they are able to let their own preferences for doing housework constitute their daily practice. The system of discourse goes beyond the boundaries of the individual family. Karen and Robert's "myth" is unusual because it is so complete, but it is constructed, as the talk of the other parents is constructed, out of notions, ideas, fragments of ideas, about men, women, children, housework; commonalities that have their origins in a historically constituted society. In the next chapter I propose to examine some of the ways that parents talk about their parenting, and to indicate how Robert and Karen's practice is in part dependent on their expressions of the man as planner, of housework as trivial, and of Karen as hereby less (rather than more) competent, within a situation where the presence of a housekeeper/caregiver enables one partner to remain defined as on "another level".

XI. DISCOURSE AND IDEOLOGY

In describing their daily lives and in explaining why they do things as they do, parents employ a number of different discourses. Each represents a mode of speech in which the terms of reference are set, and in which only certain ideas can be expressed: a discourse of "roles" and "socialization" does not facilitate an examination of power relations between men and women. If parents do start to talk about power relations (and two do) they must switch to a different set of terms. Some discourses are linked, in that one is used to "explain" another. Some are oppositional.

We have already seen that in explanation of any gendered division of labour, their own or that of other people, parents give a number of "reasons". Examination of how these are constructed reveals underlying modes of speech, of which I have identified four.

The first two of these discourses appear as pragmatic. One makes reference to personal preference. The second has as its basis that there were activities women could more easily perform than men (and occasionally vice versa). Some of this was accounted for by "training" or practice, which leads to the third discourse, more theoretical, based around the concept of "roles" and "socialization" and with clear links to sociological and psychological usages. At times to explain both their competences and their "roles" parents turned to a third discourse, of motherhood as qualitatively different from fatherhood, as natural, as involving closeness with the children, which is linked to the psychological discourse of attachment and bonding.

Parents made use of more than one of these modes of speech, occasionally switching tracks in a fashion rather bewildering to the interviewer who might expect a response from one discourse and receive another. These four discourses may

represent different levels of parents' analysis, with choice or competence as a first level, training or socialization a second, and "bonding" a root cause. This categorization is, however, too simple, as at times choice could appear as a root cause also, and at times "choice" and "bonding", or "bonding" and "roles" appear quite contradictory, although the speaker does not remark on the contradiction.

INDIVIDUAL CHOICE

The first discourse around the division of labour in the household is that of personal preference or choice. All parents in the study use this, to some extent. The implication here is that people choose what they do, out of tasks that "have" to be done, based on their unique talents and personality traits, with their choice bounded by time constraints. They wash dishes because they like it, or at least prefer it to other possible tasks. I was struck by the number of times parents gave "I like" or "I hate" or "I don't mind" as reasons for their actions: women claimed to enjoy hanging out washing, bathing infants, reading to young children. From my own experience these can be enjoyable experiences, but need not always be so. Indeed several mothers commented (in Chapter VI) that the sources of irritation in childcare were largely the same as those of pleasure, depending on the particular circumstances within which the activity took place, the child's mood, and the parent's own degree of tiredness. Further, the claim to perform an activity because of personal choice appeared almost always to coincide with a traditionally-appearing division of labour. Women did housework, men repairs, because of preference. Women read to children, men took them skating, because of preference. Women called babysitters, men did not, because of preference.

> I love hanging (a wash) out, I love watching it blow. I don't mind cleaning, you know once I get started, I can't stop. (Lucille, I)

> But in terms of the child care I don't mind the sort of physical stuff of it — too much, I mean, enough is enough, some days! *(laughs)*. (Kathleen, II)

> Well, I guess it's the same reason that, you know, Vince would paint the fence. I just wouldn't do that. I wouldn't say that I hate it, I just wouldn't do that. And I don't mind doing the laundry. (Berthe, IV)

> Pete doesn't like shopping. *(laughs)* Not so much for food, he doesn't mind that, but going out to buy the kids clothes or anything like, or Christmas presents, he gets, I mean if it's something he's particularly keen on like sporting equipment or something, all right, but just the day-in, day-out, god-the-kids-need-underwear kind of situation, he hates, he doesn't like doing that at all. Going you know buying school supplies or boring stuff like that, he doesn't like to do. Haircuts, you know, that kind of junk. (Rachel, II)

Here Rachel implies that she does not "like" the tasks much either, but continues to do them.

> [On phoning a babysitter] And you don't want to do it, and I don't mind doing it, most of the time, I really don't. So I do do it . . . I would look after school stuff, in terms of teachers, I would look after babysitters, because you are uncomfortable doing it. And I don't mind doing it. (Berthe, IV)

> Like sweep and vacuum and dust, I don't mind any of that, but I hate laundry. (Ted, IV)

> I don't mind baking cookies and stuff like that, but I'm not good at getting into sewing and not necessarily good at crafts, so Cheryl usually looks after that kind of stuff. (Mike, III)

Mike uses this discourse in an interesting way. He does "more" in the house than he had thought he would have to. He puts this down to their work schedules and the requirements of having four children, and as we have seen, views helping as a valid part of his "role". However, the things he "helps" with are those he "doesn't mind". Washing dishes is even useful to him, he says, because it removes the traces of his carpentry work.

> More and more and more I'm cooking meals 'cause when Cheryl comes home from work she doesn't want to do it or she doesn't feel like doing it so I don't mind doing it and I wash dishes at suppertime . . . it keeps my hands clean and I have to, you know when I'm (doing carpentry) they get dirty and if I don't get them, soak them in water then when I go to selling, that night, it doesn't look good. (Mike, III)

Sheena and Ted described the division of laundry tasks in terms of their preferences. Putting away laundry remains a task Ted may choose to do, rather than a task which is his by default.

Mo: I don't mind doing it, I just hate putting laundry away. And if (Ted doesn't put it away) we live out of baskets! *(laughs)* . . .
Fa: I do hate laundry, I hate doing laundry. I don't mind putting it away. But I do hate doing laundry. (Sheena and Ted, I)

Sometimes fathers claimed they "wouldn't mind" doing something which they in fact do not do.

> Well I wouldn't mind doing, yeh — I wouldn't mind doing a little bit more grocery shopping. Elizabeth doesn't like the food that I tend to bring home, so as a result she won't let me go grocery shopping. *(laughs)* No, honestly I actually don't mind doing it, however like I said I don't normally just get the things that are on the list. (Duncan, III)

Duncan's laugh, followed by "No, honestly", would seem to indicate he felt I might find this hard to believe. Another father, Rick, made very similar comments. He had done grocery shopping for a time when his wife was pregnant with their first child. However, when the second child was expected, said Donna, "for some reason I didn't mind doing (shopping) that time", adding, "But he carried the groceries in for me usually".

Rick and several other fathers expressed the view (here of laundry) that "Hey, I don't mind doing this stuff, but just let me do it my way, don't give me any questions about it!" The lack of "control", as Hugh describes it, is a reason for not doing the task.

Alternatively, fathers may "not mind" doing part of an activity, if it is organized for them. As Ted put it:

> I mean she could even stay here, I don't mind going. That's OK, but she'd make the appointments. (Ted, IV)

Hugh combined the first and second discourses to describe his family's division of labour as resulting in part from the different abilities of the parents (largely from training), in part from his wife's insistence on doing tasks such as laundry.

> Now on the other side of the scale we have anything to do with the house, the yard, the vehicle. And again it's more a matter of what either you enjoy, or two, you're good at, or what you've grown to be able to do, you know. I can take disk brakes off a car and she can't, she doesn't mind doing the kids' clothes, matter of fact she insists that she does the kids' clothes. (Hugh, I)

It became clear to me that while mothers appeared to be saying "I don't mind" in association with almost all childcare or housework tasks, fathers were being much more specific. Also, although "I hate" said by a mother might mean that she disliked something <u>while still performing it</u>, when said by a father it generally meant that he <u>did not do</u> the task in question, or only did it if he could see no way out. That is, a sense emerged from this discourse that while both appeared to be making choices in connection with household tasks, the fathers were choosing to opt in, sometimes "to help" when they felt like it although sometimes agreeing to take on responsibility for a particular task, while the mothers were giving reasons for not opting out. If the fathers gave "I hate" as a justification for not doing something, this generally meant that the mother had to do it; as with Wayne's dislike of going shopping. Mothers gave "I hate" as a reason for trying to get the father to take something on, but if this failed would continue to do it. If the father "didn't mind" the particular activity in question he might agree to do it, although, as with Sheena, Ted and putting away the laundry, his doing it might last only for a short period of time. That is, this discourse tended to confirm that certain tasks were women's by default, particularly as parents tended to say they "didn't mind" sex-typed activities, yard work for men, laundry and physical care of small children by women.

On the whole, this discourse acted to negate external pressures or constraints

on partners by giving the implication that all tasks were freely chosen. I have already suggested that it obscures questions of power. The only "power" is that of "choice", and it lies with the individual. This discourse begs the question of why these likes and dislikes appeared so stereotypically gendered, why women would "want" to do childcare and men car maintenance. One respondent, Anna, examined this point, within a discussion of abilities and socialization, not personal choice.

There are exceptions to this sex-typing of expressed likes and dislikes. Don likes to cook, but his comments only suggest he may cook, not that he has to. Andy has "chosen" to take on the day-time childcare, but emphasizes that he is "not obligated to the kids", and does not have to do this.

In two families this discourse appeared to operate differently. Susan appears to have the greater ability to choose which activities she does.

> I enjoy doing (grocery shopping). I quite enjoy doing it. I do it with the car. I don't even mind taking a kid in too much, although I prefer only having one child, but I don't mind that much. And they're quite good. (Susan, II)

She repeats over and over that she tends to behave "like a husband", coming home in the evenings to find most of the housework done, trying to resist the temptation to put her feet up, and indeed "not noticing" what needs to be done, and she links this directly to her situation as the main earner, with the nine-to-five job. In doing this, however, she has moved into a discourse of roles: in her case, "reversed" roles.

Sheila and Simon say that they have divided up the household tasks, more or less evenly, on this basis of personal preference. Sheila explains.

> There's some things that you know we have just agreed on, because the other person absolutely hates it. And I don't, it's not that I love doing it, but I don't mind it that much. (Sheila, IV)

An example is laundry, which Simon "hates" and of which Sheila says, "And you know, I don't mind laundry really."

They modify the concept of individual choice by locating it, to some extent, within a framework of what is practically available. Sheila's choice to not do cooking stems in part from when she was pregnant, and disliked cooking smells. Yet other mothers commented on the feelings of nausea associated with cooking when pregnant but did not have the "choice" to avoid it. Simon was already doing half of the cooking before then by preference and out of "fairness". In turn Simon links his liking for this activity with watching and helping his mother when he was a child and rejecting, in part, his father's "role" as too distant. Sheila questions, however, whether their choice is totally free. Again, they use a discourse of roles in order to critique that of individual choice.

Fa: I hate doing the dishes. Well, we used to share it, before kids again, we used to share, I remember it was like one day of you cooking, me doing dishes, one day of me cooking, you doing dishes.

Mo: I know but you never grumbled about the dishes, then. I guess you generally grumble about them now.

Fa: Mm. It's because I've got used to doing the cooking and leaving the mess. But I mean, I would —

Mo: I think, I think the difference is whether you feel responsible for it or not, and I, I just think that a lot of that is still on the woman for certain things and on the man for other things. I mean even if we are quote "liberated" I think that people still expect certain things of each person, and whether or not you agree with that you're still affected by all that sort of social pressure.

Fa: I don't think anybody expects me to take care of the food and the —

Mo: I do!

Fa: I understand that! *(Sheila laughs)* But in general. I really think it was a little bit arbitrary that I went from 50 percent responsibility for cooking to close to 100 percent —

Mo: Well, that's because I abrogated —

Fa: — because you refused to cook when you were pregnant, and you found the sight and thought of food disgusting until it was prepared and served to you. *(laughs)* That's how, I mean I sort of gradually took over then and then stayed with it because, you know, medical problems and all the rest of that. And I guess if you had developed a horrible aversion to laundry detergent instead, I might have wound up doing laundry, although I admit I can't imagine winding up being responsible for sorting clothes and making sure that I had the right colours and stuff like that, because I have absolutely no perception as to what goes with what. As you can tell when I dress the kids.

Mo: I mean, you know, things have to get divided, so it's like, chances are that given all the things that have to happen around the house, that they're going to fall at least some way along — stereotypic lines. (Sheila and Simon, IV)

Even as their talk questions their reasons for particular decisions, it reconstitutes Sheila as the expert on clothes.

WOMEN DO IT BETTER

"I have absolutely no perception as to what goes with what", said Simon in the extract quoted immediately above, about clothes. As we have seen the area of clothes and laundry is one where both partners appeal to the woman's expertise as reason for her responsibility. The second discourse deals in the concept of one gender "doing it better", emerging both as statements of individual ability and as blanket pronouncements about supposed skills vested in women or in men. These blanket statements mostly arose in response to questions about who does housework and childcare and so take the form "men can't" or "men don't", or (from women) "I do it better".

All respondents at some point suggested that their division of labour was dependent upon personal skills. This discourse has links with the concept of individual choice, discussed above. However, some parents, all in the middle-income or lower-income groups, moved from the concept of their own skills to that of traits shared by women or shared by men.

> He could do everything I could do. I just think maybe not as, as, just up to the level that I like them to, you know, imagine — he would dress them in rags — It would be all right, but you know on a different level . . . If I can do it better, I think I can do it better, it's fine with me, though, you know, I'll do it. So I think I'm better at that, and I think I'm better at preparing food. (Anna, II)

Anna does not in this extract move to link her "better" performance with that of other women. Lucy and Cheryl make the link explicit.

> Why would I do that? [Have responsibility for care] I would be inclined to say, because I work only part time, but I know that if I worked full-time I would still

> have that responsibility, and why *(laughs)* I don't know. I guess because I take it on. He has no interest in doing it, no desire to do it, and you know I don't think he would do it. And of course like a lot of women I suppose I just feel that I do it better. (Lucy, IV)

> I think maybe a lot of men don't place the same importance on laundry *(laughs)* as women do. (Lucy, IV)

> You just go to get it, men don't shop, they just go to buy.[1] (Cheryl, I)

> I usually do it (cleaning), because I'm home more and because if I waited for him to do it I find that I could wait another week. *(laughs)* Men don't seem to mind dirt like women do. I don't know, I like things to be generally, I can't leave, live in a lot of confusion, you know, so I find it just generally tidy, at least that's just one element of confusion that's not there. (Cheryl, I)

Some women and men, as we have seen, supplied reasons for women doing it "better". "Training" was one, used to account for expertise in dealing with sick children. As I indicated in Chapter IX, women's professional training became a "reason" for them to deal with very sick children; but men's was not similarly cited. Kathleen gave "training" or its lack as the reason her husband found difficulty "juggling" childcare and household tasks, while explaining also that "he doesn't mind" doing these.

> He changes the diapers, does the bath, puts to bed, you know does the story, brushes the teeth, he does the whole bit, and I've never heard him complain about any of it, or not like any of it, or ask me to do any of it, and when he's

[1] Statements regarding women's special shopping ability are easy to find. This one comes from the Globe and Mail of January 3, 1991.

> In the division of labour that goes with family life, my wife got shopping. That's the way it should be. I don't mean that it's women's lot in life to shop, only that they seem to do it briskly and efficiently and frequently. When a woman shops, you can be sure that there will always be a spare roll of toilet paper sitting in the bathroom cupboard and a can of tuna for an instant lunch. They don't go on and on about the emptiness of existence just because they're condemned to buy pickles and paper towels to the sound of Muzak. (Allemang, January 3, 1991)

Allemang does not examine why women seem so able in this area. His public statement legitimizes and reinforces this unexamined usage of gender as an organizing principle. My respondents are surrounded by this usage, and reproduce it.

> home and I'm home he voluntarily will take (the boy) and say bathe him and put him to bed and all of that, as well . . . (but) when I'm home the dishes might be finished, the laundry's done as well, kind of thing, maybe I've washed the kitchen floor, you know all that kind of stuff and it's all finished by the time the kids are in bed compared to when I would come home from work ordinarily, Douglas would have (the boy) in bed, but would be just getting started on the dishes and sort of that end of the day. (Kathleen, II)

Other mothers and fathers also spoke of women's apparently greater ability in the area of domestic chores and their organization as relating to their having more practice or more training. Andy, for instance, said the men are "too stupid" to do laundry, tracing his own "stupidity" to not having learned as a child. To explain their skill or lack of it, therefore, they made use of the third discourse, of socialization for roles. I have already commented on how this allowed men to appear to carry half the load of childcare, while only performing a small part: the small part was spoken of as being hard for them as the rest was for the woman.

However, while in some cases parents would explain the ability of one gender to "do it better" by recourse to ideas of socialization or training, these kinds of blanket statements about abilities of men and women are also associated with the fourth discourse of ideas of motherhood as "natural", biological rather than social, and of "bonding" between mother and child; though sometimes also, but to a lesser extent, father and child. Often both sets of explanation were proffered.

One woman, Anna combined ideas about "doing it better" with the concept of socialization to achieve a more critical approach. Men can, she says, but it is harder for them, because of how society views their attempts. Women are better at childcare, because men are not "allowed" to be good at it, and so it is hard for men to think of themselves as good parents.

> Men can do the same thing. Unless I think it's, maybe it's harder for them. It might be harder for, for men to do that. And it's, I mean I know men can be just as emotional, but you know society still looks down a little bit on that, so they might be forced, it's a little harder for them to get that, you know, that feeling, oh of parent, 'I'm a great parent and I'm proud of it', you know, attitude, like I think

> we still make it kind of difficult for them . . . I think most men have a harder time. They might love their kids, but not be able to show it enough, or not be allowed to show it enough. The way they were raised, not to. That, inevitably that leaves the woman as responsible for the kids. You're a better mother because you're allowed to be a better mother, not because you had to, you know. There are a few bad mothers out there! Yeh. And the men can't do anything about it because society still thinks that the kids would be better off with the women. And that, that's not fair. I'd like to see the tide change, I'd like to see men as involved with their kids as anybody, any woman. It might be just more natural for a lot of women, because they're just sort of brought up with that, you know, 'You take care of the babies, you have to take care of the babies, and you go out and work.' (Anna, II)

Here she uses the concept of society "allowing" only one gender to develop specific skills, with effects not only on these talents but on the self-image of the people concerned.

ROLES AND SOCIALIZATION AS DISCOURSE

Respondents used the word "role" often during the interviews, in speaking of the "role" of religion in their upbringing, the "role" of government or business in child-care, and so forth. In discussing parents' roles, however, the term was differently used. The role of government in the provision of childcare referred to possible policy directions, or (for one father) the government as employer, setting an example. The role of religion in upbringing varied from one person to the next. But when they spoke of male or female "roles", parents meant something very specific: a traditional division of labour, possibly being "modernized" in particular ways, resulting from differential socialization, or training, of men and women. At times they hinted at a "natural" or biological basis, bringing in the fourth discourse. At times, however, they suggested that men could equally be "socialized" into caregiving roles.

In the first few interviews with mothers or fathers on their own I asked how their "roles and responsibilities" differed from those of their partner: in later interviews

after I realized the importance of the "role" discourse for my analysis I attempted to change this wording. However, parents' usage goes far beyond their answers to this question.

The clearest comparison of their usage is to that of Parsonian functionalism, discussed briefly in Chapter II. In Parsons' (1955) model it becomes right and proper and fitting that there be two parents in a family, each with different areas of influence and expertise. Indeed the requirements of maintaining the physical and emotional health of a family (or any small group) necessitate a division into instrumental breadwinner and expressive/affective nurturer. Further, for the maintenance of society, the physical and emotional health of the family is essential. Oakley (1974:178-185) and Rapoport et al (1980:349) have described the assumptions underlying this model, which I will paraphrase here.

1. There is a male breadwinner.

2. There is a female nurturer, responsible for care and socialization of children, and responsible also for sending her husband off, every day, to his work. Nurturance is a particular trait of mothers, or of women.

3. The mother "needs" her children.

4. These children are helpless and dependent. They need care and nurturance from one person, i.e. the mother. Any other caregiver is standing in for, and providing less adequate care than, the mother.

5. The mother is responsible also for care of the house and for translating the father's provision into consumable materials. Her innate nurturant skills make her better at this also.

The discourse of "role" as used by my respondents is not a simple one. Not all parents favoured the content of the "roles" they felt themselves to be presented with. Some resisted, and some, as in Anna's comment quoted at the end of the preceding section, were highly critical. Not all implied a "natural" underpinning.

I categorize their usages of the concept "role" as "traditional," "liberal" and

"modern". In the first category are statements associating the division of domestic labour with "traditional roles"; these were, said respondents, slow to change, and rightly so. A rapid change would be problematic for families and for society. This discourse, with the implication of balance between partners implicit in Parsons' formulation, was common: almost all parents used it at some time, although they might also use one of the other "role" discourses.

In the "liberal" role discourse the terms of role theory are used to criticise "traditional roles" and state that task performance should not be determined by gender but only by personal preference. There is the idea that "socialization" could be overcome, by determination or applying common sense. Very few parents spoke in this mode, however, (although as we have seen, many couched their explanations in terms of individual preference).

The "modern" usage includes statements about the inevitability of change, and particularly the development of new "roles" for fathers. There is a suggestion that "traditional roles" are out-of-date. The balance tips too much to one side. Times have moved on, and something new, for both men and women, must be put in the place of the old roles. There was criticism of the slow pace of change and concern expressed about "stereotypes". About one third of parents spoke in this mode for part of the time. For Sheila and Simon, and Anna and Hugh, it was the most commonly used role discourse, Anna especially using it with critical effect.

"Traditional" role discourse

This usage carries the assumption that a gendered division of labour can be explained by saying it is "just" traditional. Men do some things (house or yard maintenance), women others (housework and childcare), because that is the way things are and always have been. It may not be right or fair, but, says Wayne, "Nobody asks what's fair."

> Traditional roles, I would say, would be the main reason, I suppose. (Pete, III)

> I think it's probably just a traditional thing. (Lucy, IV)

> Well, I think it's traditionally been the women's role, and I think that even though women make up, I don't know what percentage of the workforce, but we make up certainly a good percentage of it, and roles have been changing, there's no question about that, it can't change so quickly. I mean, everything has to take its time, it has to evolve. And I think that women have to become a little more comfortable with their new role if they're uh in the workforce full-time. (Berthe, II)

In this discourse, women were described as doing things similar to those of their mothers, men those of their fathers.

> If there's dishes here, or dishes that are not right there, and (Mike) will never wipe off counters or table or anything like that. I mean he does very bare necessities, sort of thing . . . I probably get it from my mother, my mother's a very good housekeeper, I will say that, she's good at housekeeping. I'm not nearly the housekeeper my mother is but I mean she's my role model. (Cheryl, II)

> Well, let's face it, I mean it's the tradition, in traditional roles . . . Your mother did laundry and my father did things, you know, out in the yard and made sure the house was painted outside . . . And you know 20 years ago, as far as I would ever guess, you know it would be unheard of for the wife to go out and actually start a lawnmower . . . You know, I don't think it's anything more than just, you know, some retention of traditional roles. (Wayne, IV)

According to Wayne, present day practice is not much different. He and Lucy had to look as far as Winnipeg for an example of a woman who cut the grass. This father seems very isolated from social change in what men do or women do: certainly his language makes him appear so. It seems likely that in driving or walking down his street he will pass at least one women, on occasion, mowing a lawn, but he does not "see" this. Neither has he heard of a marriage contract.

> I don't think anybody ever really sits down, you know nobody ever sits down and defines what's fair. So it, nobody that I know ever sat down and said, you know, 'What's fair?' you know, when you got married, the day you got married, 'OK, well job number one, now that the honeymoon's over, we'd better divide up the, you know, the responsibilities. We've got to, somebody has to look after the laundry, or we both have to do our own, you know. Somebody's going to

> cut half the lawn, or somebody's going to cut it all, what will you do in trade?' Well, you know, and put it on a scale of how difficult a job it is, how much physical energy it takes, how much intellectual skills, place a value on, on, you know, the job as a job and equate it to something else, which, I don't know, some people, maybe some day people will do that but I know we certainly didn't. (Wayne, IV)

Mike and Cheryl spoke of traditional roles and role models, Cheryl stating that her model was her mother. Their talk includes the understanding that part of the father's task, his "role" in the household, is to help out, if there is too much work to do, to retain the balance.

Fa: I, I think uh, now that I'm beginning to realize how much work it is, more than, one or two kids it just doesn't seem to be as much, but with three or four, so I sort of am on Cheryl's side a little bit, although I don't like to give up too much because I like to leave it where it is, you know. But I, I *(laughs)* help a I—, I help a I—

Mo: 'Don't want her to see how much I can do, because she might expect it!' eh? *(laughs)*

Fa: — but I don't want, I don't want to *(laughs)* do it forever — and I bath the kids often, and uh mostly because it's a place to put them on the way . . . But I know how much work it is to look after four kids, 'cause I do it enough to know. And I think that's the biggest problem with husbands and wives is the husbands don't spend enough time to know how much time it, how much, I don't mean just physical work, I guess mental stress, of dealing with the kids all the time. I understand that, and so. I try to help a little more, as I say I don't want to give too much. *(laughs)* Or she'll expect more. (Cheryl and Mike, IV)

Vince also spoke of being "in the supporting role".

Rachel and Pete spoke of both parents as overworked. They see their division as broadly traditional, but also as fair, and with an element of choice involved. While Rachel was speaking, here, Pete was nodding agreement.

> I think it goes back to the fact that everybody still assumes that the mother is essentially responsible . . . our whole economy is built on the idea that division of labour makes more sense, I mean why should both of us waste time knowing how to do every single thing around the house? He can't sew, and I can't saw . . . And there are, those divisions are still very much determined by societal values that we grew up with. But the fact remains that I'm, I don't think either of us are essentially unhappy with the broad override, I'd rather sew than saw. Not that I'm that crazy about sewing, but if I had to choose between

> sewing and making those cupboards, I'd make a dress before I'd make a cupboard anytime. We both would just like to do less! *(laughs)* (Rachel, IV)

Here again is the sense of balance: you do these things, and I do those. Often to my query, "Why is it women who do . . .?" I was given the answer, "Well, why do men . . .?" This extends from housework to related tasks such as renting out an apartment.

> Most women I know do that part of it. That's considered the woman's role. If you have like just one or two apartments, most women I know do all the renting. The work . . . they don't do other types of financial affairs. Pay bills and all that. It's in the man's role. (Karen,II)

Parents gave further reasons why the role remained "traditional" and women took it on: socialization, images of women in aprons doing household things, social pressures, mother-infant bonding.

> I certainly changed diapers and took care of when they were babies, but I think that is probably more likely to be the mother who does it, and it may — I don't know, I don't think that, that might be in part just traditional roles, but may also be too that the small child and the mother have a special bond of some sort, that's not the same as with the father. (Pete, III)

Here Pete drew on the fourth discourse, of natural bonding, making explicit the assumptions behind the "traditional" model. Robert placed greater reliance on early learning.

> Socialization, I think, as children, you know. Even (the elder girl), I mean she's got dolls and she dresses and undresses them, thirty times a day. You know, like — You grow up to expect a certain kind of . . . you know like if there's sort of physical work to do the men usually do it. Why is that? (Robert, IV)

While Robert's wife, Karen, expressed some criticism of the "role", she also spoke of socialization as hard to depart from, unless a woman rejected "the role" altogether, by rejecting motherhood. She ascribed the concept of socialization, on several occasions, to Robert. "He'd suggest . . ."

> Part of it personality traits, and he'd suggest it's partly socialization anyway, that men are kind of brought up to, not to consider the trivial, everyday things as much as women are! *(laughs)* I think we get the rotten end of the stick in

> some ways! And then as I had said those women who, who escape that socialization or the ones that react against it, part of the equation is that they don't have children. That's an interesting phenomenon. It's very consistent. (Karen, IV)

Paul spoke of socialization as inescapable, and as creating a matter-of-fact division of duties.

> I think it's a socialization thing. I mean if you look in old magazines when washing machines first came out they'd always show like a woman, with a skirt on, or a dress on, doing the wash, or an apron or something, right. And you never saw men going around doing that. And then there was always like a lot of diapers and stuff like that, which a man — earlier didn't have to do it. (Paul, IV)

Lucy, as we saw in Chapter X, referred rather to social expectations, but still with the suggestion that these were both inescapable and legitimate. The role has been laid out. Others, and she herself, assume that she will fulfil it.

There were occasions on which this discourse of traditional roles as practical and obvious was disputed. Sheena and Ted provided an example. While they did not use the term "role", the concept of "just a thing that's been passed over" from previous generations substitutes nicely for the phrase "traditional role" used by middle-income and professional parents.

Fa: I think it's — probably a lot, like especially in the older days, the men were out working and the women were taking care of the household. And it's probably just a thing that's been passed over, where the men were used to being out and working while the women were taking care of the house, it's like they think they know more how to take care of the house also.

Mo: Yeh, yeh — I suppose. I think it's getting better. Like in Mum's day, she worked and did everything in the house, like everything. And with the kids, plus worked full-time. See <u>your</u> Mum was home.

Fa: Yeh. And my father, like he worked usually two jobs, right up until, well even when he was working one job there, in the last couple of years.

Mo: But I think men are probably not now. I think it's getting better. I think it's just the way society works but I think —

Fa: My father always came home, like at suppertime everything would be done, they'd have supper, the dishes would get done immediately after supper, then do whatever. There was not usually housework or anything like that involved after supper. He might go down to his little workshop or . . . even when I was younger he was working two jobs always.

Mo: Yeh. No, I think it's getting better. And I think men realize now that they were missing out on the kids, like I think a lot of the times they would have liked to have been closer, but didn't know how, or something. Because I think, like I know you enjoy coming home and being with the kids, like my Dad didn't really come home and play with us.

Fa: I never spent time with my father.

Mo: You know there wasn't that — no, there wasn't that, like play and affection I think that they get now.

Fa: I know like when we came home from school or something, there was a lot of ties, that was made around too, but even earlier my father would come home, and he always had a nap before supper, and we might come in the door after playing after school or whatever, and maybe even be a little excited, but as soon as we came in the door it was 'Shh!' . . . *(laughs)*

Mo: Father's asleep on the couch! I remember like when we first started dating it was like 'don't call Ted's house between four and five because his Dad's lying down then'. But I know it wouldn't have been the other way around. If his Mum was lying down! Oh your mother wouldn't have been! But if she was from four to five! (Sheena and Ted, IV)

Ted appeals to what is "traditional", and to the specialized knowledge and practice of women. He does not necessarily agree with this way of doing things, and indeed suggests that he would like to have more involvement with his children than did his father, but he still uses the concept as a starting point for attempting to explain the present. Sheena agrees that "it's the way society works" that broadly defines the division of labour, but insists that "it's getting better". She is far more critical of the past, as they describe it, than is Ted, and so is closer to the "modern" usage discussed below. Her last sentences, above, are of resistance to a purely traditional view. What would have happened if Ted's mother <u>had</u> taken time off? A new array of possibilities opens up, in her talk.

Berthe and Vince gave a particularly interesting example of a traditional discourse in operation. Part-way through his description of not wanting to call "mothers" to fix up a car pool, Vince became aware of the words he was using, and they discussed these words, Vince maintaining that he was describing practice, Berthe saying that he might be, but not <u>her</u> practice. This is also an example of how

this couple dealt with almost every task under discussion, each claiming performance and arguing every point.

Mo: Arranging for a babysitter . . . I always do that. Always.
Fa: I feel awkward about that. I feel awkward, like the first night the [boy's nursery school] teacher phoned. You know, I felt a little awkward and thought Berthe should maybe speak to her, first of all . . . I still prefer to see myself in a supporting role, than I do being, you know, you know, running the whole thing, I don't feel as comfortable in that role somehow . . . I feel somewhat awkward — (like getting) this car-pooling business going.
Mo: Yeh, I arranged for that. But in the end, I mean it was arranged by one of the teachers, but to get the ball rolling I did the arranging for that. Although Vince is going to do the driving.
Fa: Well I did the actually arranging, in the end, I was the one that actually got —
Mo: Well, in the end you're the one that talked to the lady.
Fa: Well I actually spoke to them all, all the people there —
Mo: Oh.
Fa: — and asked them if there was anybody who could do it, but !, I felt —
Mo: But I set the stage for it basically, I —
Fa: — you know, really in terms of phoning the other, well see I was just about to say, in terms of phoning the other MOTHERS, which tells you right there *(laughs)*, I didn't say phone the other FATHERS, Berthe wasn't going to phone the other FATHERS and ask about car-pooling —
Mo: Well I would've.
Fa: But that isn't what you would have done, I mean if you would have phoned the other people they would've given you the names, you would've asked for the mothers, basically, wouldn't you?
Mo: No, I would have talked to whoever answered the phone.
Fa: Mm? Oh, all right, OK, all right.
Mo: No, no, really, seriously, because I mean that's what I do with my kids at school, if the father answers I'll talk to the father. I don't ever ask, I don't, I'll, I never say 'May I speak to Mrs so-and-so?'
Fa: And so if you were trying to arrange a car-pooling —
Mo: Yeh, if the father answers I'll say, you know, 'your son Robbie, or Joey, or Freddie is going to —'
Fa: He'd probably say, hold on a second, I'll get the mother. *(laughs)*
Mo: Yes, often that's what will happen, but sometimes the fathers will talk. Because I remember when we were trying to arrange it for (the boy) last year, I remember talking to several fathers.
Fa: Yeh, mhm, yeh.
Mo: Yeh. Sometimes I mean if the wife was home, then he would pass it on to, to his wife.
Fa: Yeh. certainly there was me and one other father there the other morning at the orientation session —
Mo: Yeh. No, no, I —
Fa: That was it, the rest was all mothers.

Mo: Yeh, which is usually the case. Yeh. The fathers are not really as uh — I might, even in terms of dealing with my kids at school, often they will pass on, pass the call on to their wife. Occasionally I will speak to a father, and he will be quite receptive. But I think they feel mostly like you do, you know, it's kind of the mother's domain.

Fa: Probably feel a little uncomfortable about certain things, that's all. (Berthe and Vince, I)

Here we begin with Vince's "feeling awkward" and therefore "choosing" to not call babysitters. However, this quickly passes to a discussion of how it is mothers rather than fathers who do these things. Berthe resists the concept of choice based on awkwardness, but accepts that such calls are in "the mother's domain", part of what women do. Implicit here is that the calls would be harder to make (and count as more work) for a man, and that in any case he would only make them to "help".

In the final interview, Vince elaborated on this.

> There's, you know, it's a social norm I guess, or something, that you phone the child's mother, 'Can so-and-so stay overnight?' She may turn around and say to the father, 'what do you think, should so-an-so stay overnight?' And he said, 'Sure, it's alright with me,' but he would never say, 'give me the phone, Oh, yeh, is that so-and-so, what are they going to do? — or what time?' You know what I mean? Like these are — we know how it works, that's the way it works. If you want to know why it works that way, I have no idea. I think it's convention. Why do people feel uncomfortable in an elevator when they're all jammed in together? (Vince, IV)

I asked all parents about who made these these contacts with the world of babysitters, playgroups, schools and so forth. Most often the mother did it, and many parents, fathers and mothers, discussed this in ways similar to Vince: particularly that it would be a woman who was being called, so that the mother would call her. Of schools, Rachel said, "No class has a class daddy, they all still have class mothers!"

These parents are not always content that the "traditional roles" should persist. But within this discourse there appears to be no way out. Roles are there, fixed, part of society, upheld by society. To say that something is "just" traditional roles is to

explain how it comes to be. But for a minority of parents at times the role discourse could be used differently. Sometimes this had the effect of resistance. Sometimes it appeared as an individual decision to ignore the role, even a point of pride indicating one's own strength or distance from the mass of people who would conform, and to these usages I will turn next.

"Liberal" role discourses

Three parents mentioned roles in order to dissociate themselves, at least partially, from them. Tasks, including childcare, had to be done by someone, they said, but gender should not be the determining factor in who that "someone" was. However, society assumed that gender would determine, and this these parents found an annoyance. They resisted, on an individual basis, staking a claim to choose their own tasks, though all three on occasion did use a "traditional" discourse.

In the preceding section we saw that comfort, itself maintained by practice, and convention, like socialization, were reasons for maintaining "roles" in a largely traditional manner. One father reacted strongly against the concept that men's feeling comfortable or uncomfortable should determine their performance of tasks. It is not a question of feeling comfortable on the telephone, said Andy, it is whether you are mature enough to take responsibility for both your children and yourself.

Fa: They don't give a damn about their kids? Is that what they're saying? They can't go out of their way to look after their own children?
JB: Well, they felt that — their wife would do it better.
Fa: Oh, no way! Your kids are your kids. No matter what comes up, you can't handle it, you're not a responsible adult. Whether you feel comfortable or not, you should be providing for your children.
JB: Why would they take that attitude?
Fa: . . .'Cause they're not responsible for themselves. How can you be responsible for two kids, if you can't even look after yourself? Sounds to me like these guys have got the women doing everything for them and they're scared to death to do a little something themselves. Do they make any decisions in the household, or anything? Or do they just go to work and come home, relax and

> that's it? *(They might do sports-things with the boys, I suggested)* . . . but if the little girls was going in the ballet they wouldn't? That's crap. My father never did nothing with me. We always had to go to our mother. He thought he should just work, ignore eight kids, while he went to play . . . or he was at the bowling alley or whatever, and I won't do that to my kids. The boy or the girl. If I'm at the alley and they're old enough to bowl, I'll take them both. If she wants to go in the girl guides, then I will take her, cubs I will take him. There is, that's the trouble, though. One parent's always ignoring and the other one's doing everything. Whether it's a boy or a girl, it's up to both parents to take responsibility, to look after several kids or even one kid. Oh that's the oldest con in the world. Well it's not (in my house). It's a responsibility, bringing up the children. (Andy, IV)

Andy rejects the "traditional" role discourse, and his father's lack of participation, but he does not deny that usually mothers perform these activities. Instead his talk is about being a "responsible parent" which carries a gender-neutral connotation. He is the only working-class parent to use this "liberal" discourse in which gender becomes something that should <u>not matter</u> in terms of role allocation. The implication is that either parent <u>should</u> do these things. But on his own admission Andy does no housework, and indeed Carla usually calls the sitters, she says, because she is in the house at the right time to call, and Andy is not. Like many other fathers, notably Hugh, Andy expresses a strong reaction against his own father's perceived lack of participation.

Two professionals implied that gender should not matter or could be made to not matter in role allocation. One, rather paradoxically, was Karen.

> I have more of a, kind of breadwinning instinct than a lot of women. My female friends, a lot of my friends are professionally oriented but they don't connect that necessarily with providing for the family, they see that more as the role of their husband and what they're doing is more sort of self-gratifying or whatever. But, so that's somewhat different, that — I kind of cherish that instinct . . . (Karen, II)

She explains how her "breadwinning instinct" came about. She managed to escape socialization for a traditionally female role, she says, in part owing to her father's attitudes.

> My father, with having four girls and one boy, he never appeared, appeared very chauvinistic. There were things that I couldn't do, and my brother could do, and yet I never got that sense that there was much to do with these male and female roles... I was always under the impression that I could do anything that I wanted to do. Anything, physical, or intellectual, the sky was the limit, that you could do anything. (Karen, II)

In her talk there is a constant tension between the discourses of traditional roles and free choice. There is a sense of her choice liberating her from the constraints of "role". Her care of children's clothing is dismissed as "just socialization", and she distinguishes between this and tasks she chooses to perform. We have the sense that choice is better, and that by "choosing" to perform some tasks she removes herself from any taint of "traditional roles". Yet as we have seen Karen clearly has responsibility for the bulk of childcare and domestic labour in her household. Do her responsibilities go beyond the traditional pattern?

> Like I'll come home from work and cut the lawn or shovel sidewalks, and do that, and that's a manual sort of — I think it is just socialization for in terms of clothing. (Karen, IV)

For Karen, the combination of "liberal" and "traditional" usages functions to create an illusion of choice. Labelling her care of clothes and household "socialization", however, does not remove it, but only removes her ability to analyze why she performs it, resulting in her having more work in the household, not less.

The other main critic of allocation of role by gender is Rick. Not all men fit the "male role", and he is irritated by people's assumptions that, for instance, he cannot cook.

> Donna went away for a week . . . And she assumed, and what was irritating, what everybody thought, they assumed that I couldn't cook. There was poor little guy at home and everything like that, and I'd cooked all by myself, my father was a professional chef! And I cook . . . So it's a — the immediate perception — and that infuriated me, people saying 'All by yourself then?' — that's a role image of what I would be, the helpless male at home, and that was — it was interesting what my reaction was. 'Drop dead! I'll show you how to do it!' (Rick, professional father, III)

Other people perceive him to be "in the male role", he says, regardless of his particular abilities or preferences.

> Like it appears as a male, you perceive I can't do certain things like cook and bake and — yeh I can do them, but whether I've as much practice, but I've done it before, as a bachelor, I can do it again! There's a perception that since I happen to be male that I don't have the right to be in that environment. So it's — it's an irritant, more than anything else. It's a perception that I don't have a lot to do with the childcare or the support, the process. (Rick, III)

When I asked if men could look after children "as well as women", he was the only respondent to discuss the terms of the question.

> You can't generalize. I mean the reverse, can females look after children as well as men, it's, it's, that's the same question — I think it's not sex, I think it's personal interest, and what the individual's been exposed to, so therefore I was brought up in an environment that provided the opportunity for being exposed to different — not roles, but to looking at an activity not as a role, specifically, but as a function specifically, somebody had to do it, not matter what sex you happened to be. So the question can men be just as good as women implies that men are second-class citizens regarding the caregiving. Maybe it's the fact that we, males traditionally haven't been exposed to the function of going through being a babysitter or taking care of small children when they're hurt. So you can't generalize those individual differences . . . Our society's deemed it appropriate that women historically, have traditionally done one thing, but males have been down-graded if they do that. The fact is that we shouldn't look at it as whether or not a father can be as good, it's whether or not an individual, whoever he or she is, wants to take on that role and responsibility. (Rick, III)

The emphasis here is very strongly on individual rights. Rick spoke of trying to "reclaim" his "'rights" to perform childcare, rights which he felt he had previously "surrendered". Rick, like Andy, is verbally resisting and challenging accepted stereotypes of men as removed from children and incompetent at housework. Yet it is clearly Donna who performs the larger share of both housework and childcare..

One couple may be included as sharing a "liberal" discourse. Susan speaks on several occasions of her being "like a husband" and Joachim "the mother". Both partners describe traditional role behaviours of other families. However, Susan and Joachim do not talk of their being expected to behave in ways other than those they

have selected, although their talk does point to a discrepancy between their practice and that of other couples. The circumstances of their daily life have permitted them, to an extent, to "choose" their "roles".

"Modern" role discourses

Where the "liberal" usage may be critical of the concept of role as allocated by gender, the "modern" usage implies that roles are gender-based, that they may have had relevance in the past, but that they are subject to change, in need of reform, and that indeed there may be different forms of "male role" and "female role" occupied by different individuals. The users may refer to external pressures from the work environment or finances as influencing the "roles" they and others adopt. Change is required by the circumstances of modern-day life. Fairness, reasonableness, logic become key-words. It is not logical that women have to carry the burden of the "second shift", so that both mothers' and fathers' "roles" have to alter. There is a subtle distinction between the liberal and modern usages. Liberal role discourse privileges the individual and individual rights, including rights not to be characterized by gender-based "roles". Modern discourse focuses on "men" and "women" and change in their situations. However, fathers particularly may at once show both accommodation and resistance to new circumstances and to the call for change that they are themselves enunciating.

As we have already seen, there is a real contradiction between what Andy says and his practice, as he and Carla describe it. He uses all three forms of "role" discourse, and in this extract his talk is closest to the "modern" usage. "Men are still in the dark ages . . ." While he does no housework, he takes a pride in his child-care.

Fa: Most of the men, in the old days, used to be the bread-makers, they would bring home the money while the women were at home. Times have changed. The men haven't, but women are changing, men aren't . . . Men are still in the dark ages, thinking they should be outdoor and the women should be at home.

Mo: Andy feels that in his heart. I mean, he's pretty, what's that word you should use, he's pretty um — up with the times, or whatever, in some respects, um even the other day he said to me, he said he wished he could, brought home enough money that I could stay home. You know.

Fa: Or win a lottery, and we both can quit! . . . Carla does everything here. I don't vacuum, I don't do dishes, I don't do meals, I don't do the laundry. I feed the kids in the day and clothe them, and that's about all I do. (Carla and Andy, IV)

Where Andy describes men's not doing laundry in terms of their being "too stupid", implying criticism of their unwillingness to learn, he is criticizing himself. He does no laundry.

Paul at times attempts to position himself in relation to other fathers' practice. There is some criticism expressed, in his talk, of fathers who are more "passive" as regards what they do in the house. In this extract he moves from the modern to the liberal usage, with preferences and "make-up" assuming importance.

> I think in some situations the male takes a more active role, some situations takes a more passive role than I do. I don't know, I think every situation's different, depends on what the make-up of the two individuals are. (Paul, III)

Douglas and Hugh also compare their practices with those of other fathers. Much is determined by their own and their partner's work hours, they say. Douglas does laundry because of their time schedules and the location of the washer; these factors, and their own attitudes, he says, prevent their division of labour from being entirely traditional. They appear as choosing to move, to some extent, with the times.

> I think we're a little, our schedule is a little bit less precise than many, the distinctions seem to exist between male/female and so on are more conservative and orthodox. But we're, we're fairly much that way. I mean I, you know, go out and I paint the fence, and Kathleen tends to the garden, that still is very much the case about here. I think it's just that our timing, our work schedules are quite different, and to some extent our attitudes towards various cultural items and so on are different, but that reflects our, you know, involvement in cultural centres and Kathleen's involvement in various activist activities. But I uh I, you know, if we were to look objectively at the way we, I don't think we are that different from the various other, I mean obviously there are some people who are very, that I could call are very conservative, but I know I just, in the distinction of roles I don't think that we're that different. It's

just a matter of degree and of orientation, I would say. (Douglas, III)

Hugh discusses fairness and making a "logical decision".

> Well, it changes, because the guys that I know that do what would be considered old typical female-role type things, they're all in situations where they have no choice. The guy next door does as much with his kids as I do, and it's because his wife works as a nurse, and she's either here or there, so he's feeding them all the time and taking them to the daycare, and taking the two out for a walk. Of the people that are home, regular nine to five jobs, whatever, most of the friends I have that are married it's still the female does a lot of what would be considered the, what we, Anna and I call the side-work, the filler-in work, you know — you get dinner ready, maybe I'll do the dishes, you get the kids up for a bath, get them ready for bed. There's a lot of, it's not that different from how I grew up really, not that strange. Although when I grew up it was very — phtt — Mom does, you know, doesn't stop from five until nine o'clock and Dad's finished at five . . . I know what it's like to be burnt out, I know if my wife is working three nights a week but still has to get up the other two mornings and do her workout and go shopping with the kid, I know she's going to be tired, if I don't do this. So in the long term it just makes a lot more sense. So it's more of a, a logical decision rather than anything based on female roles or male roles or I shouldn't do this or I can't do that. But where that attitude comes from I have no idea. I mean I didn't decide when I was 18, oh I'm not going to be like my old man . . . All I know is I am sure that I see in a lot more guys just they're — by default, it's like people giving up cigarettes, and more and more guys end up doing that — again they're still in the helping role as compared to carrying the ball role but they're, they just find themselves doing a lot more of these things, which is very nice. But I still have a couple of friends who can't, can't cook an egg and have never changed a diaper, and they're got two kids! So. (Hugh, III)

There are strong links here with Mike's view that he should "help" because there is too much work for one person. There are also links with the liberal view that he should be able to choose to do what seems right to him. But Hugh goes further. More men are "helping", he says, because with changing times they have to; and when Anna is at work, he <u>is</u> "carrying the ball".

Among the professionals, it is chiefly Simon and Sheila who use a "modern" discourse, in describing how their division of labour fits with their work hours and the needs and their children. They see their division of labour as unusual. Sheila points out, however, that it may still have some traditional features, although it has

been undertaken as a result of a conscious decision to share childcare responsibilities.

> Uh — It could be that uh there's some vestige of these stereotypical kinds of roles that have you know sort of been around for a long time, in the sense that while men and women participate now in both things, the women still have the responsibility, in some sense, where the men don't. Now that they're not participating and helping out, and everything, but there's just something about making sure it gets done, as opposed to who's doing it. And I know that we have very different areas of living where we make sure things get done. You know, he makes sure that the dinner gets done and the groceries get bought, and I make sure that we have clean clothes in the closets and that we can find things again and, you know, things like that. And it may be that while we've agreed to share all duties, that responsibility is still more stereotypic than you would imagine. (Sheila, IV)

"NATURAL BONDING": THE ESSENCE OF MOTHERHOOD

Underlying other discourses is the concept of mother-child attachment, or "bonding". There is a large and growing amount of psychological literature on the development of the "bond", its nature, and its necessity. The importance of bonding and the extent to which the infant "bonds" with one person rather than many is a matter of dispute in the psychological literature (Herman and Brim, 1980), but in the popularization of this literature the doubt is not evident.

> Stuck on you! Attachment is an important process in a child's relationship with his mother, and its success can make the difference in the child's future behaviour. (Parents, October 1987: 4)

This item from a table of contents in a parenting magazine given me by Lucy leaves no doubt at all. The article itself (Schwartzburg, 1987), however, cautions that "tempting as the idea may be, the quality of the early relationship between mother and child is not a psychological vaccination to guard our children against future unhappiness or to insure a healthy emotional development" (p.107). Attachment must be worked on constantly, in later years as well as the early ones.

Herman and Brim (1980) cite similar instances from parenting manuals of the 1970s (which are often still obtainable, and which were in bookstores when the parents I study here were having, or thinking of having, their first children) and television programmes.

Linked to the concept of bonding or "secure attachment" is that of maternal employment. Gerson, Alpert and Richardson (1984: 446) describe "a substantial body of research concerning the effect of maternal employment on children", much of it cast in terms of the "bond". Belsky (1989), for instance, suggests that secure attachment to the mother is extremely threatened by extended non-maternal care (in his view more than 20 hours per week). This attachment he describes as crucial for the child's later formation of attachments, self-confidence, and school performance, following a line of research that goes back to early attachment-deprivation work by Bowlby (1965) and Harlow (1958). Attachment therefore is constructed in these accounts as "natural" but also as fragile, having to be defended, requiring to be fostered.

The concept of attachment pervades the literature on "parenting" that many mothers and some fathers read. An example comes from a magazine given to me by Donna. A mother has written to an "expert" of long standing, Louise Bates Ames (1988) for advice in dealing with her eight-year-old son. The boy is "good from morning till night" in his father's company, enjoying doing things with him on Saturdays and "accepting" his authority, but will not take "any refusal" from his mother, occasionally making statements that the mother finds hurtful, as she does the apparent preference for the father.

Ames in her reply does not deal with questions of <u>what</u> the two parents actually do with the child, or who is normally responsible for his welfare. Instead she says:

> Eight-year-olds are normally all mixed up about their mothers. The mother-child relationship at this age is one of the strongest, deepest, most demanding and yet most tangled to date. (p.74)

She does mention the "excellent relationship" with the father as positive, but otherwise focusses entirely on this rather mystical mother-child relationship which appears to apply to all mothers and children regardless of family circumstances. Yet in this example it would have been possible to construct alternative "explanations" even in terms of the discourses used by parents in this study: "traditional roles", with the boy moving from his mother's to his father's sphere of influence as he takes more part in "male" activities, like Rachel and Pete's elder son; or personal preference and personality traits causing friction between mother and son.

Ideas of the mother-child relationship as special, and as crucially important, are present in the talk of almost all parents in this study. Possible exceptions are Simon and Joachim. It is "natural", parents say, for the mother to have more to do with the child. Wayne expressed this most strongly.

> (A) child can only have one mother. There's only one person in the world that will be that child's mother. So you can be the child's father, and I think that's an important distinction, but nobody could be the child's — you know what, hearing what I'm saying, is that the child is really of the mother, so you can get, nobody'll ever get any closer than those two. (Wayne, III)

Others echoed his comment.

> I think where the women actually have the children, too, sort of you take it on as some kind of, their responsibility, you know. That bonding is there, like, they feel more responsible, take care of the child. (Cindy, II)

> I, mothers and babies bond and I mean you can see facial expressions in contact and there's just an aura between the babies and the mothers. (Glen, III)

Ted wavers between biology and practice as explanation, giving an example of how these discourses may be woven together in parents' talk.

> I believe a lot of kids are naturally closer to the mother just from her carrying them for nine months or whatever. But, and the fact that she's here all the time in the day, it's probably just, could be just a routine, more than natural. I don't know, I always believe kids are, there's some bond between them and their mother, sort of has to be from her carrying them for nine months. (Ted, III)

In other comments also there is a sense of the bond being strengthened by practice, the women's greater presence in the home, her giving of comfort and care.

> I think a lot of times they would probably go to the mother for the comfort, maybe it's just more natural . . . Now mind you I'm very affectionate with my kids, but I just, for some reasons when something like that [a child getting upset or falling] does happen, I don't know, just seems more natural. Maybe because she's here more, or, I don't know. (Ted, III)

The mother's closeness to the child generalizes to child care and to other domestic activities. Liking for these, seeking to do these, becomes a feminine attribute. We have already seen (in Chapter VIII) that respondents discussed food and clothing chores as part of doing childcare. Women are said to buy clothes, wash clothes, even clean house because it is all for the child. Also, closeness implies nurturance, and nurturance, as we have seen in the previous section, is the mother's underlying qualification for the Parsonian "mother's role". In Cindy's interweaving of discourses, "natural" closeness to her children is associated with "natural" organization skills, and it becomes "natural" for her to <u>not dislike</u> domestic work. This is part of her femininity.[2]

> I think I have a natural instinct to do domestic work, like I don't mind doing it, I don't dislike it that much. And I think it's more efficient and quicker if I just do it. Keep things organized, I feel I'm more organized than Paul in that department. (Cindy, II)

The idea of the mother's closeness to the child returns throughout many interviews. The closeness of the bond may be seen as fit and proper or as a problem for the mother, as "too close", as frustrating for the father. The child is spoken of as wanting the mother, demanding the mother, seeking the mother "naturally", and women reveal ambivalence about this "want". As Anna said, the child can seem "stuck on you, glued on you."

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[2] Cindy claimed also for her daughter (but not her son), age 18 months, an "instinct" to do sweeping and dusting. "She's very feminine . . . She just instinctively does that, like it's her job or something."

> Sometimes I wish I'd have waited before having (the second), to spend some more time with (the eldest). But he was close to me as it was, so I was trying to break the bond. I was going to a psychologist then, when we moved in here two years ago, because it was to the point that he was just hanging on my legs. (Lucille, II)

The concept of closeness is part of Karen and Robert's family myth. Here they discuss mother-infant closeness at some length.

Mo: I don't intentionally cultivate it either, you know. We're closer, we're closely bonded, very closely bonded, from birth, and it just seems like she's perpetuating that and I, I try not to be, I don't really — I don't discourage her necessarily but I try not to encourage it either.

Fa: I think there is a special, there is a different sort of bond with the mother, I mean . . .

Mo: . . . Well I work a lot with head trauma people, and I mean now I have four, four young guys who are coming out of their coma, and three of the four are asking for their mothers, just repeatedly, where's my mother? Just half in, half out of coma, asking for mother. . .

Fa: . . . basically when you're the father you know and the kid comes into the world, it's almost a full year before you have been with the kid it seems like even as much as the mother was before the kid was even born. Like you know the kid was like in the body of the mother —

Mo: There's an advantage of the year, of the time to get to know, and I really —

Fa: You're very comfortable with the idea of that person before she ever comes out into the world.

Mo: And it was phenomenal with both, (the elder one), particularly (the elder one) because it was the first time round, but I felt some of that when I saw her, after about a day after getting over the initial shock, I thought, my dear, I really feel as if I've known this child for a long time — . . .

Fa: It's got to be a strong bond . . . I think a lot of men are a bit jealous too, you know, about that, because you want to be able to be as natural with the kids, when they're new, but you can't be. And I think it's really hard, I mean I think it's hard to be as natural with then, just because you're sort of always catching up, like with, with um —

Mo: Yeh. I found it particularly difficult with (the elder one), getting (an attachment to her husband) started. I was breastfeeding and it was very much a lot of she and I. With (the younger) he was more adjusted to her —

Fa: Although with (the elder) I jumped in, and tried, you know, started changing her, you know, diapers and putting her in clothes —

Mo: He was frustrated.

Fa: It was frustrating, because, because she'd always go to her mother. (Karen and Robert, I)

Here the bond appears as potentially problematic, but as naturally <u>there</u>. Karen

returned to this topic when I interviewed her alone. Could men look after children as (our society assumed) women could, I asked?

> Well obviously I think it depends on the man! *(laughs)* ... if it came to, down to the crunch that Robert could easily carry out the role that I have, well not easily, he would find it quite difficult at first. He would have his own way of coping ... Now I don't know about men in general. It's so individualized, it's hard to comment. But I think, biologically, they're quite able to carry out functions, particularly outside the neonatal stage, because they don't have as much contact or bonding and this, this immediate, I don't think. Especially if the mother's breastfeeding. I think there's more of a delay in the husband's ability to bond than there is in — When the mother's not breastfeeding, but breastfeeding them's so important that they wouldn't want to compromise on it. (Karen, II)

There are two sets of ideas here. Looking after children is a role, which can be learned, but it would be hard for him; and in the first few months of life bonding is all-important. This tension between discourses of men's ability to learn a "role" and of the idea of unique bonding with the mother is evident in others' answers to the same question, can men look after children.

> In general. Yeh, I think. I think like you say there's different, I think it totally depends on the man, whether he wants to or not. I definitely think they can. Now there is, like there's got to be some kind of natural, I have always believed, anyway, in the mother, because I mean they're the ones that carry, and it seems to be more natural for them. But I definitely think most men can. (Ted, III)

> I think some men can. I'd say in general though, women have a more, a natural instinct. Number one, they bear the children. I think there's a closer bond. There has to be, I think. So they feel more of a responsibility to the child. But I think men could look after them just as well, if they had to. (Cindy, II)

> I suppose, although — I don't know, you know — I certainly changed diapers and took care of when they were babies, but I think that is probably more likely to be the mother who does it, and it may — I don't know I don't think that, that might be in part just traditional roles, but may also be too that the small child and the mother have a special bond of some sort, that's not the same as with the father. (Pete, III)

There is also the sense, referring back to the prescriptions in the popular literature, that the bond "should" be present between mother and child and that

therefore the mother "should" be with the children or doing things for them.

> I believe the mother, if the mother's home then I feel the mother should be either looking after the kids or doing more with the kids. You know, there should be a mother-child bond there. Whereas I spend more time all week, I try to get Carla the weekends . . . (Andy, III)

The bond is prescribed. Attachment is natural but fragile, and requires to be worked on. In the last resort, "'bonding" does not only suggest that the mother would want to be with her children, responsible for their care: the implication is that she should be there, she must want to be there, or she is not a good mother.

RECONSIDERING DISCOURSES ON THE DIVISION OF LABOUR

I must emphasize again that I do not regard this talk as the "reasons" parents do or do not do particular tasks. Their explanations are produced after the fact, and for the particular occasion of the interview. The talk, however, indicates particular ways in which parents think about their lives, not always coherently, which affect how their own actions and those of others appear to them, and affect also their perception of what actions are appropriate or possible. Their experience is never to them "raw experience"; rather as it occurs it is intellectualized, rationalized, categorized, analyzed. What they tell me here indicates ways in which all this comes about. When I am asked about the division of labour in my own household I produce very similar answers; based on time constraints, who is present at the time, what I prefer to do, what fits in with my work, social expectations, "training" or practice and so forth. If my own answers might show more criticism of (for instance) the idea of the privatized nuclear household, this stems in part from my own familiarity with a more liberatory discourse and analysis than is available to most of my respondents.

Parents' comments position the men and women who make them in a variety of ways, in relation each other, to schools, the medical profession and various other

"experts", and to their children. Some discourses show more possibility than others for analysis and criticism.

The discourse of individual choice is not self-critical: "He doesn't like it, and I don't mind doing it" is given as an explanation of a woman's doing laundry, arranging babysitters, cooking meals, buying paints and crayons or food items, fixing up sports events, attending school or daycare meetings. Several parents, chiefly professionals, use this mode of speech to refer to their own "reasons", while talking about other people in terms of "roles". In a sense they are proclaiming themselves free from "roles", and indeed this discourse implies freedom, free choice, equality of adults, full use of possibilities, though it does not discuss these overtly. It has obvious links to the ideology of capitalism/liberalism: freedom of choice is the greatest good. Yet the choice for parents is in practice not free, but as we have seen is bounded by resources which vary dramatically from one family to another. Further, the possibilities for choice are contradictory, and the valuation of choices differs greatly.

Within this discourse, the perceived "needs" and "wants" of parents and children are balanced against each other in such a way that the choice is highlighted or becomes the central feature; yet this posing of "choice" leads also to maternal, and indeed paternal, guilt and worry over children's being cared for by others than the parents, or for one family, guilt and worry that they may <u>not</u> be able to afford the "choice" to maintain their disabled toddler in daycare. Are they making the "right" decisions, are they doing the "best things? These are matters for parents to agonize over.

The discourse of ability to perform tasks has little room for criticism within it. Why cannot men perform childcare tasks as well as women? They are not given to it, or they would find it hard to learn, or they have not been trained, say respondents; and it is unclear from their talk in general whether "training" or "natural ability" is

more responsible for this lack, though there are suggestions that training augments natural ability. This discourse, however, shifts the focus from individuals with particular unique preferences and talents to collections of individuals, "men" and "women" with specific abilities, and to the psychology of sex-differences. Blanket pronouncements about men and women are stated quite unproblematically, as in "men don't seem to mind dirt", as matters of fact, as common knowledge.

Hochschild has commented (1989) on how women in her study described themselves as "lucky" in some way, whatever their circumstances. A discourse of different abilities sets the stage for this kind of evaluation. If men "don't mind dirt" and yet a husband "helps" clean the house, the woman can describe herself as lucky. Even if he only takes care to take his shoes off at the door, she is lucky. The man in turn, though he may consider he perhaps does "more" than he had planned for, as Don and Mike suggest, may also feel as Paul did that "I think it's just nice if the woman can do two jobs". If Cindy or Karen is seen to have greater organizational talent, or Kathleen as able to perform two tasks at once, when some new problem or task in the area of childcare arises it is the woman who will automatically deal with it, so that, as Rachel said, childcare tasks default to the female.

Parents speak of "roles" in at least three different ways. Some discourses of roles and role change are more critical than others. Within the "traditional" discourse, domestic labour appears apportioned into "the woman's role" and "the man's role", and the idea that something is "just" roles or "just" socialization is proffered as a complete explanation. If the allocation of domestic labour is questioned, attaching the concept of "socialization" is sufficient — that is just a role, so we don't have to think about it any more. Labelling behaviour as resulting from "traditional roles" renders it no longer problematic. This is especially apparent when professionals — particularly Berthe and Vince, or Karen — appear to label other

people's behaviour as "roles", and their own as free choice.

Within the other discourses of "role", there is some room for criticism. Within the "liberal" discourse, the "role" is examined in terms of its fit with personal taste. The "traditional male role" is seen as not fitting individual circumstances, or not allowing people to use their particular talents to the full. There is also criticism that men will use the traditional role to avoid what should be their individual responsibilities.

Within the "modern" discourse, structuring circumstances of men's and women's practice start to come into view. Time pressures and job-related constraints on women are creating an unequal division of labour, so that men should adjust by expanding their "role" as fathers, in the direction of more "help", more care, sometimes more responsibility.

All role-discourses carry the concept of socialization, or conditioning, and difficulties of overcoming or escaping it, so that in the liberal and modern usages it becomes an obstacle to change. Problems with socialization theory, and its underlying ideas of passive acceptance of social norms and values, have received considerable critical attention from sociologists (see e.g. McLaren, 1987), but these have apparently not entered respondents' talk.

Within these role discourses, there is little space in which to examine "the role" in terms of its social construction as a product of power relations. A role is seen as more or less of a piece, and although there are suggestions of fairness/unfairness, or that role allocation should be by some means other than gender, or that change is too slow, most criticism does not go much beyond this.

The discourse of bonding, used to partly "explain" apparent differences in ability, and sometimes underpinning "traditional roles", linked to psychological and medical literature, is mediated by health care professionals, television programmes and, as indicated above, the publishing industry of "parenting" magazines, books by experts, articles in newspapers and other popular magazines to which many

parents, both women and men, have access directly or (generally for fathers) through their spouse. Within this discourse there is scope to comment negatively on the restrictions placed on women by the bond. These comments, however, emerge as complaints against what is phrased as an inescapable fact of life, a part of human nature that just has to be coped with, the demand of small children to be with their mothers. The bond itself, and its necessity, are not problematized: instead the strength of attachment is. Tensions between this discourse and that of free choice produce guilt. Is the attachment secure enough? Could I be doing something more? Should I stay home with my child? Because no social construction of the bond is visible, the guilt appears also as "natural", and the only power visible in this formulation is located with the child, a miniature tyrant compelling attention from the mother. The only ways to reduce the child's demands are by turning to expert advice, or by having a second tyrant to compete with the first.

These discourses do not only provide parents with rationalizations, but structure their perception of the world and the available choices. They provide ready-made analytic frameworks, sets of questions and answers, ways of looking at the world beyond the family: but they do not allow for the possibility of examining how that outside world constructs the women and men of the family unit. When Anna says she has been conditioned to want to do certain things, making possibly the strongest analytic statement of any parent in this study, she does not say where power lies or why she has been "conditioned". At other times if power is mentioned it is seen as located with the child in bonding, or with the woman who "gets on my case", as Rick said, until her husband "helps".

Thus while these discourses act as legitimation for past behaviour, and act to construct perception and hence possible choices, they all, even the "modern" discourse of changing roles, act to obscure power and its location, and who benefits by its operation.

For an example I will turn again to the popular press. A recent article in a popular Canadian magazine asked once again "Who mothers best?" posing the question of "to work or not to work" (for pay) as one of individual choice for mothers (McCabe, 1990). Towards the end of the article McCabe did state that "of the employed mothers, more than 50 per cent worked because they needed the income" (p. 114). However, the terms of the article were completely those of what individual mothers could or should do. While the stated purpose of the article was to help diminish guilt, to encourage women to accept that "there are pros and cons on either side, to realize that a working mother is not per se a bad one, and that both can and do raise happy and healthy families" (p.116), the entire article was written in terms that suggested guilt was indeed an appropriate feeling for both at-home and labour-force mothers.

The article reinforces the myth of childcare as in the domain of women. Mothers raise children. Husbands or fathers are nowhere around. The author quoted one "expert" as speaking of a need for "a more equitable sharing of child care and domestic responsibilities between spouses" (p.116), but did not further address this point. In this discourse, childcare responsibilities are part of a woman's role, in the last resort traceable to her special relationship with her children. But the "role" is subject to some choice. Childcare problems, accruing to women, are to be solved by women's individual choices and action, and possibly, McCabe suggested, by their pressuring "society" for more part-time work, thereby reconstituting the perception of the individual as separate from and in opposition to society. (Does "society" here mean employers? government? both?) Further, the identification of labour-force mothers as "working" constitutes the practice of mothers in the home as non-work, and as "natural". Throughout the article, there is a tension between ideas of "nature", "roles" and "free choice", evident even within the oppositional categories of mothers at work, mothers at home. The result is to construct women as

responsible for their problems, and as pitted against men, government, employers, "society" and even each other: and the only way for their responsibility to be alleviated is apparently for women to take on, on an individual basis, the further tasks of pressuring "society" and possibly of getting their men to help more.

DISCOURSE AND POWER

Two families contrasted

The force of these discourses, by constituting the division of labour in the home as either traditional, balanced and just something that happens; or natural; or freely chosen; or some combination of these, is to obscure questions of inequality, power or oppression. Women are doing most of the work of the home: men's contributions remain optional, and may be restricted to physical household maintenance. The onus is on women to try to "get" husbands to "do more" to "help", and this may meet with a measure of active resistance, or some accommodation. For instance, while Mike states he does not want to take on more tasks, he also evinces a pragmatic accommodation to what he sees as the necessary circumstances of his life.

> But I guess I should say expect Cheryl to do certain things like the laundry and the cooking and cleaning the house, but I mean that's not the way it is! *(laughs)* That's the way I thought it was going to be, but it's not like that now! I mean I have to — my job, I have some certain jobs here, I have to clean the kitchen floor, I have to shovel all the snow and take the garbage out and the odd time change the laundry from the washer to the dryer, and fold it up, take it upstairs, so. I have to cook meals, in fact more and more and more I'm cooking meals 'cause when Cheryl comes home from work she doesn't want to do it or she doesn't feel like doing it so I don't mind doing it and I wash dishes at suppertime, and I have to be home at suppertime, that's one of the rules. I don't have to be but it's nice, convenient, it's more comfortable if I'm home at suppertime. 'Cause I mean all the kids are up at five, or four, between four and seven and it's a real animal house here, they're all hungry and screaming, and trying to cook and wash dishes. (Mike, III)

But although Mike "does" more than many men studied, it is clear that the tasks remain constituted as "really" Cheryl's. Although there are particular tasks that he

does voluntarily, the rest default to her. Mike is emphatically not an oppressor, and Cheryl is definitely not an abused wife, but still there is a power relation here, whereby it is she who has to ask, to imply, to try to manoeuvre a situation whereby help will be forthcoming, and he can accommodate to her request, or not. And their talk retains, or reconstitutes, this differential.

This brings Karen and Robert's situation into a sharper focus. Both have "chosen" professions and professional involvement. Yet Karen's involvement with the children is constituted as "natural", both within the household and by her employers. She feels she has to demonstrate her professional attachment, but this is combined with unshared primary responsibility for home and children, resulting in her solution of scheduling children's medical appointments into the early morning before she commences her paid job. Yet her definition of the situation is one of a general balance between her activities and responsibilities and those of her husband. Robert can avoid participating in day-to-day activities because these are constituted as lesser or trivial, and because his "contribution" is valued as on a different non-trivial "level" Karen can tell me that:

> Robert doesn't have any qualms about changing babies' diapers or making meals, it's a matter of timing, whoever is available does it. So there's not a lot of resentment or pent up frustration! (Karen, II)

It is just, we are to understand, that he is not there to do it. Robert can say, honestly, that "Overall I think we probably work the same amount". As he sees it, this is true.

Once again, this a power relationship, here based on a devaluing of women's work in the home and reinforced by the everyday interactions and practices which both partners report here. Karen's "natural" abilities and inclinations, her special closeness with the children, lead to the assumption that she will automatically deal with problems as they arise, and that these "trivial" items of daily life will not

constitute work for her. Therefore she can also be a breadwinner, temporarily the higher earner while Robert builds up his practice according to his long-term plan. Even the daily organizing of his paid work is constructed as difficult for him, and more valuable.

This devaluation of domestic work is facilitated by their location as professionals and their ability to pay for a housekeeper to assist Karen. This couple never state that the housekeeper enables Robert to avoid domestic labour; but this is what is happening. For Mike and Cheryl, with a low income and no paid help, there is just too much family work, and not enough time for one person to perform it all.

Karen swings between the "traditional" and "liberal" discourses of role, and this affects her workload. Her partial avoidance of female socialization has resulted in her breadwinning instinct, she says: hence her professional commitment. She can freely choose to do typically male tasks, snow shovelling and grass cutting; but when it comes to a consideration of her responsibility for clothes, that is "just socialization". Her partial resistance to "traditional roles" combined with her accommodation to Robert's definition of his activities as on a higher level gives her more work, not less.

Henriques et al maintain that while "power is invested in discourse; equally discursive practices produce, maintain or play out power relations" (1984: 115), this power is always exercised in relation to a resistance, and both power and resistance are exercised, and evidenced, in minute details of human interaction. Subjectivities are discursively constituted: parents are positioned within discourses, and their positioning assigns value and usefulness to the resources with which they interact, and meaning to their practices. In the intricately negotiated webs of family life, we can see respondents attempting to use discursive practices to define and interpret their resources. Multiple discourses, as Hollway (1989) points out, create a

multiplicity of meanings. In the examples of this chapter we have seen how these meanings can be contradictory. However, the contradictions may not be evident to participants. "Meaning is suppressed or expressed as a consequence of its effects on the subjective experience of vulnerability and power" (Hollway, 1989: 67).

Nevertheless, the contradictions are there. In them lies potential for changed relations between the women and men studied here. In some families, use of another discourse (e.g. the "modern" discourse of roles), shared by both parents, facilitates some change in practice. Hollway, however, cautions that

> Consciousness-changing is not accomplished by new discourses replacing old ones. It is accomplished as result of the contradictions in our positionings, desires and practices — and thus in our subjectivities — which result from the coexistence of the old and the new (1984: 260).

New discourses will not of themselves create changed practices and relations; but they can make visible alternative sets of possibilities, choices, ways of relating to resources, to children, to the partner. However, even when contradictions are pointed out, even when alternatives are present, discursively-constituted practices are not easy to discard, and for many people studied here, alternatives are not evident, or such alternatives that parents can see would require changed practices outside the family, before change could occur within it.

Parents' discourse and practice

As we have seen in earlier chapters, the women are still by-and-large "carrying the ball", in Hugh's words, of responsibility for domestic labour. Looking at both the women and the men, we can see many different positions that they adopt, different uses that they make of the discursive resources at their disposal. First, there are two families whose use of resources, and ways of speaking about these, appear most distinctly different from the rest.

Joachim and Susan use the concept of "choice" to reject the idea that mothers need be female: but Joachim, as they point out, can be "mother" because they are incomers, outsiders in the community, and because his masculinity does not depend on "North American ideology," in Susan's words. They construct a scenario in which Joachim becomes the expert on children and their care. Susan speaks of herself as like a husband. Not only is she the breadwinner, but she describes herself as less capable within the household than is Joachim; she is "slow", less patient, and she does not know where things are, or have up-to-date information on the children's doings. At first acquaintance, "role-reversal" appears an appropriate term for this household. However, she talks of her motherhood as a status, speaking of joining a community of women by means of her motherhood. Motherhood goes beyond mothering, and is more than a "role". What have been changed are this couple's specific practices of organization and use of resources within the household, and the relations constituted by these practices.

Simon and Sheila talk of equal parenting and competence within the home, and find this facilitated by their particular circumstances, the closeness of home and work, the ability of both parents to take time off, their ability to pay for high-quality daycare close to their jobs, their use of a maid-service for house-cleaning. But Sheila wonders if their division is "more stereotypical" than they think, and points out that there are pressures such that while Simon as a successful academic can <u>choose</u> to be a "liberated male" and a participant father, his masculinity defined both by his success and his fatherhood, she is still viewed as "mother" and feels compelled to try to dissociate herself from the label, by, for instance, not informing colleagues she is going home to look after sick children. Sheila is able to "choose" to dissociate herself from several household responsibilities, while retaining others, and derives an identity as a woman both from her motherhood and from her academic work. However, there are aspects of childrearing, particularly dealing with

schools, daycares, babysitters, that remain hers. She has more interest in these areas, she and Simon say.

In the remaining families, as we have seen, women and men retain to some extent a traditionally-gendered division of labour. Parents' discursive practices act to both maintain and resist such a division.

Some professional mothers, Berthe, Karen, Elizabeth, Rachel, Kathleen, make use of the discourses, particularly of "choice" and "roles", to create on the whole a concept of equal contributions from the partners. Only if we look at their descriptions of practices can we see how this is done. "Equality" is constituted as a matter of particular contributions from husband and wife. Value accrues differently to these contributions, and the value is constituted by perceptions of skills and resources, and in particular by the concept of mothering as natural to women. We have seen in earlier chapters how their practices are woven out of available resources, including the ability, for some, to hire domestic help.

Their talk locates them, in various ways, as "knowledgeable" about housework and childcare. How this knowledge is valued depends upon particular resources and the intersection of their own and their husband's positioning with respect to these. Karen's skills and knowledge, as we have seen, are devalued. Rachel's and Kathleen's appear to be much more highly evaluated, but are therefore seen as constituting them as the ones who "mother".

Anna's discourse is highly interesting. Time after time she appears able to summarize what many mothers (and some fathers) have said about parenthood. She admits to more ambivalence about her motherhood than any other woman, more uncertainty, more doubt as to whether she is an adequate mother: not in terms of asking for "tips" on particular points (as did Cindy and Paul), not in terms of worry and despair about the future (as with Don) but as regards these being the doubts and fears that she faces on a daily basis. She defines herself as a feminist, and

indeed it may be that her feminism enables her to express her doubts as strongly as she does. She discusses their division of labour in terms of her having been "programmed" to "want" to do certain things, like sewing, and not others, like fixing the car, and she sees this as somewhat problematic: but she also discusses as problematic what she sees as a feminist practice of requiring the same contributions from wives and husbands. As she describes it, she and Hugh do different things, but both are capable in the general areas of housework and childcare, with specialized capabilities within this, which fortifies Hugh's attempts to position himself as sometimes "carrying the ball". Anna enjoys her job, as a waitress, but there can be no question of it defining her identity; whereas her motherhood, she says, is "the most incredible thing that's ever happened to me, for sure".

Many women, both professional and non-professional, appear caught between wanting their husbands to take a greater share of housework and childcare and discussing these in terms of their own greater competence or natural ability, derived from motherhood itself or from training or practice. Thus Donna says of laundry, "Over! Take it over!" while laughing at Rick's account of his "different" doing of a wash. The husbands, in varying degrees, resist performing tasks to their wives' standards, for instance by washing clothes in "a different way".

There are contradictions also in the meanings of the two women, Lucy and Sheena, who appear positioned closest to the expressive mother-at-home of the nuclear family model referred to in Chapter II. Lucy and Wayne speak of a traditional division of labour in ways that suggest only a very slow change, while Sheena defines herself as not in the labour force, and her job as not important to her or the family. Yet Lucy describes employers as "not realistic" in their failure to appreciate that women now have both to be in the labour force and to continue to have children, and Sheena also speaks of the division of labour in the home as "getting better". One extract from Sheena's talk makes some of these contradictions plain.

> No, I wish it was back in the old days. And it's not! *(laughs)* I'd like all the women to be home in every house around me. But it's just not the way it is any more, but I'm in a dream world sometimes, I think. But — that's what I would like, but it's hard financially, too. It's not just, you know, but uh — then if I grew up then I mightn't want that either. And prefer that too for — But uh I don't mind doing so — well Ted does so much, see, Ted does way more than my father did. So there's no comparison. Now Ted didn't, though, before I met him, *(laughs)* he didn't do anything! But he does. But no I, and I still do all the maintenance stuff. Like I definitely picked up that from Dad. No I did. Like I'm the one that puts windows in, and cuts holes through houses, and — stuff like that. I shovel the driveway before he gets home. I would rather do that, even though I wish I was like the old typical housewife, if there's a choice to watch the kids or go up on the roof, I get Ted to watch the kids and I go up on the roof, yeh. (Sheena, II)

Sheena wishes she could be "mother at home", full-time, but the family needs the little money she brings in; and besides she "might not want that" if she had it. She is putting pressure on Ted to "help" with a measure of success, although his definition of fatherhood is in large part one of separate spheres, and his wish is to play with the children (more than his father did) rather than doing housework.

Many women seem, therefore, to fluctuate in their views of how families should be organized. The meanings are derived from multiple discourses. At one time they talk in terms of separate spheres: at another of shared spheres and changed relations (Luxton, 186). But unless their partners also seek change, and act to create it, it is hard to see how change can occur.

Fathers, like mothers, are positioned within the discourses of role, bonding, ability and choice. They deal with their positioning in many ways. Rick and Andy actively resist their ascription as less competent parents, though Andy makes it plain that parenting does not extend to housework. He also declares that he <u>chooses</u> to be an involved father, that it is <u>his</u> decision to define his masculinity by his fatherhood. "I'm not obligated to the kids, I do it because I want to," says Andy. Rick speaks of actively opting to "reclaim" aspects of fatherhood — chores — that he had "surrendered".

Hugh is making strong attempts to modify his practice, including the way he speaks of his family life. He talks about the "carrying the ball role" as opposed to the "helping role", and sees himself as "carrying the ball" while his wife is at work, though he admits that if their work circumstances had been different he might have been a helper. However, Hugh's talk directly links the practice of childcare and housework with masculinity: he expresses scorn for men who must define themselves as men by distancing themselves from children and spouse. He likewise expresses scorn for men who refuse to take on the messier childcare tasks, in terms both of "fairness" to their wives and of their experience of fatherhood being less than complete. His speech at times constructs childcare tasks, including both physical care and activities facilitating children's intellectual and cognitive development, as not only acceptable but necessary for fatherhood, and therefore as part of what it is to be a man. Hugh gave the most sense of discussing fatherhood with other fathers, but still he has no "community of fathers" of which he can be a part.

Don's position is the most problematic of any father in the study. He is involved in household tasks to a greater degree than many other fathers, yet it is plain from his talk than this is by necessity rather than choice: his choice would be to play with the children more, but he has no time for this. Tasks such as bathtime, which many mothers and some fathers (notably Hugh) see as at least potentially enjoyable appear in his talk as just more work. They do not "undercut" his masculinity, as he sees them as acceptable: his father did many household tasks also. But neither do they define his masculinity. Lacking Hugh's access to feminist thought and his ability to place his children as his chief priority while earning a comfortable income, or Simon's education and successful career and opportunity to position himself as "liberated", Don has few resources. Within the discourse of "traditional roles", with the man as breadwinner, he is a failure: Lucille earns more than he. The earnings

and potential earning power of both are low, so that money worries are ever-present. Don sees himself trying to hold together a situation where the younger child will always be dependent on the parents for both material and emotional support, the elder is beginning at five to develop behaviour problems, their house is close to a "problem" area for crime, drugs and so forth, and he, as the man, as at least joint head of household, has fears of "just the being in a situation where it just goes totally out of whack and I've no way of kind of grabbing it and sticking it back together."

The remaining eleven fathers, by and large, remain discursively positioned as a concerned parent a little distant from the children, less knowledgeable than the mother, trying to pull their weight although this is problematic owing to their lack of knowledge and training and their lesser "natural" ability with children. They do not want to do "too much" in case this upsets the balance of the household as they see it, and in case they get stuck with the job. And from this positioning and its intersection with the circumstances of their jobs, their time, their wives' labour force responsibilities, they actively construct what they do. With their childcare practices defined as "'help" they alternately accommodate to, and resist, their wives' requests for more "help". Indeed their resistance was the subject of some humour, during interviews. This humour, however, is yet another mechanism for coping with a power imbalance. Men can refuse. Making a joke of it hides the fact that, in most circumstances, women cannot.

XII. MOTHERS AND FATHERS: GENDER AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

> The family, in our view, is the major sphere in which the domination of men is secured at the expense of women. The family, from this perspective, is the intimate testing and proving ground for the generalization of male oppressions. It is at the personal level, in the face to face encounters between men, women and children, that the intrinsic political qualities of gender relationships may be caught (Brittan and Maynard, 1984 :217).

In this study I have indicated ways in which the practices and meanings of parents' everyday lives are structured. This structuring is not simple. Parents are dealing, actively, on a daily basis, with the resources and constraints of money, space, time, transportation, and availability of childcare, as discussed in Chapter VII. But to this dealing they bring assumptions, suppositions, derived from popular or institutional ideology. In order to understand the gendered and classed nature of their daily practice, as outlined in Chapter VIII, we need to examine these assumptions and how these inform and reconstitute practice.

Within the household, within a family's space/time/money constraints, a number of tasks may require to be done. Who does them is influenced not only by time and particular skills but by discursively-constituted notions of what a mother <u>should</u> do and be, what a father <u>should</u> do and be. Mothers are spoken of as more skilled in many areas of childcare. They are both discursively-constituted as "expert" and constantly repeating the task, practising the skill, which confirms the discursive construction. A discourse of women's natural ability does not of itself <u>create</u> a situation in which women do childcare: but fathers who use this discourse will be less likely to perform childcare tasks, or will consider that they do so under supervision, having to meet the mothers' standards. And of course if they fail to meet these standards they have an excuse, a let-out. They are "naturally" less capable in

this regard. Within this discursive construction, we have seen how the real work women do in organizing the daily life of the household becomes invisible, or ceases to be "work", instead appearing as the expression of a "natural" talent, the result of "bonding" with her young children, or the performance of a "role" for which the woman is "trained" or socialized, and which she has in any case "chosen" to take on. That is, the very real resource of a particular, practised skill, becomes a liability, binding her to a particular task.

Many parents in this study are concerned with "fairness". But the division of household labour is in most cases very unfair, if the work of organizing, planning, worrying, negotiating, checking up and "bearing in mind" is taken into account. All these are performed, generally, by women. A woman's responsibility becomes, for her, for her husband, and for society, an attribute of her personality, a way in which she perceives the world. She feels responsible. He knows that she feels responsible. Sometimes she even wishes that she did not feel so responsible.

However, the situation within which women are "responsible" requires further consideration. Certain tasks may have to be performed in the household; but the tasks are themselves discursively constituted. What makes a nourishing meal? Where does a parent's, or a mother's, responsibility end, and a teacher's begin? These are other items are the subject of discussion in magazine columns, in meetings with doctors and teachers, or in kitchens, over cups of coffee. The assumption that they will be performed by mothers is a part of the construction of the task itself.

Different class-constructions of the task may emerge. Working-class mothers speak of presenting children to the outside world, of the need for smartness, for clothes to match, for the child to be respectable. Dressing a professional family's child for everyday play, in jeans and T-shirt, may be a simpler matter. Conversely, professional parents put greater weight on some of what children do: water-play,

mess-play, museum and library visits. The mother's constructed responsibility has, therefore, a class basis.

In part, of course, this class basis is constituted by the very different material resources available in well-off and poorly-off families. On the one hand, professional families have many more resources, many more choices at their disposal. They can pay for "quality" daycare, or a housekeeper. They might opt for shared care. They can take time off, or pay for specialized care when children are sick. Working-class families find that the decision may be between shared care and an unqualified babysitter. Their finances will not cover the cost of a housekeeper. The institutional practices of their jobs are such that taking time off is difficult and work-hours do not fit with those of established daycares.

Even within these different resources, however, we can see how decisions are influenced by assumptions about motherhood and fatherhood and who should care for children. Some families could increase their income substantially if both partners worked full-time, for instance. Some could reduce time constraints if one partner worked part-time; indeed, two are planning to do this, but paradoxically it will be the higher earner, the woman, who gives up part of her work-hours and salary. These constraints of time, job hours, money may be seen as partly constructed from outside the family, by institutional practices: but reconstituted also on a daily basis by parents' own practices, and the constitution is again discursive. The mother may take part-time work "because" she is "naturally" the better caretaker for the children, or "because" it is her "role" to do childcare, her husband's to earn money.

The discursive practices I have identified in this study organize parents' perceptions of their experiences, skills and resources. The discourses are common to all families, and the organization is systematic. I have traced two of these discourses, not to their origins, but past their entry into parents' practices, through popular "parenting" material, to conventional academic sociological and

psychological discourses, hence linking them with what Smith (1990) terms the relations and apparatus of ruling. Conventionally constructed "knowledge" about families and motherhood becomes a control on the practices of actual mothers and fathers, through the concepts of the "mother's role", "father's role" and the "good mother" who "bonds" with her children.

Smith (1990: 13) states that "the established social forms of consciousness alienate women from their own experience". We have seen how their work in the house becomes non-work, or less-valuable work, even in their own eyes. This process of alienation applies, in a different way, to the fathers also: alienated from their work in the home, feeling less capable in dealing with their children, at times resenting children's apparent preference for the mother.

Clearly fathers care deeply about their children. Being a father is important to them. "My kids, you're talking about my pride!" said Andy. However, while their fatherhood is part of their identity, part of their subjectivity, it is rarely as central as the women's motherhood. There is a sense in which being a father, or taking on responsibilities as a father, is optional. Fathers talk to me, in detail, about their children, their joys and sorrows, their fears and hopes for the future: but in their talk, there is no male equivalent of Susan's community of mothers, that she joined when she became pregnant. The popular discourse deals in "parenting", and being a "good parent". It is supported by an industry of "expert" pronouncements through books, television programmes and magazines that many people in the study view or read, and men use and are positioned within it as emotional supporters or appreciative audiences, as concerned fathers, as helpful spouses and even as potentially warm and nurturant caregivers. But their positioning is not institutionalized in the way that women's motherhood is. "Mother" implies warmth and care. It implies availability to deal with children's problems, or talk with medical or educational personnel; and it implies a sharing with other mothers of certain

tasks and certain emotions. "Father" does not. "Mother" means being judged, publicly, for the supposedly-private performance of family responsibilities.

> A well-known professor of child health said on television recently that the amount of stimulation and help a mother gives her baby in its first three years of life is invaluable and irreplaceable. He turned to his filing cards, picked out one and commented that this mother was a good mother who had done everything she should, including taking her child to all her appointments at the child health clinic. Watching mothers must have imagined their cards to be in his file. (New and David, 1985: 194)

But the fathers had no cards. In this construction, fathers were not present at all.

TOWARDS SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

Clearly the responses of parents, mothers or fathers, to their situations are neither simple nor predictable. Each couple in negotiating their own solution is sorting through images of what it is to be a father or mother today, and relationships of home and the job. In their attempts to achieve what seems to be a "fair" solution they are struggling, as we have seen, to reconcile the exigencies of their work lives with concepts of motherhood as "natural" and the breadwinning father. For some families this combination results in the creating of justifications that maintain a patriarchal imbalance of power, with the woman defined as lesser, which are in Lees' (1986) words "the material practices, the discourses of sexist power"; but in others where the justification, the myth, is not as complete, there is a space in which transformation becomes possible.

While the situation of every couple is different, there are some ways in which not only could their tasks be made easier, but real transformation facilitated.

The material conditions of parents' lives, as we have seen, are greatly unequal. Childcare and work jointly structure their days; but the provision of non-parental childcare while parents work could be greatly improved. Not all parents

"approve" of daycare centres, but many do, although some prefer to regard them as resources for part-time use. However, it is plain from families' present strategies and from their discussions of childcare that any government plans for childcare, to be accessible to many parents, must take into account parents' hectic and often unpredictable schedules. There is a need for 24-hour "drop-in" childcare, staffed by competent professionals; large employers such as hospitals could have childcare on the premises; parents of several children might find it easier to have a caregiver come to their home or to some kind of neighbourhood centre. The problem of sick children, who cannot attend a centre, is one that urgently needs resolution, possibly through a system of flexible leave available to either parent. Parents whose children have a medical condition that makes them often unable to attend a daycare centre might be able to register for part-time babysitting by medically trained professionals.

However, present problems around the structuring of non-parental childcare in part stem from the assumption that all childcare is privately organized for the benefit of each family, and that it is primarily mothers' work. Here we have a major problem of discourse. While we speak of daycare as a woman's problem we are denying the active daily childcare provided by Joachim and Andy, and part-time by others such as Mike, the involvement in decision making of Simon and Hugh, and the concern expressed by many other fathers in this study. Yet if daycare becomes something to help "parents", this obscures not only that in most of the families the woman is primarily responsible for basic childcare, but that she organizes non-parental care, and that this organization is work, in some cases work that has to be done over and over again as caregivers leave, prove incompetent or cease to suit parents' needs.

Furthermore if daycare is seen as relieving the woman of responsibility for childcare during work-hours, this still leaves her with the burden of other domestic labour, chores, laundry, shopping, when she returns home. It is evident from mothers' comments that the most unpleasant parts of motherhood are those

associated with the constant packing of chores into a small space of time, the feeling of being too rushed, the lack of time to spend with the children on activities both mother and children do find enjoyable. Mealtimes at the end of the day, when everyone is tired and children cranky, appear in these accounts as highly unpleasant. If the day is spent at work, the evening in meal preparation, chores and shouting at the kids, as Sheila said, "There's no fun in that". Reducing the pressure is crucial, but the part-time solution favoured by several women and men in this study is generally seen, as is taking family sick-time in some quarters, as marking the people who do it as "choosing" to place family first, less committed to their employment, only "working" for a little extra money, not really serious about a career.

Lamb et al argue (1983) that at present three workplace systems act to reduce fathers' domestic participation. First, employers have a low tolerance for "work-family conflicts" (p.248) in men. Second, inequality in the workplace keeps female earnings low and so constitutes the man as "breadwinner". Third, there is greater male concern about workplace achievement, so that domestic participation is likely to affect others' perception of the employee's commitment to his work. There seems to be some evidence, from what these parents say here, for all three.

There are implications here for social policy. Legislated sick leave, available to all employees, and applicable to children's medical appointments as well as to actual illness, would help. So, of course, would genuine pay equity. So would a shortening of work-hours. But to put in place policies which truly supported families would demand recognition of what families are, the work that constitutes them, the variation within them, and the centrality of family life to the self-image of the ordinary women, children and men who live their lives in the constant state of hustle and hassle that these thirty-two parents described to me. We need new ways to speak of families, and to act in relation to those families.

There is a need to develop a new discourse of both parental and non-parental care of children. It should be possible to reject the idea that the biological mother is necessarily and "naturally" the best caretaker for the child, while still recognizing that many mothers are indeed primary caregivers, and that their attachment to their children is an exceptionally important part of their lives. We need a discourse of fatherhood which recognizes that fathers have responsibilities as well as "rights" and which constitutes fathers' participation as standard rather than exceptional. Non-participation should be seen as defaulting rather than traditional, performance of childcare and household tasks as everyday work rather than special favours done to "help" the mother. This recognition has to occur not only within families, but in the workplaces where, as we have seen, many fathers have difficulty in persuading their employers of the importance of their parenting activities, not only for themselves as fathers, but for society. And this recognition has to occur in the schools, for it is here that concerned teachers can attempt to ensure that tomorrow's mothers and fathers will at least have some familiarity with the idea that family work is an expected and natural part of daily life for every family member, rather than performed to help "mom".

We need to create ways of speaking and thinking which can construct childrearing as an essential, valued and central contribution to society, rather than merely to the individual child or family. We need ways of speaking and thinking which constitute childcare as potentially shared among a number of people, family and non-family (perhaps changing conceptions of what or who is "family"), without losing the closeness of attachment that mothers, and many fathers, prize. And we desperately need ways of speaking of "the child" which recognize that children and parents have their being in many different circumstances; that "after-school activities", may for some children be an extreme luxury, that sickness may be a constant constraint, and that the power relations surrounding the children of the

professional classes are very different from those in which the children of the poor are embedded.

In this study we can see how the sociological discourse of roles and socialization has become current and common parlance: but what was initially a way of trying to describe and understand society has become, if not a prescription, an excuse. "I'm socialized" say both women and men. "It's the role". Sociologists and social theorists carry responsibility to the subjects/objects of their research, but also to the generations that follow them. A new sociological discourse of family life can come to liberate or to constrain the people it describes. The production of ideas, terms, concepts is the business of the academy, and academic discourses in part produce the terms in which people describe themselves, the terms in which parents, teachers and children, understand and interpret their everyday life. But from the sociological and psychological discourses of roles and bonding have come also the images and concepts that policy-makers, whether governmental or corporate, use to understand peoples lives. From these stem the institutional practices that in turn constitute the choices of ordinary people. In attempting to understand social life, we are also constituting society.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDES AND CONSENT FORM

These "guides" were suggested questions and prompts which I might use during semi-structured interviews. The purpose of these questions was to ensure that the same areas were covered with all respondents. When topics arose spontaneously, scheduled questions were not asked. Topics were not therefore necessarily addressed as shown.

All respondents were asked to sign the consent form before the first interview commenced.

STUDY OF FAMILIES IN HALIFAX: INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

I am a student in a Ph.D. programme at Dalhousie University. My field of studies is Family Sociology. I am undertaking a study of how parents in some families go about their parenting, how they divide up the tasks of child-care, and what being a parent means to them.

I would like to interview you and your spouse, together, about how you organize your child-care. At a later date I would like to interview you both, separately, then much later hold a final interview with the two of you together. If after the first interview you find you can't participate any further, we can cancel the others.

I would like to tape these interviews, with your permission. If at any time you want me to turn the tape off, please just say so.

The information you give me will be used only for the purposes of my finding out about parenting. I will not give your name to any other person or agency in connection with the interview material. If I quote any material you give me, in my dissertation or in any papers or publications resulting from it, I will do so in such a way that you cannot be identified. I have no connection with any government department or welfare agency.

Will you participate in this study?

Jenny Blain
Dept. of Education
Dalhousie University

I, ... am willing to participate in Jenny Blain's study of Halifax families as it has been described to me. I understand that I can cease participation at any time, if I wish. I understand that Ms Blain may want to quote parts of what I say to her in her written material resulting from this study, but that she will not do so in a way that identifies me.

Signed . . . . . .

date . . . . . .

I. JOINT INTERVIEW: BOTH PARENTS

I. Demographic details: ask for basic information on:

A. Number of people in household.
B. Ages of people in household & their relationships to each other.
C. Number of years & type of education of people in household.
D. Jobs held, hours of work & approximate income of household.
E. Are children in school/daycare? (Get grade, daycare unit if appropriate.)

II. I'd like first to get some idea about everyday life in the household.

A. Can you take me through a typical working day in your family? (Ask also for ACTUAL day — yesterday or last working day.)

1. Let's start with the morning, when you and the kids get up. What would I see going on if I was here then?

   (Get up, breakfast, child-care. Organizing household to go to work/school/childminder/daycare. Where is work, when does it start, how do they get there? Children getting to school/daycare/babysitter arriving/parent at home. Organization/responsibility — who does what, and what is other parent doing then.)

   What about YESTERDAY/last working day? How did it happen then?

2. Is anyone at home at all during the day?
   (Parent/babysitter/kids — who does lunches?)
   (If appropriate ask parent) What kinds of things would you be doing while you were here during the day?
   Do you see the kids at all during the day (after school care?)?
   [Note — remember they may be shift workers.]

   What about YESTERDAY?

3. When you're at work or kids are not present — is there anything relating to the children that has to be done or that you have to organize? (Who does this organization?)

   What about YESTERDAY?

4. What times do people start to come home? How do they get home? What kind of things would be happening here when they arrive home?
   (After school activities of kids — do different things happen on different days — who organizes activities/getting home.)

What happened YESTERDAY?

5. What about the evening? What would I see happening if I were here on a typical evening?
(Evening meal — who organizes, prepares, cooks? Child care duties. Do family all eat together? How is clearing up organized?)
What happens after you've eaten? When it's time for the kids to get ready for bed, what happens then?
(Who organizes them/baths them, etc. Who puts to bed, reads stories. What is other parent doing then? Organization of homework etc. if applicable. Who goes out & what nights.)

What happened YESTERDAY?

6. What about after the kids are in bed? Do they ever wake up? Who sees to them then?
(Or, who would see to them if they did wake up.)
(If older children are present in household, find out what they do in late evening, including if they give assistance with younger kids.)

What happened YESTERDAY?

B. Now can you take me through a typical non-working day in your family? What day would this be? [Note: may not always be weekends. May differ for the two parents!]

1. Again let's start with the morning, when you and the kids get up. What would I see going on if I was here then?
(Get up, breakfast, child-care. Who is responsible, who organizes. What is other parent doing?)

2. Would you all be at home during the day? Who would be out? What sorts of things would cause people to go out?
(Get details of trips on household business, e.g. shopping. Also trips out involving kids.)

3. What kinds of things would you be doing while you were here during the day?
Would the kids be here in the house during the day? Who would be looking after them? What would this involve? Do problems arise with kids (tantrums, rows, falls, etc.) — who deals with these?
Do other children come over to play (or to be babysat)? Who organizes this/supervises this? Where do they play?

4. What about the evening? What would I see happening if I were here on a typical evening?

(Evening meal — who organizes, prepares, cooks? Child care duties. Do family all eat together? How is clearing up organized?)
What happens after you've eaten? When it's time for the kids to get ready for bed, what happens then?
(Who organizes them/baths them, etc. Who puts to bed, reads stories. What is other parent doing then?)

5. What about after the kids are in bed.
   Do they ever wake up? Who sees to them then?
   (Or, who would see to them if they did wake up.)
   [Check for older children's activities.]

C. (If not already clear ask) What about chores, shopping and cleaning and so on? How would these get done?
   (Probe for what they see as chores, who does what, when, who carries responsibility for them.)

D. In general, how do you decide who does what?
   (Ask for specific instances. Use examples they have given already.)

III. You've told me quite a bit about __ and __ [kids' names]. However I'm wondering if you could describe them to me, just what they're like, how they seem to you.

A. (Try to get at personalities as they appear to the parents. Do parents hold the same opinion of kids?)

B. I'm interested in finding out more about your childcare arrangements.

1. Can you describe to me how these work? How did you find/negotiate this arrangement? Who organized it?
   What happens if it falls through (e.g. if childminder quits)?
   [Note: if applicable rephrase for older kids.]

2. How and why did you decide to go for this type of arrangement?
   (Decision-making process. Who decides. What were main criteria — cost, availability, distance to travel, hours, etc.?)

3. How do you feel about these arrangements? What would be your ideal childcare arrangement?

4. Do you use any other form of childcare, for instance if you go out at night? Can you describe this arrangement?
   (Who babysits — if in a reciprocal arrangement, who does "return"sitting? Who organizes this sitting?)

IV. I'd like to turn to looking at some atypical situations. You've told me the general pattern of life on a working day. But what happens if there's something different happening that day? For instance,

A. What happens if one of the children is sick?
(Older children or daycare children ask also — what if they're off school but not sick?)

B. Who takes children to the doctor?
(Regular visits and sickness. Dentist also.)
[Check: do they need to take time off work for that? — lose pay for it?]

C. (Ask for each parent by name) What would happen, (name) if YOU were sick?

II. SEPARATE INTERVIEW WITH MOTHER

The respondent will be given the transcript from interview 1 (in advance) and asked to read it.

I. First I'd like to check if there have been any changes in the household since I was last here.

   A. Any new jobs, different people in the household . . . ?

   B. Are child-care arrangements still the same?

   C. Have there been any changes to your basic routine that you both described for me last time I was here?

II. Now that you've had a chance to read the transcript, is there anything you'd like to add to it? Anything missing you think you'd like to say?
(Anything they want to add now that partner is not present?)

III. What I'd like to do now is ask you to tell me a bit about your background and your own family where you grew up. Who was in your family?
(Look for details on — number in family, and adults present. Parents working — attitude toward this if they did. Who seemed to look after kids. Educational level, and how education was valued. How parents' responsibilities were regarded — primary responsibility of mother, father.)

   A. Can you remember the vision you had of your parents, when you were a child? What can you remember about them? How did your mother appear to you? Your father?

   B. Some people say that the images they had of their own parents, when they were children, have really affected how they want to go about being a mother or father. For instance, some women want to do things like their mothers, or alternatively they might want to do things very differently. They might want to do some things like their mothers. Have your images of your mother affected you?

      Is there anyone else you wanted to be like or unlike?

   C. Do you think your images of your father have affected how you think (partner) should go about being a parent?

   D. I'd like to ask about any experiences with looking after children before you had your own children —

1. Did you ever look after siblings or young relatives, or do any babysitting?

2. Any volunteer work relating to children?

3. Education — any child-care or family life courses?

4. Any university level courses in child development?

5. (If YES to any of above) How do you think that affected your own experiences or view of yourself as a mother/father?

E. Do your mother or father ever give you advice or suggestions on how to go about being a mother?
[Get examples. Do they welcome these, or not?]

F. Sometimes people when they're quite small children start to think of themselves being parents when they're grown up, and planning what that'll be like. Other people don't do this at all. . . When did you start to envisage yourself as a mother? Can you tell me about it?

IV. Now of course you are a mother — There's a difference, of course, between being a mother, and actually looking after the children, engaging in child-care. I'd like to ask you about how you feel about being a mother, and later about child-care.

A. What do you like/enjoy most about being a mother? [Get examples.] Why? Do you think (partner) would share your enjoyment, if I asked him about being a father?

B. What do you find most irritating about being a mother? [Examples, partner]

C. What dc you find most worrying about being a mother? [Examples, partner]

D. What do you like/enjoy most about actually looking after your children? [Examples, partner]

E. What do you find most irritating about looking after children? [Examples, partner]

F. What do you find most worrying about looking after children? [Examples, partner]

V. I'd like to ask some questions that relate to your paid work.

A. First of all, can you tell me a bit about what you do?
(Get brief description. Look for hours, flexibility/ inflexibility.)

What attracted you to this work?
(Money, availability, interest, hours e.g. part-time, flexibility, . . . If not made plain, ask "Did your having kids or hoping to have kids have anything to do with you taking this job?")

B. When you're at work who has overall responsibility for your kids? Are you still doing childcare? Is there anything relating to the children that has to be done or that you have to organize?
(Check for — making appointments, lunchtime shopping, collecting kids, what if kid is sick.)
[Note — some people may work at home or with kids around.]

What about YESTERDAY at work — did you have to do any childcare things then?

C. Do you talk much about your kids to people at work? Do you talk about problems you're having with them? [Get examples]
Do people at work ever give you advice on looking after kids?

VI. This section is about how you see your responsibilities and what you do as a mother as compared to your husband. I'm looking for ways in which your roles are different, and ways in which they're similar. I'll ask some questions, but there may be other things you think of, too.
[Note: Throughout section, check for relationship to gender of kids]

A. Which of you has the main responsibility for looking after the kids?
(Keeping them fed, keeping them clean, keeping them safe?)

1. Are there any things you do that (partner) doesn't do? [Get examples.]

2. What do you think are the reasons for this?

3. Do you think in general that other families do things in the same way as you?

B. What about discipline?

1. How do you and your spouse differ in your approach to discipline? [Get examples.]

2. How important do you see consensus or agreement as being here?

3. Do you see any differences here between mothers and fathers in general?

C. What about when the kids are having problems with something or if they're

upset about something?

1. [If both] would you both go about sorting things out in the same way? [Get examples]

2. Do you see any differences here between mothers and fathers in general?

D. Which of you organizes things for the kids to do in the house (creative things, homework, games)/ outside house.

1. (If both) do you organize the same kind of things, or different things? [Get examples]

2. Do you see any differences here between mothers and fathers in general?
(Look for differences in decision making/ organizing large-scale, organizing details, getting things ready to do activity.)

VII. When you feel you need some guidance or help with parenting, where would you look for it?
(Books, articles, T.V. friends, mother, doctor, teacher . . .? If books read, find out which they like best.)
Does anybody ever offer you advice you didn't ask for or don't want?

A. Whom have you discussed your children with in the last week?

B. What discussions of your kids have you had with (partner) in the last week?

C. What articles/books have you read in the last month?/ What T.V. shows watched?

D. What problems are your kids giving you just now? Have you looked for any advice on these?

E. Do you ever read books or seek advice on development, just to know what's coming next?
(Which books? Check for mention of ages and stages.)
Do the kids in the books or in the advice seem like your kids at all?

[NOTE: see if I can borrow copies of articles/books which are important to them]

F. You've got two kids (adjust figure), (name) and (name). What kinds of differences have you noticed between them? [Get specific stories to illustrate differences.]

Any ideas why there might be such differences?
[Check for ages, gender.]

VIII. I'd like to turn again to looking at what mothers and fathers do . . .

A. When does your husband look after (child's name) or (child's name) on his own?

1. How does he get on with them?

2. Are there any particular tasks or activities he specially likes to do...specially dislikes?

B. When do you look after (child's name) or (child's name) on your own?

1. How do you get on with them?

2. Are there any particular tasks or activities you specially like to do...specially dislike?

C. Are there any problems <u>you</u> have with the kids that you think (name of spouse) doesn't have? [Get examples.]
Are there any problems <u>he</u> has with the kids that <u>you</u> don't have? [Get examples.]

D. Is there anything you do with the kids, looking after them or playing with them or anything, that your husband COULDN'T do? [Get examples, reasons.]

Is there anything your husband does with the kids, looking after them or playing with them or anything, that you COULDN'T do? [Get examples, reasons.]

E. I'd like you to think back, to when you only had one child. Was it any different then? Were there things (your husband) did then that he doesn't do now. [Or other way round; get examples.]

F. When (name) and (name) were born, was your husband present?

G. In general, can men can look after kids as well as women?

1. [If YES] Would the age or sex of the child make a difference?
[If NO] Any reasons why not? Would the age or sex of the child make a difference?

2. Are there any ages or stages that men would be particularly good at looking after?

IX. If someone asked you what BEING A MOTHER meant to you, what would you say?

III. SEPARATE INTERVIEW WITH FATHER

The respondent will be given the transcript from interview 1 (in advance) and asked to read it.

I. First I'd like to check if there have been any changes in the household since I was last here.

   A. Any new jobs, different people in the household, anything like that?

   B. What about child-care arrangements — are they still the same?

   C. Have there been any changes to your basic routine that you both described for me last time I was here?

II. Now that you've had a chance to read the transcript, is there anything you'd like to add to it? Anything missing you think you'd like to say? (Anything they want to add now that partner is not present? [Partner will not get to read transcript of this interview]

III. I'd like to ask some questions that relate to your paid work.

   A. First of all, can you tell me a bit about what you do?
   (Get brief description. Look for hours, flexibility/ inflexibility, career possibilities.) What attracted you to this work?
   (Money, availability, interest, hours, flexibility, . . . If not made plain, ask "Did your having kids or hoping to have kids have anything to do with you taking this job?")

   B. When you're at work who has overall responsibility for your kids? Are you doing childcare? Is there anything relating to the children that has to be done or that you have to organize?
   (Check for — making appointments, lunchtime shopping, collecting kids, what if kid is sick. Note — some people may work at home or with kids around.)
   What about YESTERDAY at work — did you have to do any child-care things then?

   C. Do you talk much about your kids to people at work? Do you talk about problems you're having with them? (Get examples)
   Do people at work ever give you advice on looking after kids? What people at your work talk about their kids?

IV. What I'd like to do now is ask you to tell me a bit about your background and your own family where you grew up. Who was in your family?

(Look for details on — number in family, and adults present.
Parents working — attitude toward this if they did. Who seemed to look after kids. Educational level, and how education was valued. How parents' roles were regarded — primary responsibility of mother, father.)

A. Can you remember the vision you had of your parents, when you were a child? What can you remember about them? How did your father appear to you? Your mother?

B. Some people say that the images they had of their own parents, when they were children, have really affected how they want to go about being a father or mother. For instance, some men want to do things like their fathers, or alternatively they might want to do things very differently. They might want to do some things like their fathers. Have your images of your father affected you?

   Is there anyone else you wanted to be like or unlike?

C. Do you think your images of your mother have affected how you feel (partner) should go about being a parent?

D. I'd like to ask about any experiences with looking after children before you had your own children —

   1. Did you ever look after siblings or young relatives, or do any babysitting?

   2. Any volunteer work relating to children?

   3. Education — any child-care or family life courses?

   4. Any university level courses in child development?

   5. (If YES to any of B) How do you think that affected your own experiences or view of yourself as a father?

E. Do your mother or father ever give you advice or suggestions on how to go about being a father? [Do they welcome these, or not?]

F. Sometimes people when they're quite small children start to think of themselves being parents when they're grown up, and planning what that'll be like. Other people don't do this at all. . . When did you start to envisage yourself as a parent? Can you tell me about it?

V. Now of course you are a parent — I'd like to ask you about how you feel about being a father, and later how you feel about actually looking after & dealing

with children.

A. What do you like/enjoy most about being a father? [Get examples.] Why? Do you think (partner) would share your enjoyment, if I asked her about being a mother?

B. What do you find most irritating about being a father? [Examples, partner]

C. What do you find most worrying about being a father? [Examples, partner]

D. What do you like/enjoy most about actually looking after your children? [Examples, partner]

E. What do you find most irritating about looking after children? [Examples, partner]

F. What do you find most worrying about looking after children? [Examples, partner]

VI. This section is about how you see your responsibilities and what you do as a father as compared to your wife. I'm looking for ways in which your responsibilities are different, and ways in which they're similar. I'll ask some questions, but there may be other things you think of, too.
[Note: Throughout section, check for relationship to gender of kids]

A. When someone calls to ask about your kids — maybe a teacher (school or daycare) or a relative — which of you do they ask to speak to? How do you fell about that?

B. Which of you has the main responsibility for looking after the kids? (Keeping them fed, keeping them clean, keeping them safe?)

1. Are there any things you do that (partner) doesn't do? [Get examples.]

2. What do you think are the reasons for this?

3. Do you think in general that other families do things in the same way as you?

C. What about discipline?

1. How do you and your spouse differ in your approach to discipline? [Get examples.]

2. How important do you see consensus or agreement as being here?

3. Do you see any differences here between fathers and mothers in general?

D. What about when the kids are having problems with something, or if they're upset about something?

1. [If both] would you both go about sorting things out in the same way? [Get examples.]

2. Do you see any differences here between fathers and mothers in general?

E. Which of you organizes things for the kids to do in the house (creative things, homework, games)/ outside house.

1. [If both] do you organize the same kind of things, or different things? [Get examples.]

2. Do you see any differences here between fathers and mothers in general?

[Look for differences in decision making/ organizing large-scale, organizing details, getting things ready to do activity.]

VII. When you feel you need some guidance or help with parenting, where would you look for it? (Books, articles, T.V. friends, mother, doctor, teacher . . .? If books read, find out which they like best.)
Does anybody ever offer you advice you didn't ask for or don't want?

A. Whom have you discussed your children with in the last week?

B. What discussions of your kids have you had with (partner) in the last week?

C. What articles/books have you read in the last month?/ What T.V. shows watched?

D. What problems are your kids giving you just now? Have you looked for any advice on these?

E. Do you ever read books or seek advice on development, just to know what's coming next? (Which books? Check for mention of ages and stages.)
[NOTE: they may tell me which books their wife has read.]
Do the kids in the books or in the advice seem like your kids at all?

[NOTE: see if I can borrow copies of articles/books which are important to them]

F. You've got two kids (adjust figure), (name) and (name). What kinds of differences have you noticed between them? [Get specific stories to illustrate differences.]
Any ideas why there might be such differences? (Ages, gender.)

VIII. I'd like to turn again to looking at what fathers and mothers do . . .

A. When does your wife look after (name) or (name) on her own?

1. How does she get on with them?

2. Are there any particular tasks or activities she specially likes to do . . . specially dislikes?

B. When do you look after (name) or (name) on your own?

1. How do you get on with them?

2. Are there any particular tasks or activities you specially like to do . . . specially dislike?

C. Are there any problems you have with the kids that you think (name of spouse) doesn't have? [Get examples.]
Are there any problems (name of spouse) has with the kids that you don't have? [Get examples.]

D. Is there anything you do with the kids, looking after them or playing with them or anything, that your wife COULDN'T do? [Get examples, reasons]

Is there anything your wife does with the kids, looking after them or playing with them or anything, that you COULDN'T do? [Get examples, reasons]

E. I'd like you to think back, to when you only had one child . . . Was it any different then? Were there things (your wife) did then that he doesn't do now. (Or other way round; get examples.)

F. When (name) and (name) were born, were you present?

G. In general, can men can look after kids as well as women?

1. [If YES]Would the age or sex of the child make a difference?
[If NO] Any reasons why not? Would the age or sex of the child make a

difference?

2. Are there any ages or stages that men would be particularly good at looking after?

IX. If someone asked you what BEING A FATHER meant to you, what would you say?

IV. BOTH PARENTS PRESENT

I. Check for changes.
Make sure I have AGES of parents, EDUCATION and RELIGION from earlier interviews.

II. (Situation) I'd like to ask you a bit about your home and your neighbourhood:—

A. How long have you lived here? (In this house, this neighbourhood)
(And before that, you were in . . .)
How long have you been together?

B. Is the house your own, or do you rent it? How is it for size and convenience, with having the family? What kind of things does it require in the way of maintenance (and do you do that yourselves? [Get who does what.])

C. What about location? Is it convenient or inconvenient (e.g. for parks, schools, childminding, bad roads in the winter, other kids to play with.)
How do you like it here, in general?

[NOTE: Look around, take notes on house & locality after visits.
What SPACE is available for children to be in/parents to use for child-related purposes? What facilities are available locally?]

III. Overall, do you see your household as being very similar, or very different to others in the neighbourhood, in terms of your parenting and child-care arrangements? (How is it similar or different? Is this to do with your work?)
[Look for division of labour]

IV. I'd like to ask for a moment about your household income. I'll give you a card and perhaps you could say roughly where your income level would fit in.
[TOTAL household income.]

A. (Show card)

1. under $15,000
2. $15,000-$20,000
3. $20,000-$30,000
4. $30,000-$40,000
5. $40,000-$50,000
6. $50,000-$60,000
7. $60,000-$70,000
8. $70,000-$80,000
9. over $80,000

B. I'd like to get an idea of how that's distributed. Who earns more?

V. I'd like to move on, there, and look at some topics that people have mentioned in the other interviews I've done.

A. The first one is to get an idea of what the KIDS do for THEMSELVES (self-help skills).

1. Tidying up? Putting away? dressing? Choosing clothes? Any food preparation?
2. Who gets them to do it? Who teaches them? Helps them?

3. Homework? (school-age kids only) Who gets them to do it? Helps them?

B. Something that a lot of people have mentioned is the question of personal time. When do each of you have time to do something you want to do.

1. Do you make time for yourself? (if applicable) What might make this hard?
   [Try to get them to discuss it]
2. Do you make time for yourselves as a couple?

C. One woman said she has this dream of being able to get away from it all, for 2 or 3 days. How would you feel about that. Would it be possible?

D. One thing that's come up again and again is the business of finding child-care while you're working. People talk about this and the effort and energy they put into it. (Usually it's the mother who puts the effort and energy into it) Is there any way that finding child-care can be made better?

E. Some people say that the government should take a greater share of responsibility for child-care, to make sure that there's different forms of child-care available for the people who need it, and that it doesn't cost too much. Something like the elementary school system, but with more choices. What do you think?
   [Make sure that they know I don't just mean day-care centres!]

F. Back in the home: Why is it almost always women who do laundry?

1. In general I've found that while BOTH women and men look after kids, it's women who do the housework things or ORGANIZE or arrange for them to be done. Why?

G. I was talking to a family about what happened when the kids were sick, and a parent had to stay home with them. The mother said:

"If his boss knew that he was calling out because one of the kids are sick, there'd be hell to pay, you know."

1. Is this in any way familiar?

2. Who would this apply to — people doing what jobs?

3. Is this different for women than for men? Why might it be different (for women, or for some women, or for people in some jobs.)

H. Several fathers have said that when it comes to fixing up babysitters, or arranging for car-pools for their kids, or talking to teachers, they don't really feel comfortable doing these things.

1. Is this familiar? (Do you do them at all? to father)

2. Why might men (or some men) not feel comfortable?

3. Would women always feel comfortable doing these things? [Ask both father and mother this.]

4. (For families with an older child) What about things like going to PTA meetings, or visiting the school? Who usually would do that?

VI. I've been here several times and you've talked with me a lot about your lives — what kinds of talking between yourselves have you been doing as a result of the interviews?

VII. Finally, looking to the future: What do you see ahead for them?
How many children do you want to have? (Think you'll have this many?)

APPENDIX B

TRANSCRIBING, EDITING, CODING AND ORGANIZATION OF DATA

Conventions used in transcribing and editing data

Like several other researchers (see e.g. Devault, 1990), I embarked upon transcribing data before I became aware of conventions used in transcribing material for use in linguistic discourse analysis. I had, however, taken a decision to indicate as much as possible of what went on during interviews. I did not therefore take the shortcuts conventionally used in much sociological work of transcribing only the respondents' talk, not the researcher's, or omitting the "irrelevant" material, "ums", "ers", "you knows" and so forth.

Although this decision lengthened transcription time by possibly as much as a quarter, I remain very glad that I made it. These hesitations are part of my respondents' talk. The use of "you know" is particularly interesting, and I agree with Devault (1990) that it is used by respondents in different ways. It is not only a filler-in while the respondent thinks what to say next. She, or more rarely he, does often indeed mean "you know". She is lining up her experiences with mine. Where Anna, for instance, was saying,

> Everything that becomes sort of a daily ritual thing, you know . . . after a while you get tired, you just need a break, you get burnt out, and you do find that you do just from all the chores, and you know from washing dishes to doing the laundry to doing the shopping, and you try to sort of ignore it, and just do it, you know. (II)

I would be nodding. Yes, I do know.

The following conventions were used in transcription and retained in this dissertation.

> A dash "—" used at the end or beginning of an utterance represents a continuation. This is used particularly in joint interviews, when both partners might be talking to me at once, as in:

Mo: And there's a lot of continuity —
Fa: The institution continues.
Mo: — I mean (he) has three teachers, so even if one left, you'd still have the continuity of the two —

In this extract, the mother said, "And there's a lot of continuity, I mean (he) has three teachers (etc.)". As she finished the first phrase her partner made his explanatory comment, "The institution continues", without stopping her. Both were talking to me at once.

In other examples the dash is used only at the end of an utterance. This indicates that the speaker had not finished but that the utterance "tailed off", often because the other partner had taken up the conversation.

A dash followed by a period "—." indicates that the speaker did not complete a sentence, but finished what she or he wished to say (i.e. they were not interrupted).

Empty parentheses "()" indicate that a word was unintelligible. (. . .) indicates that more than one words were omitted from transcription due to poor sound quality. These notations are rare.

Italicized words in parentheses indicate an action of the speaker *(laughs)* or of some other person *(child came into room)* .

Several other conventions were used for the purposes of this dissertation, in editing quotations.

Ellipsis ". . ." indicates that I have omitted some words or phrases of the speaker, for the purposes of this dissertation.

Square brackets "If one of them [a teacher] is sick" enclose my comments providing explanation of some aspect of the talk.

Parentheses "(the elder girl)" enclose words which I have substituted for the original, generally for purposes of confidentiality, such as here replacing a child's name. In writing this dissertation I have on occasion replaced a word or phrase with another which is clearer. The above example might replace "she" where it would be otherwise unclear which "she" was intended. I very occasionally similarly enclose a brief paraphrase of a lengthy exposition, by a parent, where the exposition itself is not essential for the purpose of my argument but its meaning is required for understanding the speakers' next comments.

Selection of quotations for the purposes of analysis unavoidably requires their

removal from the context within which they are produced. In my treatment of quotations I have endeavoured to retain so far as possible the sense and purpose of these extracts for the speaker, by summarizing the circumstances of their production.

Coding and organization of data

For organization of data, I used an ATARI 1040ST computer equipped with a SPECTRE 128 cartridge, from Gadgets by Small, which enabled this computer to function as a Macintosh and so allowed me to use the database manager HYPERCARD. When interviews had been transcribed they were converted to text files, and these were read into HYPERCARD.

Within HYPERCARD I read through each interview, breaking it into sections of dialogue each dealing with a particular topic. I was here engaged in "squeez(ing) an unwieldy body of discourse into manageable chunks" (Potter and Wetherall, 1987:167), and for want of a better word had termed these sections "chunks" several months before I read Potter and Wetherall's inestimably useful book. A chunk might be a few words or a line of text long, or two pages.

Chunks were stored in one or more of 31 HYPERCARD data files, which are termed "stacks", conceptually equivalent to stacks of index cards where these cards can be annotated and linked to other cards in the same or in other stacks. A chunk might appear in one or several stacks according to what the general theme of the chunk might be. A particular sentence or utterance might be included with more than one chunk.

The names of the 31 data stacks give some notion of the major divisions at this stage, and so I will list them here. Some dealt with parents' descriptions of the allocation of the division of labour and their childcare strategies.

Responsibilities (for childcare)/division of labour
Chores
Baby-care chores
Childcare arrangements
Ideal childcare arrangements
If child is sick
Fixing up sitters
Gender distinctions

Some related to their descriptions of the organization of the day.

Typical day
Yesterday
Typical weekend
Last weekend

Several dealt with ways in which they described feelings about being a mother or father.

Motherhood
Fatherhood
Each parent alone (dealing with situations on her/his own)
Enjoyment
Irritations
Worry
Differences/problems (between parents' handling of situations)

Some dealt with how they described their children, and sources of advice for childcare.

Parents' view of kids
Children's activities
Advice

Still others held parents' accounts of their situations in terms of housing, work and pay, descriptions of their families of origin, previous experiences with childcare, and so forth.

Background-family of origin
Jobs
House, neighbourhood
Experience with kids
Demography (incomes, ages, education, etc.)

Finally a number of stacks held information pertaining to parents' lifestyles that did not appear to fit in elsewhere.

Personal time
Lifestyles
Talking about interview
Days off

Some of these stacks held vast amounts of data. The "chunks" were not yet of manageable proportions. These were divided or sorted into smaller chunks, on subtopics, within the same data stacks. Thus when it became evident that the stack of talk concerning "chores" was unmanageable but that a large amount of information within it pertained to laundry, it was subdivided into "laundry" and "general chores". Further subdivisions were between "laundry" (as a fairly straightforward account of how parents considered this was allocated) and "reasons for the allocation of laundry" (when parents discussed why this was, in most families studied here, a woman's task). This procedure is conceptually equivalent to sorting and subdividing a card file.

As analysis proceeded these "reasons" were themselves categorized and sorted and patterns became evident. Similar procedures of organization, eventually ending as analysis, were followed with other files, such as those on "childcare arrangements", or "worry". The largest file, on "responsibilities", began with four subdivisions, resulting from particular questions in Interviews II and III on responsibility for different types of childcare, and later was further subdivided.

I did not commence this procedure of organization with 31 stack names. Indeed I started with none. As I read through the first interview I created a number of stacks, which was increased as parents appeared to discuss new topics. If an item did not appear to fit anywhere I created a new stack for it (and some stacks are very small). If it fitted in more than one stack, then it was allocated wherever it seemed to fit. As more interviews were "chunked", stacks were amalgamated or divided, and

organizational categories revised.

Principles on which data were organized were therefore, firstly, "what are the parents talking about", and secondly, "how are they talking about it".

As analysis progressed it became evident that there were certain broad patterns to parents' talk, and that these cross-cut the various topics we had discussed. As well as aiding in revising and resorting categories, HYPERCARD gave me the ability to search all the data, or particular stacks, for occurrences of particular word patterns, and I used this to check my perception of the use of catch-words or phrases or word associations, such as "bonding" or "I don't mind it" or "the woman's role".

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