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Parenting: Concept and Praxis

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Summary

For most people parenting is a crucial experience. We enter the world via our parents; we learn what it is to be a child, a human being in that particular time-space-people context. We carry our parents' legacy from conception to death.

The questions central to this research concern the concept and praxis of parenting. Why is parenting so important for human being? What do terms such as loving, caring, nurturing, mean? What does it mean to be a 'family', a 'mother', a 'father'? What of power in families? How do parenting relationships differ from other forms of relationship? How does parenting 'fit' in society? The task I set myself was the comprehension of parenting. I wanted to grasp as much as I could about the definitions, ideas, practices which people use in their everyday lives, and I wanted to understand these in society.

The work is a theoretical one. The phenomenological method underpins the total process; the introduction, the field research, the analysis of data, the writing. Phenomenology, as I understand it, is concerned essentially with uncovering meaning. I wanted to learn the meaning of parenting praxis in society in order to develop a theory of parenting which could be used as a catalyst, and provoke questions which I believe are critical for human being.

The thesis is divided into three parts. The first is the preparation or journey into the research. Time is spent on defining such basic terms as 'body', 'self', 'perception', in building an ontological and methodological framework sufficient for my needs.

Portraits of the six families with whom I lived are presented in triptych form in the middle part of the thesis. I wanted, needed, to immerse myself in people's lives, not simply to visit and ask questions which they may/may not have been

able or willing to answer, but I wanted to become part of their lives, albeit for a short time. Then I could hear, see, taste, feel .. what it is like to be in their family. People are revealed warts and all, and parenting shown to be complex, ambiguous, tedious, awesome ..

In the third part of the thesis focus is on parenting-in-society. C. Wright Mills' questions anchor the discussion of the history of parenting, and on parenting in Australian society. The concept and praxis of parenting is un-covered, and shown to be an ongoing social construction. I argue that the particular construction, this ordering of power, this definition and conceptualisation of parenting, is brought about by a systematic orchestration, an ordering of people's lives which inhibits full realisation of human being. The liberal democratic ideology fuels this construction, and contradictions inherent in parenting praxis are denied, deflected, dismissed by reference to this ideology.

Statement

I hereby certify that the work embodied in this thesis is the result of original research and has not been submitted to any other university. The thesis contains no material published elsewhere, except when due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

marg gilling

Margaret Gilling

Acknowledgments

Many people gave of their time, their space, themselves in this research. The English language, any worded language, is unable to carry the respect, gratitude, humility which I feel. To these people, especially to the six families with whom I lived, I can but say thanks, and pause, in silence, in memory of these times.

Of mentors:

Some you 'study'; some you learn from; some corroborate you; some 'stimulate' you; some are gods; some are brothers (sisters), much closer than colleagues or gods; some choke the heart out of you and make you dubious of ever reading or looking at work again ... *

Some enable: Peter Hiller, supervisor and friend, was/is always an enabler. I thank him for that.

And Lex Grey (1961/62); Jan Pouwer (1970/71); Fiona Mackie (1978 ...).

To Margaret Robinson, friend and a very special wizard on the typewriter, thank you. To Glen Chandler, Michelle Anderson and Robyn Mita; thank you for your enthusiasm, balance and practical help.

To other friends .. and my parents, Don's parents, and 'the family' .. thank you for being you. How richly blessed we have been in human wealth. Without your support I could not have stayed the course.

To Don, a special wording: the term husband is an insult. Don is more than that: he is friend, colleague, lover, anchor, stirrer, challenger, nurturer .. our relationship grew through this research.

* Agee (1939)1966:321 (brackets added).

To Simon, Michael, Ana: thank you for sharing, for teaching, for your patience and resilience: the tears when I left (Simon), the closing-off (Michael), the strident instruction 'Mum, you come home' (Ana). I gambled on our working as a family in the hope that I might learn, and therefore more ably seek to change the world.

1. Bracketing is a key process in this research. In phenomenological terms, it means that the word is being placed under the vivisector. It is

... the technique of phenomenological reduction, whereby the object under study is placed in a special kind of systematic doubt ('bracketed') as to its contingent and theoretical characteristics.

Lafferty, 1977:140

In Part 1:3 the process is explained and used in a deliberate, formal sense: that is, words are bracketed and defined. At other times, a word is bracketed, and the single inverted quotes are used simply as an alerting system; they indicate - this word has an alternative meaning, or multiplicity of meanings.

2. The use of two periods .. after a word means I have given space for the emergence of other meanings. For example:

Sociology is concerned with people: how they live, where they work, what they value, how they play, when they celebrate, what they worship .. and why.

p.1

Three periods ... means words have been omitted. This is the standard use.

3. In the text and bibliography some books are given two dates of publication - the original date, and the date of the particular edition I have used. For example: C. Wright Mills (1959):1970. In the normal use of the Harvard system I found the use of the second date only gave an unrealistic picture of the text. Books, like people, are products of their time.
4. In the thesis, a number of different tpestyles are

used.

this is used for people interviewed for the research;
this is used for people I lived with.

5. At times in the text I use an unusual form of expression. For example:

The questions sociologists ask, the kinds of answers they create; how they search, where they re-search ..

p.1

... for I want/ed to comprehend both parenting
'praxis' ...

p.3

The first example illustrates how words can be changed in order to focus on meaning; the second is used to straddle tenses, in this instance past and present. The reasons for this will be made clear in Part 1:3.

To lend himself, to project himself ... to feel and feel till he understands and to understand so well that he can say, to have perception at the pitch of passion and expression as embracing as the air, to be infinitely curious and incorrigibly patient, and yet plastic and inflammable and determinable, stooping to conquer and serving to direct - these are fine chances for an active mind, chances to add the idea of independent beauty to the conception of success. Just in proportion as he is sentient and restless, just in proportion as he reacts and reciprocates and penetrates, is the critic (researcher) a valuable instrument ...

Henry James
'Criticism'

frontispiece
Gunn, 1975
(brackets added)

Prologue

Part 1:1

Parenting beggars an easy route to its core. For most people, the relationship established through birth (or by creation) is of gut importance in terms of nurturance, belonging, identification and social learning. Potentially, this is one of the most enabling and enriching relationships open to human beings: it is also one of the most assumed, most problematic, most ambiguous. To try and comprehend 'parenting'¹ is to endeavour to capture the meaning, the space, the dialogue, between people - old and young, 'parent' and 'child'. Parenting relationships are not simply of significance in childrearing years: they are lifelong, for we carry our parents' imprint from conception to death.

These relationships are commonly considered crucial for the functioning of society so they are defined, monitored and sanctioned by societal institutions: law, government, education, religion ..² and in ideology. This thesis is an attempt to understand and explain the private and public praxis of parenting, and the beliefs which underlie such praxis. It is done through the discipline of sociology.

Sociology is concerned with people: how they live, where they work, what they value, how they play, when they celebrate, what they worship .. and why. Why do people interact this way and not that? Why do these people place importance on this, other people on that? Why does this structuring take place with this group at this time and in this particular context? The questions sociologists ask, the kinds of answers they create; how they search, where they re-search,

¹ Single quotation marks mean that the word is bracketed. See technical notes, p. viii.

² .. means the list is ongoing, not closed. See technical notes, p. viii.

will depend on a host of factors: their sense of individuality, their reasons for doing sociology, their training, quality of experience, their sociological imagination.

Any enterprise can be dangerous: 'doing sociology' is dangerous. It is potentially disturbing, rewarding, exciting, unsettling, boring and challenging.

This research is both creative and critical: creative, in that in its very process it is eclectic, simultaneously theoretical and intuitive, timeless and contemporaneous; critical, in that it is designed to challenge, and change, existing praxis and beliefs about parenting. It focusses upon people, their history, their biographies and their intersection in society. More particularly, it concerns people involved in parenting: adults and their children, and those with whom they share their lives. That is a necessary beginning.

The main task of the thesis is the development of a theory of parenting, an interpretation and explanation of parenting grasped as part of the wider structuring called 'society' (see Part 3).

One of the central beliefs in western society is that parents care: that they instinctively, intuitively, care, and that they *should* care.

When family breakdowns occur or one parent dies, the remaining parent must care for the children.

Balmer, 1974:79
(emphasis added)

The child, for the full and harmonious development of his personality, needs love and understanding. He shall, wherever possible, grow up in the care and under the responsibility of his parents ... a child of

tender years shall not, save in exceptional circumstances, be separated from his mother.

Principle 6
Declaration of the Rights
of the Child (U.N.)
(emphasis added) ³

To question how parents care is safe: to describe how parents bring up their children, how and when they send them to school, music lessons, work .. how they feed a big family, survive on welfare payments, interact with relatives and neighbours .. that too is acceptable, and much research is of that descriptive kind. But to ask if parents care, about the shape of that caring, and why they care, that is more tortuous, for it demands a suspension of one of the core beliefs in society, and an acknowledgment of one's own experience of parenting, both as child and adult. It requires a bracketing of one's own knowledge, intuition and beliefs, an openness to surrender, in Wolff's term, ⁴ matched by a willingness to become embroiled in other people's lives in order to do the research.

Questions beset me on all sides when I started thinking about the research project. How do relationships get established, bruised, nurtured? When, how, why do they change? What do terms such as loving, caring, bonding, mean? What does it mean to be called 'a family', a 'mother', 'father', 'son', a 'child'? To be part of a two person family, a larger one? Why should parents like their children, children their parents? What choices do people have? What of power in families? What are the connections between 'families'

³ The use of the male pronoun as an all-inclusive term is a common one. I have drawn attention to it only once and tried throughout the thesis to use non-sexist language.

⁴ Surrender meaning total involvement, a suspension of received notions, the pertinence of everything, of identification, and the risk of being hurt (Wolff, 1976, esp. 22-23).

and 'society'? Who defines the rules and sets the fashions in parenting? What happens across gender, age, life style boundaries? How do parenting relationships differ from other forms of relationships? Why?

Like the Newsons, I expected that such questions, especially such central questions in human experience, must have been asked hundreds of times before.

Is it characteristic of the enquiring mind that, precisely because of its respect for the research process, it imagines ... that its questions must have been asked ... before.

Newson and Newson, 1976:24

In various disciplines and professions, for example anthropology, psychiatry, psychology, social work, some of these questions have been addressed. However, when I read other family research accounts, I wondered whether I was mistaken in my vision, or overly ambitious in what I was endeavouring to do, for I wanted to comprehend both parenting 'praxis' in particular human situations and the beliefs and practices, praxis, in the societal context. A relative of one of the research families, when told what I was doing, said

You're wasting your time - it all comes down to LOVE.

and a research coordinator of one of the largest welfare organisations in Melbourne, one which specialises in fostering, exclaimed

But of course, it's all biological!

If it were that simple.

For many years, as a person, teacher, social worker, sociologist, I heard what C. Wright Mills calls '... the beat feeling that all is somehow not right' (C.W. Mills, [1959]: 1970:18). I heard people constantly moaning about their

parents, their kids; about having to attend end of year school concerts, or go to mum's every Sunday for lunch; about the noise of the stereos in their son's room, or the untidiness of the same room. There was/is little talk of celebration in families, more often a taken-for-granted acceptance or hope of survival coupled with mixed feelings - "I guess they are my flesh and blood", "whatever I do it's wrong", "we are luckier than most", "it would be so boring without the kids". Life became a series of interviews as I scurried from person to person searching for answers. People ⁵ talked in numb-like fashion about their experience. Many talked of difficulties in relationships with their parents.

They cared but never praised.

Sally, 47

I needed to be without my mother and not to feel guilty because I wasn't like my mother.

Meg, 39

Mum's lost her memory so she doesn't recognise me but I like to go and see her once a fortnight. Roger (husband) doesn't go, nor do the girls because it upsets them so much.

Jean, 48

Others spoke of their joy and delight. For example, Claire, talking about her daughter, Christine, said:

There is magic for me in our relationship - in having the opportunity to watch her learn to fly.

Claire, 37

I never discussed having the baby ... yet from the moment he was born I felt marvellous ... I just felt that I'd done something no-one else had done before.

Gloria, 42

⁵ For details of people interviewed, see end of Part 1:4. Their words are always *in this typescript*.

I've had 14 years of being paid to do exactly what I want to do so at 35 I've decided to stop working. I gave a lecture the other day and said I would rather be a father than a teacher. I don't need a job any longer, I don't need a career ... I've re-mapped my whole life ... I will be perfectly happy to spend my time with the kids.

Bob, 35

I was still at the beginning of the research project, still trying to 'get inside', trying to make sense of where I was, where I wanted and needed to go. I read frantically, trying to find explanations, answers to my questions, and found that the complexity, ambiguity, intensity and drabness of living were more likely to be captured in fiction or biography than in academic writing. Whether it be Proust, Drabble, John Berger, Adrienne Rich, Virginia Woolf, Katherine Mansfield .. or the 19th century novelists, one could hear, see, feel, touch the characters and respond in recognition, identification, in sympathy.

One man's writing had a profound impact. James Agee's work is an artist's word portrait of three families living in Alabama in the 1930s. Agee taught me about time, space, dignity and about people:

This family must take care of itself; it has no mother or father: there is no other shelter, nor resource, nor any love, interest, sustaining strength or comfort, so near, nor can anything happy or sorrowful that comes to anyone in this family possibly mean to those outside it what it means to those within it ...

Agee, [1939]1966:53

... so even as they sit at the lamp and eat their supper, the joke they are laughing at could not be so funny to anyone else ...

Agee, [1939]1966:51

and about the intrusion of research:

They just kept looking at me. There was no more for them to say than for me ... I said I was awfully sorry if I had bothered them; but they only retreated still more profoundly behind their faces

[1939]1966:40-41

None of them relieved me for an instant of their eyes ... I was transfixed ... As I asked my questions, and told my purposes, and what I was looking for, it seemed to me they relaxed a little toward me ... almost as if into trust and liking; yet even at its best this remained so suspended, so conditional ...

[1939]1966:33

In contrast, the people described in much of the sociological family literature resembled T.S. Eliot's hollow men, stuffed men. Many are lopsided, divorced from kin, friends, social networks, severed by methodology, by objectification and/or categorisation from any physical or social context. Everywhere one could/can see sociologists continuing to flatten human beings, to lump them, like potatoes, into s(t)acks.

Mogey's comment made in 1962 is still pertinent:

Over much of the world, family research is still highly descriptive. Much is still cast in the older mould of institutional analysis, heavily normative, moralistic Some is frankly archaic in its intellectual equipment.

in Morgan, 1975:2

Mainstream family research remains within the soft functionalist paradigm (Morgan, 1975:17-59). It is reified theoretical research, research where people are perceived as role-people, as mothers or fathers, siblings .. then questioned about those roles, about role-conflict, or strain, or role saliency. There is seldom recognition given to the social constructing of these roles - of the age, sex/gender,

legal dimensions of these roles. In functionalist research both the social and particular aspects of human being are often ignored. Morgan hammers this kind of research which he believes to be more common in family sociology than in any other area:

What is objectionable ... is not merely the actual list of functions presented but the lack of critical awareness as to what kind of question is being asked and whether it is a meaningful question at all.

Morgan, 1975:18-19

Assumptions are common: not only does there tend to be a reification of 'family', of roles, and of functions, but also a prevailing view of 'the family' as being private and apart from the social or public structure of society. Too, singular views of family experience are presented as complete pictures (see Part 1:2).

Much of the argument is simplistic, and parenting, as a key process in family praxis, is swallowed up in such research into the taken-for-granted reality and belief in the centrality of 'the family' for people's lives.

The family either provides a sense of competence, of selfworth, a sense of power and of social respect; or it provides the reverse sense of incompetence, powerlessness, lack of respect and self-denigration ...

Edgar, 1980b:7
(emphasis added)

... the family in Australia ... remains the cornerstone of community stability ...

Stoller, 1974:1

The feminist literature ⁶ which flourished in the 1970s

⁶ See Bernard (1975, 1976); Oakley (1972, 1974a, 1974b, 1979); Choderow (1978).

broke the conservative retaining walls of functionalist thought by asking questions which went beyond 'roles'. By concentrating on the gender division of labour, feminists clearly illustrated the social construction of reality.

For many people this writing brought about a painful awareness of the inequalities, discrepancies, the conflicts in family structure and experience. Questions raised were/are often threatening, for example:

Why men by and large do not do primary parenting, and women do, is a centrally interesting sociological question.

Choderow, 1978:14

Initially, the tone of some of the works was anti-male, anti-motherhood, anti-establishment. The marrying of Marxism and feminism and later theoretical development, plus the evolving grass-roots emphasis on mothering-as-nurturing have, however, eased some of the social and ethical dilemmas for feminists and/or radical sociologists. But parenting-as-process open to both male and female has not yet received the scholarly attention it deserves.

Growing pains became more pronounced when I read 'theory'. Argument about the rightness/wrongness of focussing on the individual rather than using a structural approach (and thereby risking ignoring the individual) seemed quaintly irrelevant; so too the endless debates about subject/object, conflict versus consensus approaches, materialism versus idealism; frequently such debate existed only in a vacuum. C. Wright Mills' emphasis on history, biography and their intersection seemed to make sense, and made such word dichotomies non-sense. Without a strong commitment to the research, to sociology, to people, complemented by a growing feminist awareness, I may have atrophied and remained imprisoned within prevailing

thought, been as Adorno suggests, one who

... drags along with him as his social
(sociological) heritage the mutilations
inflicted upon him over thousands of years.

in Mackie, 1977:xxxiii
(brackets added)

Increasingly, I found myself jettisoning much of the theory I had been taught, and caught; this led to a growing sense of disquiet, a fear of arrogance and/or mis-interpretation. No longer could I envisage a traditional kind of research project: the statement of a sociological problem, development of a theoretical framework, hypotheses, fieldwork, testing of hypotheses, analysis, interpretation, conclusion. I had/have no succinct sociological problem, just a journey of discovery. I wanted to learn of parenting, not about parenting. Perhaps my task was/is to illuminate, not to explain.

In the midst of this bewilderment, O'Neill's book, Making Sense Together dropped as manna from heaven: I became overnight a wild sociologist:

This is the task of wild sociology ... to root sociology in the care of the circumstance and particulars that shape the divine predicaments of ordinary men ... to keep faith with the great commonplaces of human life, birth, marriage, work, and death, and to be faithful to what is strange and varied, brave and defeated ...

O'Neill, 1975:10, 81

We must think of the joys of labor as well as its pains, its celebration in things as well as its struggle with them. We must know what it is people do in their work, how they feel, what they see, what they hear, what they need from steel, or marble, or bread ...

1975:3

We need to start conscious of others,
willing to learn, to be overwhelmed, to
struggle, to fight back, and to stand.

1975:11

Wild sociology encourages a way of look-
ing at things and saying things that
matures with its own practice.

1975:79

C. Wright Mills charges sociologists to use their socio-
logical imagination, to acquire a new way of thinking:

You try to think in terms of a variety of
viewpoints and in this way to let your
mind become a moving prism catching light
from as many angles as possible.

C.W. Mills, [1959]1970:235-6

I wanted to stretch, to be the eclectic that I am; to
learn, to absorb, reject .. to stand. Yet the shackles of
years of training die hard. Sense antennae are difficult to
keep alive in an academic context for they are seen as un-
reliable, subjective, female, and therefore dangerous and/or
irrelevant. Objectivity remains the goal, 'facts' the desti-
nation of the research journey. Everyday reality, however,
does not necessarily tidy itself into compartments, and it
does involve the constant interplay of our senses. Tradi-
tional research methods - questionnaires and interviews, even
open-ended interview schedules - became less and less entic-
ing tools of research. It became essential to try and catch
'with all of me' in any attempt to research parenting praxis.
I learnt so, so slowly to use my intuition, understanding,
scholarship, and to trust.

I'm fundamentally, I think, an outsider.
I do my best work and feel most braced
with my back to the wall. It's an odd
feeling though, writing (working) against
the current ... Yet of course I shall.

Woolf, [1953]1978:293
(brackets added)

The challenge was there, and accepted: that did not remove the omnipresent doubts or fears, nor the lurking suspicion.

Doing research is always humbling, for one is constantly reminded of how little one knows, how inadequate one's experience and knowledge of 'the other', how privileged is the trespass into the lives of other human beings.

In a novel, a house or person has his meaning, his existence, entirely through the writer. Here, (in research) a house or a person has only the most limited of his meaning through me: his true meaning is much huger. It is that he exists, in actual being, as you do and I do... His great weight, mystery, and dignity are in this fact.

Agee, [1939]1966:11
(brackets added)

In this work I wanted, always, to accord full dignity and right to the people involved, yet I knew that our conversation would bring to the surface questions, ideas, areas of tension which might otherwise have never emerged. By agreeing to participate in the research people gave me entry to their lives: the research dialogue became a window for them, for me.

The research was/is designed to try and comprehend parenting; the beliefs people hold, and those enshrined in the societal weltanschauung, and the translation of those ideas into practice. That needed an uncovering approach. None of the accepted sociological frameworks seemed practicable: functionalism was suspect, interactionism also limiting, structuralism enabled the societal research, but not the focus on particular human beings. Then I discovered phenomenology, not the Schutzian variety but the European school; I responded strongly, especially to Heidegger and Merleau Ponty, and this enabled me to anchor the research theoretically and

methodologically in phenomenology.⁷ As I understood/understand it, phenomenology is basically a dis-covering process, an attempt to 'see' holistically. Phenomenology serves as an exacting martinet, and an alienating one:

Whoever thinks of hiring her (phenomenology) for ... a job should be warned that he will find her a highly unsatisfactory maid, perhaps even a rebellious one ... Phenomenology follows its own laws. Whoever embarks on it has to follow wherever it leads. It makes no promise of safe and easy solutions.

Spiegelberg, 1975:79
(brackets added)

I accepted that challenge for there is something of the missionary zeal and commitment in this research.

Following the phenomenological command, bracketing of key concepts became the essential modus operandi. Words like mother, wife, daughter, grandfather, family .. all have been bracketed throughout the five plus years of research: so too, words like sociology, theory, methodology, research; the discipline has been relentless, painful but necessary. Doing phenomenology in this way means doing it on oneself,⁸ both as a human being and as researcher, as well as on the language of the everyday world, including academia.

Understanding is ever underway. One of the conceits of academia is the assumption of omnipotence, the belief in the feasibility of 'freezing reality', of capturing 'truth'. If truth is defined as the opposite of concealment, or as a miracle of vision, then I am a truth-seeker, but I had/have no illusions about grasping more than a flicker of an-other's meaning, nor in comprehending the complexity, ambiguity, living-ness of any relationship.

⁷ See Part 1:3 and Part 1:4.

⁸ See Oakley (1981b), and Stanley and Wise (1983), for discussion of the personal nature of research.

The questions central to this research are ontological, concerned with the being of parenting, as well as the shape/shaping and texture of parenting experience.

"Be-ing" is the verb that says the dimensions of depth in all verbs, such as intuiting, reasoning, loving, imaging, making, acting, as well as the couraging, hoping, and playing that are always there when one is really living.

Daly, 1979:23-24

But human being is normally taken for granted: only at times of crisis or intensity, or grave decision-making .. do people become aware of 'being', or at times of ecstasy, pain, at punctuation marks in their lives, for example - marriage, death of a friend or relative, the birth of a child. The dramatic irruption of a work of art, sculpture, poetry or music can heighten the sensitivity to being, as can a thunderstorm, a spring leaf, a sunrise (see Csaky, 1979).

In trying to grapple with such a fluid, sensitive, jagged area of meaning as parenting praxis, words alone are inadequate.

Words strain,
Crack and sometimes break, under the burden,
Under the tension, slip, slide, perish,
Decay with imprecision, will not stay in place,
Will not stay still.

T.S. Eliot, Four Quartets,
'Burnt Norton', V.

When Ana ⁹ hugs me I don't mentally word - ah, I am receiving a hug. I feel it, respond, enjoy both the physical closeness and moment, but the hug has a past, present and future context. Human being is always anchored in time, and in a spatial material context.

⁹ My daughter.

If I was to uncover parenting praxis, I needed to deal with concepts such as human being, time, space .. to examine all these terms and then piece together a conceptual repertoire sufficient for the cause; words such as body, self, intersubjectivity .. all had to be placed under the phenomenological vivisector in order to grasp and then spell out what I knew (see Part 1:3). Only then could I go to the 'research proper'.

To 'doubt' in this sense ... (means) the readiness and capacity for critical questioning of all assumptions and institutions which have become idols under the name of common sense, logic, and what is supposed to be 'natural'.

de omnibus dubitandum; everything must be doubted, particularly the ideological concepts which are virtually shared by everybody and have consequently assumed the role of indubitable commonsensical axioms.

Fromm, in Illich, 1976:9
(brackets added)

The time came, however, when I had to pause with the intellectual wondering and start the 'people research'.

Initially I tried to explore the meanings of parenting process in the context of five 'families'. These families were of different shapes and sizes (see Part 1:4). I used a number of research techniques, mostly open-ended interviews, though I deliberately varied the timing of my visits. I ate evening meals, went on family outings, listened, talked, observed, pondered .. With one family I attempted a family sculpture¹⁰ in order to try and break out of words, and the spaces between words. I became increasingly frustrated for I knew I was seeing only the tip of the interaction and that 'polite and mannerly', however honest.

¹⁰ I had been taught the technique in family therapy training, see Part 1:4, p. 115.

I started interviewing anyone who would talk about being a parent, being parented, and I chased after people doing research on 'family'. I read, listened, and returned in hope to my anthropological undergraduate studies: in some of the ethnographies real people came through. It surely was possible.

By the end of 1978 at the conclusion of the pilot study and after my phenomenological awakening, I decided it was feasible to focus on a limited number of 'families' for the research proper, but to spend a concentrated period of time in their presence in order to give each person, me included, the space and time to develop a dialogue¹¹ which would be interrupted only by regular activities, for example paid employment, theirs and mine.

Jules Henry's book, Pathways to Madness,¹² was the catalyst for this move. That text is a detailed account of his living with a number of families, each of whom had a child diagnosed as being schizophrenic. I decided to try and do likewise, but with 'ordinary' families (see p. 34 for definition).

An eight day period seemed an appropriate time for the conversation to develop, and for routines, rituals, interaction to be observed. One of the families which had participated in the pilot study agreed to continue through to the 'research proper'. I started searching for other families, again disparate in age, education, religion, social class. Ten sounded a 'defensible' number, but six became the actual number. After living for eight day periods with six 'families'

¹¹ 'He didn't tell her in words that he was all right. He just looked at her and gave her time to know it.' Mackie, unpublished manuscript (1974:141).

¹² The title was unwittingly apt, in retrospect.

I believed I could not further add to the dimensions of the research. I had reached saturation point (see Glaser and Strauss, 1968:61-62).

For the first two families on some days I appeared as the alarm was going off and left as the adults were going to bed. Other times I appeared for breakfast and left after the evening meal. For the other four families I became their live-in guest; I slept on a mattress on the floor (twice), on a couch in the living room, and in a spare bedroom. The portraits of these 'families' and comments upon the research experience form the middle section of this thesis.

To add breadth to the research process and diversity of people I interviewed thirty four people:¹³ their words are scattered throughout the thesis to illustrate, to describe, to point to confusion or ambiguity in parenting praxis. These people, like those with whom I lived, taught me about parenting, and more. Many jolted half-baked ideas, too quickly-formed conclusions, and some painfully demonstrated that aspects of my thinking were so ingrained, my prejudices so embedded, as to act as blinkers.¹⁴ Such people stretched the horizons of the research/researcher.

I knew, however, that this was but one part of the research. Parenting does not occur in a vacuum nor behind closed doors. I knew I both wanted and needed to juxtapose the portraits of parenting praxis which emerged from the people research with institutional definitions of parenting, and to endeavour to locate this discussion in the context of both the societal weltanschauung and in society. It was also

¹³ This number does not include those in the pilot study families, nor the 'research proper'. The total number of people interviewed for the research is in excess of 100.

¹⁴ For instance, a friend phoned part way through the research and suggested I be 'formally' interviewed about my own assumptions about parenting.

blatantly necessary to anchor the thesis historically, to look at the development of both the concept and praxis of parenting through the centuries.

C. Wright Mills' questions are central to this thesis: ¹⁵

What is the structure of this particular society? ... Where does this society stand in human history? ... How does any particular feature (parenting) we are examining affect, and how is it affected by, the historical period in which it moves? ... In what ways are (people) selected and formed, liberated and repressed, made sensitive and blunted?

C.W. Mills, [1959]1970:13
(brackets added)

One of the key aims in this project is to discover not only what parenting praxis is, but what it might be.

Nothing that is said (done, lived) has its truth simply in itself, but refers instead backward and forward to what is unsaid (un-done, un-lived).

Gadamer, 1976:67
(brackets added)

In recent years I have leant heavily on a number of writers, using their words for support and to hone in on human being. Virginia Woolf's honesty captured more succinctly than I could the pain of being aware:

... what a grind it is embodying all these ideas and having perpetually to expose my mind, opened and intensified as it is by the heat of creation, (of research) to the blasts of the outer world. If I didn't feel so much how easy it would be to go on.

Woolf, [1953]1978:231
(brackets added)

¹⁵ Detailed and discussed more fully in Part 3.

The thesis, like a Proustian novel, grows in structure and sensibility. The whole is more than the sum of its parts, and not until the epilogue, the end-point (pause is a preferable term) do any of the parts make 'full' sense. Many of the ideas are naked - 'thin' - when first introduced into the thesis: only in the context of the text do they develop depth, do meanings accrete, become supplanted, explode.

Emphasis is on coming-to-know, rather than on knowledge, on process rather than the production of a finite work. Parenting cannot be neatly untangled, nor can any apprehension be complete.

And further: meaning is not singular, nor owned; to apprehend meaning requires mediation and response, for understanding is an active process, not a passive one.

It is not enough for a painter like Cezanne
... a philosopher (or researcher) to create
and express an idea; they must also awaken
the experiences which will make their idea
take root in the consciousness of others.

in Mackie, 1977:173
(brackets added)

Pelz's words kept ringing in my consciousness through the years of research:

... the phenomenological intention can be spelled out like this: to purify the channels of perception, to learn to see, hear, smell, taste, feel ... until we really are seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling. But also to come to understand what we actually are understanding, how and why we are trying to understand.

Pelz, 1974:204

No research journey is ever easy: as I read, and read, and read, and read the sociological literature (and that of related disciplines) I became increasingly disenchanted with the a-theoretical, a-philosophical, de-humanised nature of

many research projects and reports. My objections are detailed in the next chapter, which serves a dual function: to map literature on 'family', and especially to note some of the assumptions underpinning much of the research; and secondly, to comment upon these assumptions and problems in relation to this research, to point to a number of steps decided upon which would hopefully avoid some of the pitfalls, or blind spots, or crassness of previous research. Both tasks seemed necessary to complement and prepare the space for the following crucial chapter, the theoretical grounding of the research. The chapter on methodology follows the theoretical grounding, and 'completes' Part 1.

But I should need to be a herd of elephants ... and a wilderness of spiders, desperately referring to the animals that are reputed longest lived and most multitudinously eyed, to cope with all this ... How shall I ever find the grains of truth embedded in all this mass of paper?

Woolf, [1929]1977:27

... 'being soaked in the literature' is being able to locate the opponents and the friends ... viewpoint ... you may drown in it ... Perhaps the point is to know when you ought to read, and when you ought not to.

C.W. Mills, [1959]1970:236

Other People's Words

Part 1:2

There are probably more words written on 'family' than any other topic. Poets and novelists, professionals in many areas - medicine, psychology, social work, architecture .. all contribute to a burgeoning mass of material. Academia is no exception. People in disciplines such as law, anthropology, pediatrics, education, women's studies, sociology and the rapidly growing interdisciplinary area of history of the family (see Morgan, 1979), all spotlight 'family'. Journals specifically devoted to 'family' abound in Britain, the United States and Australia. Articles appear weekly in women's magazines, newspapers, and 'the family' features as a topic for discussion on endless television programmes and talkback shows. To maintain a watchful eye on this verbiage is difficult: to critique even the major books and/or articles an implausible task. Bibliographies such as Koopman-Boyden's on the New Zealand family (1975) are welcome: likewise texts such as Rapoport *et al.*, Fathers, Mothers and Others (1977) are helpful in gathering strands of literature together; they can act as signposts through the maze. In this latter book, the authors present a comprehensive review of the literature, focussing on parenting rather than on 'families'. They organise their work using a developmental perspective: include a chapter entitled 'Parenting with

adult children and grandparenting', and succinctly draw together at various points summaries of the dominant conceptions of parenting in the literature (see especially pp. 35, 36, 73). Rapoport *et al.* acknowledge their work to be stronger in its understanding of middle class parenting than of the working class, and also to be

... firmer in its social-psychological than its macrosocial formulations.

Rapoport *et al.*, 1977:viii

This literature is strangely seducing, for the temptation is to concentrate on writing which is traditionally known, 'acceptable', for example, the studies of families and social class - Bell (1969), Young and Wilmott (1975) - or to focus on studies which attract attention because of their detail - Busfield and Paddon (1977) - or their methodology - Henry ([1965]1973) - or to read mainly Australasian works - Ritchie and Ritchie (1978), Harper and Richards (1979), Russell (1983) - all the time failing to see the questions which are not being addressed because of the underlying premises on which most family research is based.

One of the sad, bad facts about family sociology is that it has not attracted a concerted and critical debate, either theoretically or in regard to method. None of the founding fathers - Durkheim, Marx, ¹ Weber - concentrated attention on 'family', hence their disciples or opponents have developed their work in other areas. Into this vacuum entered Parsons, whose ideas expanded in direct consequence to his lack of debating partners.

His influence and importance in the study of the family is unquestioned; he has not only provided a framework to argue within

¹ See Coward (1983) Chapter 5, for a discussion of the concept of the family in Marxist theory.

... but he has, to a large extent, defined the rules within which people argue.

Morgan, 1975:25-26

Parsons' central ideas - the isolation of the nuclear family, the differentiation of the family from other institutions, the specialisation of functions within the family, socialisation being the primary function, all rest on a pre-supposition of a biological division of labour.

A number of suppositions flow from that initial one: research undertaken within such a functionalist theoretical framework commonly assumes that:

1. the nuclear family, a man, a woman, and their child/ren is the key institution in society.
2. Because the nuclear family is 'the normal family', families which do not fit this structure or who vary from the norm are described by adding an adjective to their title:

single-parent family
dual-career family
migrant family
adoptive family
low-income family²

3. The family can be viewed as a system where the actions of one member affect those of the others. The family system might also be seen as a microsystem of society.
4. An adult male becomes the husband and the father. His

² For research on single-parent families see Penman *et al.* (1981); on dual-career families, Rapoport and Rapoport (1971); on migrant families, Mackie (1982); on adoptive families, Humphrey (1969); on low-income families, Howell (1973).

role is primarily in the workforce, and in the family he is the breadwinner, the protector and provider for his wife who is mother to his children.

5. The male husband/father is the link between the private world and the public:

Put very schematically, a mature woman can love, sexually, only a man who takes his full place in the masculine world, above all in its occupational aspect, and who takes responsibility for a family; conversely the mature man can only love a woman who is really an adult, a full wife to him and a mother to his children, and an adequate 'person' in her extra-familial roles.

Parsons and Bales, in
Morgan, 1975:43

6. An adult female becomes the wife and the mother because it is the female who conceives, carries, gives birth and then feeds her husband and children. She is responsible for the nurturing of her family, and practical matters such as housekeeping ..
7. It is logical to do research using a life-cycle or developmental approach; for example, research can focus on 'courting', or on 'getting married', on 'transition to parenthood', or on 'parents with adolescent children', or on 'middle-aged women and the empty-nest syndrome'

Language legitimates this perception of family structure and gives it a sense of moral 'rightness' and as being 'naturally' given.

man and woman	woman and man
man and wife	woman and husband
man and wife and children	woman and husband and children
family man	family woman

or

John Collins and Catherine White
 John Collins and Catherine Collins
 John Collins and Catherine Collins, Anna Collins and
 Blair Collins
 Mr and Mrs John Collins
 (Henry James talks of You and Mrs You).

A number of theoretical and methodological points ensue: within this perceived 'structure' it makes sense to do research on 'parts' of families - on 'wives', 'fathers', 'mothers' ..³ Because this is essentially role-research it is easy to assume that all mothers, or all fathers .. or that people within 'a family' share the same outlook, values, lifestyles.

Jessie Bernard's warning (1976) about there being two marriages - His and Hers - is a vital one (though limited in its conception), yet it remains unheeded by many researchers. It is still common for only one person in a family to be interviewed and asked to describe/define what others in the family do or say .. how they behave, what decisions they make .. That person is usually 'the mother', though studies undertaken in Australia (Adler, 1965; Krupinski and Stoller, 1973) have used children as 'respondents'.

That we have many 'selves' which vary and twist and surface at different times of day, on hot sticky nights, or when Aunty Gladys is visiting, or Grandma .. or when we are feeling tired and frazzled, excited .. such complexity seems not to be acknowledged in much of the research.

Research on the family in Australia is so sparse and so superficially carried out as to suggest a nervously calculated evasion of the whole area.

Conway, 1978:45

³ For research on wives, see Gavron (1968); on fathers, Russell (1983); on mothers, Oakley (1974a, 1979).

Too, a strong middle class bias percolates through many of the studies:

... I have the uncomfortable feeling that the authors, despite all their elaborate theories and technical research devices, are doing little more than projecting certain middle class hopes and ideals onto a refractory reality.

Barrington Moore, in
Morgan, 1975:3

Safilios Rothschild furthers the point by saying that the

... 'egalitarian family' ... is a type which exists mainly and almost exclusively in the minds of family sociologists.

in Bryson, 1975:214

Parsons bears much of the responsibility for this emphasis for his attention was on middle class America. He talks, for instance, of possible exceptions to his analysis as being 'the rural family system, the upper-class family system and the lower-class' (Morgan, 1975:39).

Perhaps, too, blame could be traced back to Parsons for the ethnocentric nature of much of the research: rarely do studies incorporate people of different nationalities or ethnic groups. Instead, research is done on black families in America; Greek families in Australia; Maori families in New Zealand. Such families are perceived as being different, the distortion in that assumption being that such families are seen as different from 'the family', from the norm.

Mainstream research on 'the family' is conservative and limited in its vision: the challenge of exposing social inequality, injustice, contradictions, is ignored. The task of inquiry is deflected and much of the research remains on the level of description. Ontological questions, issues of social structuring, cannot be addressed from within a functionalist tradition: people are not seen primarily as indi-

viduals but as role-people, viewed with already-established parts to play. Questions of meaning, of identity, of complexity, are frequently missing or glossed over in this research.

For instance: at the heart of Catholicism are beliefs about procreation, beliefs which have direct effects on sexual practices, on contraception, abortion, child-rearing. Judaism has at its centre a concept of the matriarchal family. Whether people are practising their religion or not, if they have been reared in such a tradition these beliefs will affect them, yet research questionnaires and interview schedules scarcely touch upon such matters. (But see Busfield and Paddon, 1977:280, for a list of questions about religion and politics; Richards, 1978:312, for the question 'How important is religion to you?'; Bott, [1957]1971:202).

Fallding's ⁴ work is an exception. In a mid-nineteen-fifties doctoral thesis he asked people to talk of their goals; about their perception of Australian society - the growth of materialism, about class-consciousness, about immigration .. questions rare in family research. He also asked family members to talk about their 'external activities': with neighbours, friends, religious groups, cultural, educational and political groups. Often these areas are ignored. As well, family members are presumed to be the 'significant' others to each other (see Morgan, 1975:72). Fallding's research was complex in design and honest in its reporting.

Sexual matters were not dealt with because of the special competence and confidence their treatment requires.

Fallding, 1956:7

Another Australian study met with a different response:

⁴ H. Fallding, 'Aspects of Australian Family Structure: a Field Study of Urban Families' (Australian National University, PhD thesis).

Krupinski and Stoller ... revealed little about child-parent relationships beyond some naive reporting ... Krupinski's sanguine finding that negative perceptions of parents were 'rare' tells us very little. His final, tantalizing sentence begs more questions than it answers ...

Conway, 1978:45

Some of the comments made in the literature are simplistic:

Like it or not, children and their parents are part of a larger world.

Goodnow and Burns, 1980:33

When a woman has a baby in our society, she acquires with it a role - she is now a mother.

Harper and Richards, 1979:11

One wonders about the goals of research, and the ease and dexterity of being able to do research which fulfils one's expectations:

The study was begun with an hypothesis - that parents and potential parents in Australia today are under pressure from conflicting social norms ...

(fourteen lines later)

The study confirmed the suspicion that family roles were confused by norm conflict.

Richards, 1978:37

Role research cannot explore human potentiality for the parameters have been drawn prior to the commencement of the project: people are perceived as limited in their ability 'to be', to change, and praxis is perceived at the surface level of reality only.

Simmel's comment captures both the subtlety and depth which 'surface' research can never tap:

If we express the historic relation between the sexes crudely in terms of master and slave, it is part of the master's privilege not to have to think continuously of the fact that he is the master while the position of slave carries with it the constant reminder of his being a slave. It cannot be overlooked that the woman forgets far less often the fact of being a woman than the man of being a man.

in Morgan, 1975:145-6

No man, until recently, would have attempted to write a book about the experience of being a man. Male experience has been viewed as (normal) experience, but in recent years a torrent of books has flooded onto the market on what it is to be a woman. Dorothy Smith, a Canadian sociologist, claims in her article, 'A Sociology for Women' (1979), that women have a different relation to the world than men, and that this has been 'organised'. In any research project, but especially one focussing on family process, such claims have to be dealt with and measured against one's own experience of the world. Assumptions, no matter how deeply embedded, must be uncovered.

The power of the status quo puts up the facade into which our consciousness crashes. It must seek to crash through them.

Adorno, in Mackie, 1977:xxviii

In feminist writing, one finds attempts to address these questions and efforts being made to penetrate behind the facade of the status quo. Books such as Choderow's The Reproduction of Mothering (1978), Adrienne Rich's Of Women Born (1977), Ann Oakley's work on women and housework (1972), women and birth (1976), and women and research (1981b), Segal (1983) and Greer (1984), all focus on the experience of women; they bring to light the unequal power relationships

the drudgery, and misconceptions, the myths used to perpetuate a particular form of social reality.

Not surprisingly, most feminists have focussed their attention on women, and, in studies of 'the family', on their involvement and perception of family process (see Dowrick and Grundberg, 1980; Badinter, 1981). Women's culture has been primarily an oral culture, passed down through generations of mothers and daughters: now, however, so much of the experience is in print - in texts such as Ehrenreich and English (1979), Grieve and Grimshaw (1981), Stanley and Wise (1983).

Such writing carries a potency edited out from mainstream writing: argument, conflict, depression, laughter, anger .. all are aspects of everyday living and now part of the stories and research projects being published. Oakley's recent autobiography (1984) is brutal in its honesty - for both author and reader I suspect. The title itself, Taking it like a Woman is provocative, and the discussion of her experience in families - both with her parents and her husband and children - tells so, so much of the complexities and ambiguities, the strife and pain. This writing, too, makes all her other works that much more real.

There is an undeniable sense of power in Adrienne Rich's writing about a 'first birth'. It is strong in its impact, for people can respond in recognition, empathy and understanding.

Throughout pregnancy and nursing, women are urged to relax, to mime the serenity of madonnas. No one mentions the psychic crisis of bearing a first child, the excitation of long-buried feelings about one's own mother, the sense of confused power and powerlessness, of being taken over on the one hand and of touching new physical and psychic potentialities on the other, a heightened sensibility which can be exhilarating, bewildering and exhausting.

Rich, 1977:36

And the experience of later years:

To be caught up in waves of love and hate,
jealousy even of the child's childhood;
hope and fear for its maturity; longing
to be free of responsibility; tied by
every fibre of one's being.

Rich, 1977:22

Other women turned to literature as a means of expression; again, a sense of real-ness pervades their work, whether it be short stories, or poetry, or in novel form (see Piercy, 1974; French, 1980; Atwood, 1983).

Last Child

you are twelve, only
for this year. I am
waking you and the morning
fog hugs us
together, a warmth
crawls out from under your quilt
where my nose goes deep
in your hair. curled
inside me, I hold, still
the growing hollow
where elevens died. soon twelves
will follow.

Christine Horner, Women
Vol. 7:2, 1980:38

Throughout the thesis I have used other people's words to hasten the learning process. Women do not have ownership of the creative process. A bevy of quotes from a book by David Steinberg, called fatherjournal, illustrate what it means to be so intimately involved with another human being. Steinberg dedicated the book

To all the fathers who have been taught to
turn away from their children, and the
growing numbers of fathers who are turning
back.

May 2, 1971

Tonight I cried for the first time since Dylan was born. All the walls, all the strengths, all the holding tight, came tumbling down ...

I know so little of being a father. It is too much for me.

I was going to be the perfect father: loving, caring, nurturing, soft ... Tonight I see how scared I am. There is so much to do for this little creature who screams and wriggles and needs ... and relies on me to figure it all out. I watch myself run away, leaving the baby to Susan ...

Steinberg, 1977:13-14

February 20, 1972

This morning I woke up feeling comfortable, warm, and solid. Then Dylan started to fuss and I turned irritable right away. I wake up to a demand every morning. I'm behind before I even get out of bed. A horrible way to start the day.

1977:31

February 15, 1974

I think I finally feel, way down in my gut, that I am a good father. I still do all sorts of things badly ...

Sometimes when I'm doing something with Dylan, or just watching his play, I get an overwhelming rush of love for him - pure appreciation of who he is - this incredibly open, honest, alive, present world-explorer who gets such intense joy out of so many little things in his life. I literally get choked up in my throat.

1977:47

June 8, 1974

Today I bought a card for Father's Day, a plain card on parchment paper that said inside: 'For all the times I haven't said it ... I love you.' So simple. Can I say that so simply? Will he hear?

It's not too late to change, not too late to unravel the tangles, not too late to open my eyes, to my father as well as to my son.

1977:53

Literature reviews in theses or in books often seem antiseptic, like reports of package tours; read this, been there, done that, with scant attention given to the quality or impact of the material on either the researcher or the research process. Emphasis seems more likely to be placed on the quantity of the material covered.

The following texts, for a variety of reasons, though mostly connected with methodology, have played a major part in the development of this thesis.

Bott's work was one of the earliest research studies to excite me: I responded to the sense of the work and the humility, a thread running throughout the text:

The research was exploratory. We had to develop research techniques as we went along, and it was only after a considerable time that our very general aim took shape ...

Bott, [1957]1971:1

At several points in this book the data are insufficient for the interpretations suggested.

[1957]1971:5

In any research, but particularly in an exploratory study, it is obvious that one learns as one goes along.

[1957]1971:30

We decided to succumb in confusion in the hope that it would be temporary. We endured uncertainty for a time in the hope that constant careful comparison would eventually lead ...

[1957]1971:9

It was from this study I borrowed the rule of thumb to work with 'ordinary families', defined as being 'families' who, at the time of initial contact, had not sought help from outside agencies for 'family problems' (see Bott, [1957]1971:10). As interdisciplinary research aimed at understanding 'the social and psychological organisation of some urban families' it was innovative in the 1950s. It was functionalist in theoretical stance; as grounded theory it predated Glaser and Strauss by a decade.

Bott studied twenty families, considering each family as a social system. All had children under the age of ten, were of different socioeconomic status, and all lived in different parts of London.

Howell's study, Hard Living in Clay Street (1973), is based on his research with two families in the United States. This book I happened upon by chance in a sale, and yet its importance in the research cannot be overestimated. So much in research, seems, like this, to depend on luck; whether one meets the 'right' person, happens to be in the 'right' place, be a student in the 'right' department at the 'right' time .. Howell, for instance, comments on how his life was changed by a note he received in the midst of chasing round after jobs. He was asked to go and talk to one of the academic staff about a research project.

That afternoon, my plans suddenly changed.

Howell, 1973:xiii

Howell moved with his family into an older suburb in Washington D.C. for twelve months. He talks of the difficulties he had in explaining himself:

I would usually stutter and stumble around for words, mumbling something like, 'Well, I am on a government research project. See, we feel that people in government don't have much understanding for the way real people live' ...

1973:4

And the reaction:

You mean the federal government is paying you a salary just to live here, get to know folks and write it up ...? You mean this is what you are getting paid to do?

1973:4

Howell tells the stories of living alongside these two families, the Shacklefords and the Mosebys, for a year: he uses a narrative form of writing and says that the dialogue isn't verbatim, but 'rather my recounting of what was said'.

Some of the comments made by Howell in his book forced me, enabled me to change my thinking about research; particularly important were some of the methodological details he lists in the appendix. Jules Henry's work had a similar impact.

In this research I wanted not only to make contact with people but to keep them alive in the translation into written words: what right had I to intrude into their lives if I simply intended collapsing them into categories, or wrapping them in bundles called types?

In an appendix in his book, Pelz (1974) comments about Oscar Lewis' work, and compares his studies with that of Young and Wilmott (1962):

... because he let his subjects speak for themselves, refused to frame them, the result burst the frame. His work required a discipline ... a discipline of committal, of openness and expectation, the actual discipline of inter-subjectivity ... His involvement not only had to be comprehensive, it had to be felt to be so by them, so that their subjectivity and subjecthood could be kept inviolate all along ...

Pelz, 1974:259

He gave to them the space-time which permitted them to grow ...

1974:260

Pelz continues:

Let us ... compare his work with Young and Wilmott (1962) ... A feeling of nostalgia and benevolence permeates the study. Yet it never gets beyond its intentions. Where it threatens to do this, it is rigorously drawn back into tabulation and statistics. The result is unilluminating. It confirms 'scientifically' what was known all along, certainly by the researchers. The subjects which momentarily sprang to life were soon swallowed up again by the investigators' objectives and objectivity. They ceased to be what they were. Information concerning them becomes irrelevant, because it does not concern them.

Pelz, 1974:260

Morgan, too, emphasizes the necessity of 'keeping' people alive: he talks of the gap between the families described in the sociological literature and talked about in lectures and tutorials, and those experienced in 'real life'.

Very often the living dialectic between them appears to be lacking.

Morgan, 1975:2

I recall the sinking feeling of scurrying through dissertation abstracts, countless research studies, reviews .. and

being left with a 'so what' feeling. Pelz catches the frustration with his comment on Young and Wilmott's study - 'it confirms ... what was known all along'. Laing's comment has a more cutting edge:

Careful and meticulous ... research ... sometimes leads to a type of analysis of familial interactions that returns findings that can never answer the questions we really want answered.

Laing, 1976:60

Why is parenting so important for human being? That is the question at the centre of this research.

A Jewish friend, Yvonne, a very competent, confident woman of forty years, said about herself:

There's one person who can strip me to the core with one sentence - that's my mother.

Goffman puts this in more formal words:

There seems to be no agent more effective than another person (in one's family) in bringing a world for oneself alive, or, by a glance, a gesture, or a remark, shrivelling up the reality in which one is lodged.

in Laing, 1976:12
(brackets added)

This work had to be careful and meticulous in its conception and praxis: family is important. To avoid some of the pitfalls of already-done research, I read and talked and questioned and delayed and pondered. Few of the research projects concentrated on parenting, focussing instead on fatherhood or

motherhood from before birth or at various stages through to adolescence. None, apart from Rapoport *et al.* (1977) appeared to acknowledge the lifelong context or impact of parenting. It is an old saying which carries some truth:

My parents are dead. I am no longer a child.

Yet there is a danger in 'thinking differently' from the mainstream: one runs the risk of being controlled by what one opposes, of writing with 'the others' ghost sitting always on one's shoulder.

But I learnt very little about parenting as I read the literature, for most of the focus is on what I now term 'parentwork', or on 'parenthood', not on the total process of parenting. This distinction I borrowed from an article in Women, an American feminist journal.

Mothering:- an active process of nurturing, not limited to biological mothers or biological children.

Motherhood:- the institution of responsibility and rewards established around the role of mother in relation to her biological or adopted child (a legal/economic entity).

Motherwork:- the labor of birthing, raising, tending, guiding and caring for children and families within the home; and the extension of this work into the community and labor market.

Editorial, Women, Vol. 7:2:1980:68

I changed the term 'mother' to parent: the distinctions are but arbitrary - and in a shorthand form - parenting as nurturing, parentwork as caretaking, parenthood as 'role', used throughout this thesis as tools for analysis (see especially the third section of the triptychs). When parenting is underlined I am using the term in its total sense - inclu-

sive of parenting, parentwork, and parenthood.

The focus in this thesis is on male and female parenting. One of the most pervasive myths in society is that parenting means mothering. Often this myth blinds researchers:

... the common methodological fault remains the persistent treatment of the two sexes, either separately or ... at different levels of analysis - one sex being ascribed directly to the social, the other being considered principally as the locus of mediation between the natural and societal state.

Mathieu, 1979:233

The main difference between mainstream family research and mine is, however, theoretical.

The phenomenological method forces the language of research to be bracketed: as foreshadowed in the prologue and developed in the next chapter this means that words such as mother, father, parenting, are bracketed, not only once and then defined, but continuously. I learn as I go along.⁵ In mainstream research such terms are part of the taken-for-granted reality. Such research can describe, but never explain: it can add richness and colour to our lives, but not help in changing them: nor can such research un-cover the silences, the options, the potentiality which is part of human praxis.

I want to 'know', in order to change: to know from the 'grass roots' layer of existence to the most abstract .. What is a 'human being'? What is the difference between a body, a self, an individual? How do people make contact with one another (what Buber calls 'between'); how is society possible? Why is family, and parenting as a core process in family process, so crucial? Why is 'it' organised in such

⁵ The definitions 'frozen in words' in the next chapter are but temporary: this is explained. See Part 1:3.

a fashion - designed, monitored and sanctioned .. ?

This is, therefore, basically an ontological thesis: it is concerned with grasping human beings - working, in the Marxian sense, ⁶ at parenting. It is also critical phenomenology, designed to comprehend in the first instance, then to change.

Today, adjustment to what is possible no longer means adjustment; it means making the possible real.

Adorno, 1967:94

I had/have to search in my own way.

⁶ Work is not work-in-order-to-satisfy-another-need: it is the human need to live in nature and to give a meaning to itself and nature (Paci, in Reid, 1977:121) (see p.101).

Part 1:3

Theory can be defined this way, that way: as a framework through which the research can be perceived: a conceptual scheme by which relevant data can be categorised, classified and compared; a post-research addendum, an ideological rationale. None of these definitions capture the sense in which theory is understood in this thesis. Theory is seen as dynamic, alive and everchanging. It is not conceived as an orienting perspective, a finite or static model, a paradigmatic approach, nor a rhetorical frame overlaying one's chosen field of study. No narrow framework, no singular vision, could ever have sufficed.

Theory is the grounding of the whole process of this research, grounding in the Heideggerian sense of enabling, created/creating from the researcher's encounter with the world; the means whereby the research can be centred, anchored, enabled to grow, to be held-together; to stretch, leap, waver .. become multi-dimensional, multi-sensed. Theory means doing theory; this is an active process, a constant sifting, shifting through concepts, from one perspective to another, from focus on people to structure, and vice versa; from observation to critique. Doing theory is a political activity, political in that it involves making decisions about who or what is important in this context, who or what is marginal .. Political too, in that theorising is critical theorising, designed to provoke change in human relationships, and in our thinking about them.

This is eclectic research: ideas, notions, concepts, have been borrowed from many disciplines and mentors. Some have been wrenched out of context - used, abused, discarded. Sins of omission and commission have been perpetrated: key concepts have been ignored; for example, socialisation;¹

¹ See Berger and Luckmann ([1966]1971:149-182); Giddens (1979:128-130).

others, peripheral in most contexts, made central; for example, gender.²

The research demanded such an approach: parenting defies simplistic dis-closure. Though parenting is a 1970s word, the process has been around in various guises since human life began. In Western society its importance is so assumed, so taken for granted, so much part of the language - for example, God the Father, God the Son - that an approach had to be found to 'un-hook' parenting from its altar where it sits beyond reproach and questioning. Critical phenomenology proved to be such an approach, but this requires all concepts to likewise be unhooked, un-ravelled. Common sense denied/denies the necessity of bracketing all concepts and my lack of awareness caused/causes me to shuffle over others without recognising the need to pause. From the time of my phenomenological awakening (Husserl talks of it as conversion), a concerted effort has been made to suspend everyday meanings of key concepts, for example body, self, society .. and an equally dedicated, often painful, stress placed on the bracketing of the research process.

This chapter does not represent, therefore, a 'traditional' theory chapter for it is essentially a 'doing phenomenology' on the ontological and epistemological tools used in the research. (I have arbitrarily divided the theoretical process and the research process; doing phenomenology on that forms the next chapter.) It is not a 'product' but an anchoring of words and diagrams, a shorthand of where I am, where I have been, where I need(ed) to go in order to do what was/is perceived necessary to uncover the concept and praxis of parenting. The temptation is to dwell in the land of the sociology of knowledge. The task would be both more simple and confusing for the separation of theoretical musing and fieldwork is a well-established modus

² See Oakley (1972:158-188).

operandi. ³

Too, this theoretical grounding only goes part-way. Not until Part 3 is there a discussion of 'inter-existence', an exploration of the structure of society, focus on the history of parenting, and on the institutional definitions of parenting. But the tools enabling such discussion are laid out here.

Underpinning any research is an ontological base:

We do not perhaps recognise the degree to which our knowledge of the world is already located at a conceptual level prior to the development of a theoretical apparatus.

Dorothy E. Smith, 1979:148-9

In sociological research, particularly in family studies, this is frequently taken-for-granted, or dismissed as belonging to philosophy. In developing such a base for oneself, Bruyn (1966:160-197) suggests a researcher is developing not only a tool for the research but an ontological reality for him/herself. That process is ever-underway, for one's understanding of human-being-in-the-world is constantly changing.

Learning in this ontological sense is exciting, challenging, tremor producing: what I understand today, I may have lost tomorrow. I feel in touch, then alienated, from the people I love, people in the research, from myself: confusion reigns; doubts infiltrate every aspect of the research process.

³ 'Many can shuffle cards who can't play'. C.W. Mills ([1959]1970:59).

Doubt simultaneously freezes and boils the marrow in our bones, it shakes our bones like dice that are never thrown, it plays a secret and violent organ music through the different calibrations of our arteries, it rumbles ominously and affectionately through our bronchial tubes, bladder and bowel.

Cooper, 1972:10

Doing any form of research is not a linear process: meanings, ideas, thoughts .. jump from written and spoken encounters. Lightning strikes, and that which was problematic becomes clear; that which was lucid becomes blurred; knowing becomes comfortable, discovering exhilarating; deja vu feelings flood the senses, and not necessarily in the orderly way texts suggest, but as flashes at 2 a.m., 9 p.m., when cooking, driving children to school, in argument.

Doing phenomenological research is hazardous for doubting and intuition are inbuilt dimensions of the process. The following pages have, therefore, a dual purpose:

1. to retrace the steps of the theoretical journey in order to understand how, what, why .. the research unfolded as it did;
2. to develop (continue developing) the ontological base of the research, the pivot on which the work evolves.

The chapter has four remaining sections: the first outlines my introduction to phenomenology, summarises the main points of it, pulls together my understanding of it and explains what this means in this research process.

Language is the next focus: in this section doing phenomenology on language means testing out the intertwining of language and society. I draw heavily on Heidegger's conception of language and his beliefs about the crisis in western society.

Next is a brief but crucial discussion of four terms - thinking, knowing, understanding, questioning. All are aspects of the process of discovery, and need defining prior to the last section which has two parts - a diagram followed by discussion of the concepts named in the diagram. The concepts included have all caused ulcers during the research time: some are presented in brief detail, others in glossary form. This section might be considered as the setting down of points in an ontological compass - points or terms indicating where I am, or directions in which to look.

Only in Part 3 does this discussion make sense. This chapter contains no argument (other than that presented in the language section): it is but a laying out of one's tools, for

in the case of an applied phenomenologist
it is much more relevant to pay attention
to what he does than what he says ...

Spiegelberg, 1972:217

One further point:

He broke fresh ground - because, and only because, he had the courage to go ahead without asking whether others were following or even understood.

Hammarskjöld, 1964:100

Phenomenology

Phenomenology and I married in 1978: it was love at first sight. We met via a dissertation entitled Critical Phenomenology: the Status of Everyday Reality in Relation to Alternate Reality States.⁴ I was astonished, bewildered, awed .. and I knew I wanted to learn more. I knew with-all-of-me (what I would now call body-knowing) what Merleau Ponty was getting at when he wrote:

We shall find in ourselves ... the unity and true meaning of phenomenology ... It is ... not so much ... encountering a new philosophy as of recognizing what (one) had been waiting for.

Merleau Ponty, 1962:viii
(brackets added)

As an undergraduate in anthropology I had learned about structuralism - Levi Strauss style - but I hiccuped, then, mainly over the asserted binary division functioning of the brain, or what he claims to be a 'universal mental structure.'

In sociology I considered the relative merits of the functionalist, interactionist and Marxist schools of thought, but felt that whole areas of discussion and meaning were missing. Only when I read Fiona Mackie's thesis did I learn about Adorno, Heidegger, Merleau Ponty .. and I was stretched beyond Anglo-American discourse, catapulted into a milieu where ontological questions were/are an essential aspect of theoretical conversation. Mackie's thesis was the catalyst: it provoked a search for an intellectual tradition I now recognise as European, rather than Anglo-Saxon. Slowly I recognised that the dissatisfaction I experience with traditional frameworks is not a personal dilemma but a shared one. Nor, however, do I fit comfortably in a phenomenolo-

⁴ Mackie (1977).

gical tradition, nor European mode, which is primarily male in thought.

Schutz became a partner to the courtship for a very short time. Then I rejected his concern

... with the way meaning is constituted in the individual experience of the solitary Ego.

Schutz, 1967:13

Meaning, individual, 'ego' are all socially constructed dimensions of reality and therefore are key terms to be bracketed: more importantly, I believe meaning 'exists' outside of people, so this research is not egological,⁵ to use a Husserlian term.

Too, Schutzian phenomenology is primarily descriptive and cannot therefore deal with explanation, structure, nor potentiality. Schutz follows Husserl down some paths but then sidetracks ..

... I, the human being, am also ... an element of this world that has to be bracketed, and so is my body and my mind ... I have to suspend belief also in my mundane existence as a human being within the world.

Schutz, 1962:105

and contradicts himself:

As we proceed to our study of the social world, we abandon the strictly phenomenological method. We shall start out by simply accepting the existence of the social world ...

Schutz, 1967:97

⁵ Egological ... taking the individual human being as the centre of a system of coordinates on which the experience of the world is mapped (Luckmann, 1978:8).

These were the initial causes of divorce (see also Gorman, 1977). Further along the journey I understood more clearly what Schutz was trying to say, and I reject(ed) his stance more intelligently. Two further objections, then and now.

The understanding of the conduct of others, according to Schutz, can be examined phenomenologically as a process of typification, whereby the actor applies learned interpretative schemes to grasp the meanings of what they do.

Giddens, 1976:29

I was/am puzzled about the process of typification, both in the above usage, and as used in sociological analysis (particularly in the latter case). It appears to involve an amputation from any concrete experience, a rejection of human being, a categorisation in frozen form. One is left with a 'so what' feeling after reading research organised or presented in this manner, and doubts about the rigidity of the analysis, the possibility of abuse. Types may become as labels, and used as a shorthand way of dealing with human beings.

The other objection concerns Schutz' postulate of adequacy, the notion that sociological concepts can only be declared adequate insofar as they can be translated into ones that can be understood by those involved in the research. Such an assertion raises the questions of what social research is about, and for whom the research is undertaken. Such a requirement denies, or makes more difficult, any attempt to 'deal' with human experience in the wider totality, in historical time and space. In research of this kind, questions of adequacy and validity can only be phrased in terms such as - does it make sense? does the work have an internal logic? does it achieve what it set out to do? is it just to the people concerned? Unfortunately, Schutzian phenomenology is frequently, particularly in Australasia, considered the only form of phenomenology. The richness,

the challenge, the rigor of doing phenomenology, of trying to penetrate beneath and beyond the layers of established custom and entrenched thought, gets deflected.

But there is no one way of doing phenomenology, for phenomenology is a method: it is neither an ideology nor a theory.

The word merely informs us of the 'how'
with which what is to be treated ...

Heidegger, 1962:59

It involves seizing phenomenology as potentiality, a realising of human potentiality rather than the acceptance of the discourse of a discipline, of academia, of society and one's allotted part in that.

Learning to live with phenomenology had/has its magnetism. Husserl speaks of phenomenology as a conversion

... a change of attitude ... a freeing of
oneself from a tight categorical mentality
so that one can encounter reality afresh
...

F. Joseph Smith, 1979:53

Most writers stress that the central concern of phenomenology is to explore human experience, revealing its depth and wealth, instead of reducing it. The lowest common denominator is the shared tenet or command to try and un-conceal, to penetrate through the pollution of assumed ways of behaving, reified patterns of action, of 'they' definitions, to 'humans being'.⁶

This penetration has often mistakenly been compared with the process of peeling an onion. The only similarity

⁶ See pages 86-101.

is that both can lead to tears:

Recovering the "essence" of a thing has little to do with the metaphysician's penchant for peeling off the rings of the onion, to find its "essence" only as he discards the last ring and with it the whole onion. Instead, he is like the lover, who takes away one veil after the other from Istar, so that she may be revealed finally in all her bodily presence and allure.

F. Joseph Smith, 1979:242

Spiegelberg distinguishes between what he calls steps or phases of phenomenology (the following words are paraphrased):

1. descriptive phenomenology - direct exploration, analysis and description;
2. essential (eidetic) phenomenology - probing of phenomena for typical structures or essences;
3. phenomenology of appearances - giving attention to ways in which phenomena appear;
4. constitutive phenomenology - studying how phenomena become established in our consciousness;
5. reductive phenomenology - suspending the belief in the reality or validity of phenomena;
6. hermeneutic phenomenology - designed to unveil concealed meanings.

Spiegelberg, 1975:57

This research could be described as fitting all categories, or none. Each has to find their own way.

Several people, Paci and Merleau Ponty in particular, have merged phenomenology with Marxism. Central to their ideas is that human reality is socially constructed, this structuring evolving through social praxis. For Merleau Ponty one of the key concepts is that of the network of re-

relationships called intermonde, or interexistence, and the embeddedness of this interexistence in a concrete material world.

... interexistence is not a passive toleration of individual difference but an active recognition of (Being-with). That is, neither self nor other is sovereign but they are coextensive with each other ... We are not "islets" but are together inscribed in the world. Concrete, lived history (is) the embodiment of interconnected situations ...

Jung and Jung, 1977:41-42
(brackets added)

I have borrowed from Merleau Ponty, particularly from his ideas as presented in the Jung and Jung article in which the authors contrast Merleau Ponty's ideas with those of Mao Tse-Tung. I have leaned heavily on Heidegger whose work also stresses the importance of the material world and the interweaving of people in that context. In books by Psathas (1973), Spiegelberg (1975), Wolff (1976), F.J. Smith (1979) .. one reads of people doing, writing of phenomenology, or 'catches them at it', yet it is important to move on, from looking to doing.

Basic to the phenomenological approach I am adopting are the following notions:

1. that human reality is socially constructed;
2. that 'individual' and 'society' are inextricably intertwined, and the focus of this research is on the dialectic that is that reality (intersubjectivity, interexistence) ...

the dialectic of the self and the other
which make up a whole without reducing
one to the other.

Jung and Jung, 1977:40

3. Praxis is the meaning which works itself out spontaneously in the intercrossing of those activities by which man organises his relations with nature and other men.

Jung and Jung, 1977:40

In the 'research proper' I am trying to become part of that praxis between 'parent and child' in order to interpret and illuminate that intersubjectivity and communicate it to others via the thesis.

4. This 'meaning' is created through language which can be both verbal and non-verbal.
5. The purpose of radical phenomenology is

... to open up the infinite regression to the roots of the problem, to the very ultimate presuppositions and assumptions, to engage ... in a process of 'back questioning'.

Smart, 1976:106

Therefore, I need to immerse myself sufficiently;⁷ to become part of the flow, intersubjectivity, in the context of parenting networks. This necessitates:

6. entering a process of 'mediation', of negotiation, re-negotiation, through which

the past already functions in and shapes
the present horizons

Linge, 1976:xvii

of all involved.

7. This acknowledges that history must be part and parcel

⁷ See Giddens (1976:161).

of the present:

The critical self-consciousness of the interpreter must include an awareness of the continuing power of effective history in his work ...

Linge, 1976:xviii

Phenomenology has been criticised for being ahistorical, because it was understood to remain at the level of 'the actor's consciousness', e.g. Schutz.⁸ I do not accept that but rather appreciate the comment:

History is ... the situation in which all meanings are deepened ...

Jung and Jung, 1977:40

8. This history, 'prescencing', requires a 'shifting' from the "macro" to "micro" and vice versa, continuously.
9. Gouldner's comment captures the purpose of research done within such a framework:

... Sociology starts by creating a small social world in order to gain leverage on a larger one.

Gouldner, 1975:105

10. Phenomenology, thus outlined, 'fits' within the broader hermeneutic frame which stresses understanding, interpretation, and creation, rather than the testing of hypotheses or the 'discovery of facts'.

⁸ Schutz viewed the past as 'part of the stock of knowledge at hand'; he referred to it in terms like 'our pre-acquaintance with the world'; he has been misinterpreted on this point (Mackie, 1977:179-208).

In many ways phenomenology does become a way of life, not simply a methodological approach for one is forced to surrender;⁹ to discard old beliefs and language, to question, and search, and quake. Phenomenology does not permit the luxury of hygienic sociology, of steering an easy path through other people's previous travail, nor does it allow the luxury of dis-engagement, of split perception - I am researcher, I am me. The bracketing of even key notions is tiring and at times defeats its own end for one becomes tautologically strangled. It is a risk.

Modern social science knowledge has reduced its independence as a form of theoretical life to a rule of methodology founded upon the auspices of technical rationality.

O'Neill, 1978:203

But the rationality in this work is that grounded in the method - the method of phenomenology, the bracketing and unconcealing and dis-covering ... that is why becoming a participant in a small number of 'families' seemed the only way to learn of parenting, and why, in the first part of Part 3, concentration is on the spelling out of interexistence, the social world. It became necessary to discover the structuring of this for myself. Doing phenomenological research is far more than doing reflexive research (see Gouldner, 1970:481-512). Phenomenological reflection means to step back:

... it slackens the intentional threads which attach us to the world and thus brings them to our notice ... in order to see the world and grasp it as paradoxical, we must break with our familiar acceptance of it...

Merleau Ponty, 1962:xiii-xiv

⁹ See p. 3, fn 4.

In the next section the phenomenological bracketing has already been done, so that some of the comments on language appear as existential statements. That is only part true: they are my personal comments, my comprehension of language, and of the centrality of language in human praxis. The whole purpose of this wordy process is to slacken the taken-for-granted grasp 'we' have of the social world, in order to explore both the concept of parenting and praxis. It seems necessary (and is continuously so) to un-cover the epistemological and ontological threads which form the fabric we take-for-granted in our conversation. But in an essentially simple way,

It is our task ... to set discussion on its way, to bring it 'on to a path.' ¹⁰

Heidegger, in Steiner, 1978:26

¹⁰ The stress is on the indefinite article - a - meaning this is but one path, one mode of explanation. This is particularly important in Part 3:4. I am not trying to develop a singular theory of parenting, but to theorise about parenting.

Language

People live, existentially in and through language. Language enables human being. It 'exists' between people, in and through words, art, music, .. has no autonomous being of its own, no static form, for meaning is contextual. Language is porous, ambiguous, fluid, alive, inherently unstable .. magic. Language has no end, no middle, no beginning, for it exceeds any person, any conversation, any society.

Language is central in human activity; language is the means of intersubjectivity; language is sentient for it involves all the senses - hearing, sight, smell, touch, taste, and the conflict and/or unity of these.

Language is not fractured into words and non-words. It is both vehicle for human praxis and praxis, that is, the articulation and the doing. Through language people structure the world.

Language has the unique characteristic that we live in it, are familiar with it and deal with it, seldom catching sight of it or becoming aware of it. Rarely do we pause to question the grammatical arrangement of a sentence: we punctuate our verbal conversation with silences, sighs and gestures, we do not question 'a-rational' aspects of language use.

The hammer is too heavy ... (meaning, for me to use, not in a literal sense)

I put on my glasses to hear better ...

I can smell a storm coming ...

She spoke with such force ...

Language can be enabling and constraining: can be manipulated, used to excite or destroy, to reveal or disguise. Language can become a tool, be edited, censored, become a

neutered force, a means of perpetuating a 'chosen' form of reality.

Theoretical knowledge starts from the disclosure of possibilities; from the discovery that familiar actuality does not exhaust the realm of possibilities; from a 'bumping' against the lack of fit between actuality and possibility.

Bauman, 1978:160

This research project is a critical one, designed to challenge and change existing praxis. The whole work is predicated on the belief that human praxis is distorted, that people are far from working to their potential, but that

... as long as we are alive, our situation is open.

Merleau Ponty, 1965:442

Language is at the core of human praxis. It is vital, therefore, to explore the various forms and layers of language and to see how language and understanding are inextricably linked in human actuality.

When I attempted to make sense of language and of human-being-in-the-world I found, like Steiner, the German philosopher Heidegger

... to be massively present and in the path of further thinking.

Steiner, 1978:21

Much of what I think and understand about language is therefore anchored to Heideggerian thought, for I respond/ed strongly to his concern with being, and time, and space, and authenticity .. and to his turning-inside-out the conventions of grammar and words and questions and discourse. Such defiance he considers necessary in order to reach a clearing or space where light is let in and understanding can take

place. T.S. Eliot talks of 'people' too strange to each other for misunderstanding (Little Gidding, II) and I run that risk, for

To 'understand' Heidegger is to accept entry into an alternative order or space of meaning and of being ... We are asked to suspend in ourselves the conventions of common logic and unexamined grammar in order to 'hear', to 'stand in the light of' It is not 'understanding' ... It is an 'experiencing', an acceptance of felt strangeness.

Steiner, 1978:18

Heidegger deliberately twists, compacts, violates conventional usage of words and grammar in order to stun, to irrupt and erupt the 'talk' of the everyday world. He distinguishes between Rede meaning authentic language, and Gerede meaning idle talk or inauthentic language (gossip). Authentic language means grounded language, grounded in an existential manner, being in touch with one's core or essence or one's 'self'. In idle talk, the connection to that has been lost:

Idle talk is constituted by ... gossiping and passing the word along ... Idle talk is the possibility of understanding everything without previously making the thing one's own ... Idle talk is something which anyone can rake up ... Things are so because one says so.

Heidegger, 1962:212-213
(emphasis added)

Or because "they" say so. In Heideggerian terminology, 'they' is defined as the public, anonymous 'they':

The "they" is there alongside everywhere ... It can be answerable for everything most easily, because it is not someone who needs to vouch for anything. It 'was' always the "they" who did it, and yet it can be said that it has been 'no one' ... Everyone is the other and no one is himself.

Heidegger, 1962:165

Like the Mr Nobody of my childhood who always took the biscuits, and made mum's bed. The 'they' prescribes what one sees, what one does, and concerns itself with averageness.

In this averageness with which it (they) prescribes what can and may be ventured, it keeps watch over everything exceptional that thrusts itself to the fore. Every kind of priority gets noiselessly suppressed ... Everything gained by a struggle becomes just something to be manipulated. Every secret loses its force.

Heidegger, 1962:165
(brackets added)

Inauthentic language carries this message of greyness in its multi-forms of expression. Perhaps because worded language is the vehicle of economic interaction in the western world, ¹¹ worded-language is deemed sufficient, or superior, to other forms of language such as art, music, 'body-language'.

We pay a considerable price for equating verbal efficiency with rationality and with normalcy. ¹²

Many words, and precisely the essential ones ... are worn out and used up ... the language in general is ... an indispensable but masterless means of communication that may be used as one pleases, as indifferent as a means of public transport.

Heidegger, in Steiner, 1978:48

A group of French structuralists deliberately struggle against simplicity of style in their writing:

¹¹ See Mauss ([1954]1970) for an exploration of the 'total' language used in (economic) exchange in other-than-western countries.

¹² See Leach (1979:16).

Lucidity gives us the illusion that we have language firmly under our thumb, that we are making it do exactly what we want.

Sturrock, 1979:17

They couple this scepticism with a firm belief in the multiplicity of meaning:

Meanings may and should coexist, there is no call for one to be exalted at the expense of others.

1979:15

That is in their written work. People too live with complexity and in the midst of an ambiguous density of meanings. Being-in-the-world is complicated. I wanted to grasp as much of that density as I could, yet the demands of academia nearly declared that an impotent wish.

Research frequently gets tailored to meet the needs of a department, a sponsor, or chiselled to the fit of the 'society'. Words become defined to the nth degree; jargon passes for thought and communication; academic and/or professional language becomes esoteric, alienating, the possession and shorthand of an elite few. Elegance is admired; neat, non-ambivalent results rewarded; answers are required, but questions 'left-hanging' and/or treated with disdain. Theory production, mostly composed of patterns of words, or statistics, becomes the pinnacle of attainment, of 'intellectual' activity. As well

We (academics) use concepts and analytic techniques to perform the necessary task of rendering a complex reality a little simpler to grasp, but sometimes we forget to explain why the given reality is complex in the first place.

Emy, 1980:22
(brackets added)

Sociologists are often guilty, along with other academic and professional word wankers, of intrusion into people's lives. We ask questions which are provocative, perhaps meaningless, or embarrassing, or threatening to the persons concerned. Sociologists commonly patronise in their stance and in their refusal to give of themselves, ¹³ (perhaps) withdraw, and then proceed with great haste to reduce 'reality' to boxes, or a mass of words.

We take a handful of sand from the endless landscape of awareness around us
and call that handful of sand the world.

Pirsig, 1976:75

We seldom think to question our perception of the world, or often only limited aspects of 'it'. In a 'they-world', and academia is part of this, being is deflected, diminished, channelled in increasingly defined directions. They-living is un-exciting, un-differentiated, un-punctuated: grey and murky, numbing, vapid - for some.

Those who have quenched the heart, who would not dare
for any cause to set life on a throw,
Who never walked with failure, death, despair
In long familiar converse; how can they know
What the world looks like in a blaze of glory?
They end as they began, and have no story;
With life unused they dwindle as they go.

James McAuley, in Conway, 1978:1

But bureaucracy thrives on such diluted discourse. People can work in the same physical space, the same time and social space, and yet fail to make contact with each other or with their labour for they become tools, doing work designed by the anonymous 'they', performing tasks and obeying rules which have their origin and 'sense' elsewhere. In such a world, people 'blend' into one another, behave like robots,

¹³ See Oakley (1981b).

machines, 'things'. Conformity is god: social control made 'easy'.

Pronouns symbolise this process: WE is used to entice, to swallow objections, un-ease, and to implicate multiple ownership of an idea, for example

We believe all people on pensions should be able to manage ...

We suggest all parents should, could ...

We is used to indicate joint ownership:

My husband and I ..

We .. Mr and Mrs Tom Allenby

Cloudy today, wind in the east, Think we shall have rain ... We? Where did I get that word? ... I remember now - the new creature uses it.

Mark Twain

We/they ... no room for the I.

We take pleasure and enjoy ourselves as they take pleasure; we read, see, and judge about literature and art as they see and judge; likewise we shrink back from the 'great mass' as they shrink back; we find 'shocking' what they find shocking. The "they", which is nothing definite, and which all are ... prescribes the kind of Being of everydayness.

Heidegger, 1962:164

'They' define what is appropriate: the expression of one's feelings becomes orchestrated, defined in age, gender, nationality terms. Intensity of emotion is frowned upon: strong negative feelings - anger, disgust, despair - allowable only if expressed in a restrained manner. Enthusiasm is considered suspect: conviction, commitment likewise. To be objective, to be 'cool, calm, collected', uninvolved,

detached, is considered the 'mature' way of behaving. Love, caring, support - strong 'positive' feelings are curtailed in their expression, expected to be shared only between members of one's 'family' and, perhaps, a few close friends.

The body is be-headed: the head, site of mental and verbal processes, is tended and revered; the body-below-the-neck closeted away, subjected to obscene language, goggle/giggle conversation, ignored, or accentuated in body-beautiful advertisements. Matters of the intangible, of the 'soul' considered embarrassing, and suitably scorned. Emotion is OUT; intuition is OUT; knowledge is IN; originality, creativity encouraged, BUT.

Human being-in-the-world seems dampened. Language embodies and perpetuates this levelled form of praxis.

This seduction of human-being can be examined on two levels: one centres on the dominance of the technological world view and the structuring of society; the other on the potent implications of this 'they' thinking, especially the crippling effect on people, on human potentiality (see Part 3).

Marx anticipated the current state:

The less you eat, drink, buy books, go to the theatre ... the less you think, love, theorize, sing, paint ... the more you will be able to save and the greater will become your treasure which neither moth nor rust will corrupt ... The less you are, the less you express your life, the more you have, the greater is your alienated life and the greater is the saving of your alienated being ... And everything which you are unable to do, your money can do for you.

Marx, in Avineri, 1969:110

Money becomes the medium of exchange between people, rather than authentic communication. A rather bizarre example of

this concern is the family who took their daughter to Hong Kong 'to show her poverty'.¹⁴

Heidegger blames this situation on the philosophers, the scientists, those holding the capitalist reins, and lashes out at

... the continued authority of the meta-physical-scientific way of looking at the world, a way almost definitional of the West, that has brought on ... made unavoidable the alienated, unhoused, recurrently barbaric state of modern technological and mass-consumption man.

Steiner, 1978:33

Central to the technological weltanschauung is the belief that progress is inevitable, proper, advantageous: what we do now is proper, right, good. Human suffering is seen as inevitable; hierarchical power as inevitable; division of the 'public' and private worlds is inevitable .. and 'normal'. Ethnocentric blinkers prevent realisation that this is but one mode of thinking, a temporary state.

Those with power assume the right to pronounce on sundry matters, assume normal-ity is exemplified in the way 'they' do things; presume their language, their way of structuring the world is the only way. Non sequitur.

Ideas become reified - enshrined in law, beliefs in ideology. These carry the weight of dogma, the crassness and subtlety of ideological presumption and 'truth'. For example: because a woman can give birth and nurture a child, she is presumed also to be able to do, and want to do, housework. A man who fathers a child is deemed very important in that child's life, if he is legitimately related to that child, that is, if he is a married father; if he is not he

¹⁴ Example given to me by a friend, Melbourne 1983.

may have to fight even to see his child. 15

Many writers, academics, clergy, political leaders .. talk of the economic, political and social crisis rampant in society. Engels called this catastrophe industrial inhumanity; Marx termed it alienation - of people from themselves, from each other, and from their work; Heidegger called it inauthenticity. He argues that human beings have lost the power to live 'authentically' and have atrophied in their ability to 'wonder', to be 'astonished' and to 'care'.

Parenting is caught up in this crisis. People seldom have the chance to be; instead they are required to perform-in-roles as parents, as mothers, fathers, as prisoners within the confining walls of 'they' definitions and fashion:

'They' say - breastfeeding is IN
 all children Shall attend school
 babies Shall be woken every four hours
 fathers Should help in the home
 mothers Shall ..
 parents Care

What if people don't?

The normative aspects of parenting, especially the shoulds/should-nots, become more entrenched - reified and deified, through the pronouncements of 'they-experts' - medical personnel, psychologists, educators ..

Having monopolised the knowledge necessary to socialize the young, the agencies of socialized reproduction then parceled it out piecemeal in the form of "parent education" ... Having first declared parents incompetent to raise their offspring without professional help, social pathologists "gave back" the knowledge they had appro-

priated - gave it back in a mystifying fashion that rendered parents more helpless than ever, more abject in their dependence on expert opinion.

Lasch, 1979:18

There is a time and a need to question.

Sociology originated in the impulse to criticize the principles of the society with which it found itself confronted.

Adorno, 1967:46

Before one can criticise the principles of a society one has first to embark on a journey of discovery, and that journey must include, I have argued, an investigation into language. Yet this is a difficult task for doing phenomenology on language is like trying to unzip one's own skin. We live in language; from the time of our birth we are learning 'ready-made' language, shortcuts, rules, forms of expression, ways of behaving which we are expected to follow, to absorb, to conform to, to 'own'.

The remaining pages in this chapter I own in a very idiosyncratic way: they are the result of the phenomenological bracketing of tools I found it necessary to use in the course of the research. They are presented in a modified glossary form, though the meanings of these terms emerge in the context of the thesis, not in the limited form of definitions.

But the next four pages are deliberate attempts to violate conventional thesis presentation in order to provoke a different experience and awareness of parenting. The intention is that these un-usual forms of thesis language be used as a catalyst to jump people from their regular use of

language and therefore open-up the possibilities of a new conversation.

What I am endeavouring to do - with words, their spacing and ordering,¹⁶ via cartoons, poetry and one print .. is to bracket not only the terms and concepts of parenting language, and of the research process, but also to bracket the experience of people reading the thesis. Parenting beggars an easy route to its core and it is such a familiar experience for people that that experience colours the viewing of all-other. I am wanting to pause, to allow time and space for alternative meanings to surface, and then to penetrate through the various layers of parenting-conceptualisation and praxis, and expose these. Only by jumbling-up common or usual approaches, by turning upside down and inside out 'normal' ways of considering parenting, can 'parenting' be revealed.

¹⁶ The ordering of words becomes particularly important in Part 2.

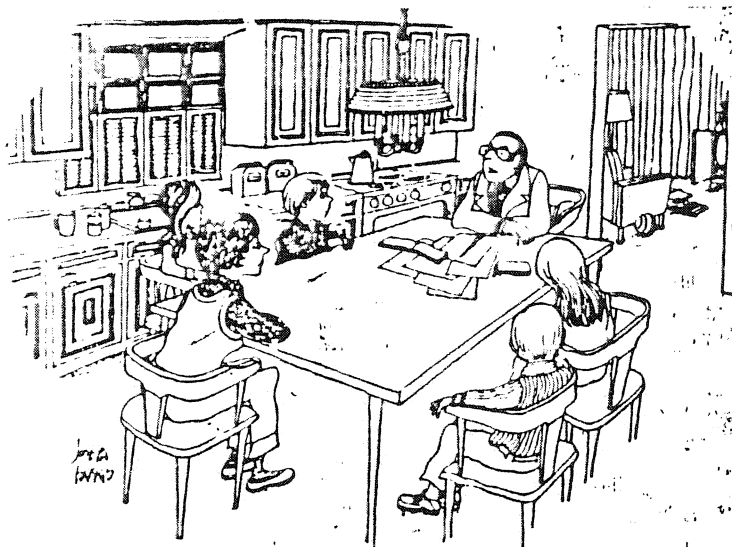
Sunday's Child

*But the child that is born on the Sabbath day
Is bonny and blithe and good and gay*

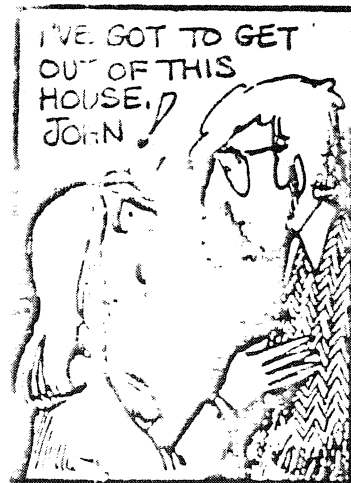
She is the only child of a failed marriage
And since she was not bitterly offered up
Upon the altar of their civilized disjoining
Division stays incomprehensible. Like Christmas,
Only the calendar makes it credible,
Allotting second Sundays for 'paternal access'
(As if the province of the law included
A road to the heart of the matter).

Leaving his mistress sullen at the laundromat
He calls for her by car. The day's a rolled-up chart
Of fools-gold expectations. They have,
Like Sunday lovers of past generations,
No place that's home. In zoos, in cinemas,
In parks, in restaurants, they visit,
Constrained to company manners. She's growing up.
He opens doors for her, defers to choice of ties,
Compliments her dress, asks after boyfriends. She
Learns to subdue her gawky growth, cross ankles,
Be feminine, sketch teasing hints at rivals,
And never cry till safely out of sight.
If the ice broke they fear they both would drown.

Jenny Strauss
Children and Other Strangers
1975



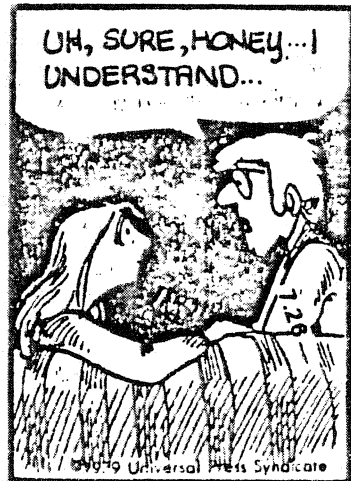
"I've called the family together to announce that, because of a... situation, I'm going to have to let two of you go."



I'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF THIS HOUSE. JOHN!



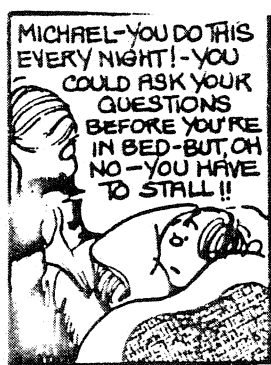
I'M GOING THROUGH SOME KIND OF CRISIS. I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENING TO ME... I NEED A FEW DAYS TO THINK...



UH, SURE, HONEY... I UNDERSTAND...



'NIGHT, MIKE!
GOODNIGHT...
UH, MOM - I JUST WANNA ASK YOU SOMETHING.



MICHAEL - YOU DO THIS EVERY NIGHT! - YOU COULD ASK YOUR QUESTIONS BEFORE YOU'RE IN BED - BUT OH NO - YOU HAVE TO STALL!!



ALL RIGHT. WHAT IS IT?



...DO YOU LOVE ME?



- SO, WHY DON'T YOU PACK UP THE KIDS & GO VISIT YOUR MOTHER.

(the guilt again-write of her older sister-everyone loves
babies. what of the lonely 7 year old (7½, mommy!) watching tv
in the front room?) what of her?
what of yesterday when she chased the baby in my room and i screamed
OUT OUT GET OUT & she ran
right out but the baby stayed,
unafraid. what is it like to have
a child afraid of you. your own
child, your first child, the one
you're expected to be most nervous with, the one no one expects
you to be perfect with (except women in parking lots),
the one who must forgive you if either of you are to survive.

alta, 1974:72-73

... a word may be used in dozens of different ways that gradually merge into one another ... Ordinary words have "blurred edges".

Linge, 1976:xxxiv

Glossary

Beware: vivisector at work. In appearance, this section is like an extended glossary: in fact, it is an invitation

... when we define a word we are merely inviting others to use it as we would like it to be used.

C.W. Mills, [1959]1970:4

in the first instance. As emphasised throughout the thesis, words carry a multitude of meanings yet the subtlety, nuances and differences in words can be lost for 'everyone' knows what they mean so no one person bothers to discover for his/her self. The purpose of bracketing a number of key words is to focus attention on them; for me to define the word as I am using it, and then to open up the term for a richer array of meanings as people respond.

I am not a philosopher. I feel vulnerable in un-covering my definitions onto paper: I hesitate to give these 'here and now' definitions the status of staples in an ontological framework, but I have no choice. I have to wonder.

1. Phenomenological practice forces me to define the words I am using, for these are the tools used to apprehend social reality, and through which I live and/or deal with that reality.
2. What is human being? How do persons grow, 'fit' in society? Why is this person different? What enables a person to grow? How does complexity occur? Why do some people find change so difficult to comprehend?

Put simply, the particular problem I am trying to work through in this thesis is the ancient mystery of how individuals become, and become part of the 'other' of society.

The questions pounding through my consciousness are these: if each person is unique - a 'me' - what happens to enable that 'me' to get started? When, why, how .. what people, what environments, enable the 'me' to flourish? What of the effect of 'they'? What happens in parenting? What happens when one person, two people, are expected to bring up a 'me'? My 'prejudices' at the start of the research, and in part battered but never dismissed during the research process, suggested that one of the intrinsic or crucial contradictions in parenting as I knew/know it was/is that the 'me' became/becomes submerged, and the 'role-me' whether this be father-me or mother-me, takes primacy. Children learn both gradually and rapidly to become son/daughter-me. How much space is an 'individual' given to be 'me'? Who is 'me'?

The I-am-me experience first came to me when I was very young, perhaps five or six. I remember that I was standing in an upstairs porch of my parents' house. I was quite suddenly filled with wonder over the fact that I was me. I remember asking my mother, who was in the same room, what made me me and not someone else; I'm not sure if she understood ... it was a very hard thing to put into words, since it did not come to me in a verbal way, but rather as an overwhelming feeling of wonder. There was really no vocabulary for it ... I wondered what made my body so radically different from everybody else's. How did I wind up inside it?

Zaner, 1970:177

Always I am confused in my endeavour to make sense of human-being-in-the-world, and this bewilderment is heavily ground-

down in my continuous efforts at understanding who I am, why I am, my being .. my woman-hood, my sexuality, sensuality, my newly-discovered intellectual power, ¹⁷ my relationships with others, and my relationship and response to the rest of the world.

Many - artists, sculptors, dancers, photographers - have tried to present their quest in other forms. Often they have been successful in capturing the ambiguity of time, space and people, the complexity of pain and celebration, for example, with a loud percussion roar or majestic organ chords; or by a sweep of murky grey on a dull canvas; or in the frenetic dense scrambling of colours as in some of Van Gogh's art. Through such means people make attempts to both make sense of their being in the world, and to communicate this to at least an-other.

But those calling themselves students/academics are primarily restricted to words and concepts. Yet ...

Philosophy may well have shaped conceptual tools which are positively inappropriate for the apprehension of that which constitutes our humanity.

Pelz, 1974:54

I repeat: the following definitions are not 'final': they 'suffice-for-now'; they are abstractions, ripped from the research praxis; a doubly artificial process, albeit a necessary one. I am not trying to singularise meaning, but to say how I am using these words. I am not right, nor wrong. I am.

The selection of words, of concepts, is deliberate: at some stage of the research process I was forced to deal with each of these concepts, in a more-than-superficial way. They

¹⁷ Like so many women, I discovered that I had a 'brain' only in my late thirties: not a good brain, nor a bad brain, but a brain.

are presented in diagrammatic form (p.85).

Four words - thinking, knowing, understanding, questioning - are discussed prior to the presentation of the diagram. They are aspects of the discovery process, defined as being epistemological rather than ontological, though I am unsure if this dichotomy is a valid one. The main point about each of these words is that they are redefined as doing words, not nouns.

Then the diagram. This is an attempt to hold together the concepts which are now to be defined. I cannot deal with them simultaneously so, yet again, an analytical or conceptual travesty is meted out. The diagram is one way of holding a complex process still long enough for me to distill, to allow meanings to emerge.

Though lines are drawn between pairs of words, these are arbitrarily arranged. However, the words do seem to 'fit' together. The play on words at the centre is a fumbling attempt to capture the dialectical, dynamic process of being-in-the-world. But only in the context of the thesis, in their usage, is their definition made clear.

Still, Merleau Ponty and Rex both get a silent vote of thanks: they offered hope in the midst of a twirly muss.

The "healthy" man(woman) is not so much the one who has eliminated his contradictions as the one who makes use of them and drags them into his vital labours.

in Jung and Jung, 1977:33
(brackets added)

... we wish ... to claim ... that our ... doubts should not be kept so continuously before us that they prevent us doing sociology.

Rex, 1974:14

Thinking, knowing, understanding, questioning ..

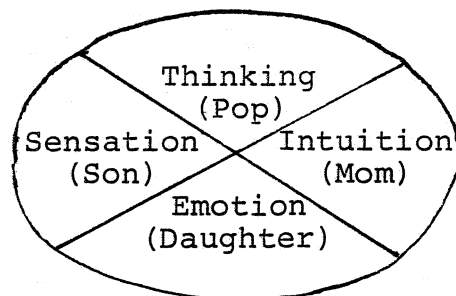
Thought is no longer theoretical. As soon as it functions it offends or reconciles, attracts or repels, breaks, dissociates, unites or reunites; it cannot help but liberate and enslave ... at the level of its existence, in its very dawning, is in itself an action - a perilous act.

Foucault, 1977:frontispiece

Thinking is a concrete process, not an abstract 'mind only' activity. We think through our bodies: if I am ill, my thinking is affected; if I am hungry, excited, worried .. my thinking is changed. Likewise thinking is altered by age, gender, nationality, time .. thinking is part of everyday praxis - part of human-being-in-the-world.

Yet western society perpetuates the Cartesian split of mind and body, of thinking and intuition. Thinking is lauded as 'activity', the intelligentsia or 'educated person' given high status. Thinking is seen as brain power: thinking which involves emotion is scorned, for it is not considered the most efficient means to an end, that is, not rational (see Part 3, p. 590).

A dichotomy is assumed in the 'they-world': male thought is seen as 'formal', normal, rational; female thought as illogical, emotive, impulsive. A version of Jung's mandala can be used to illustrate:



in Women, Vol. 7:2:1980:64

Concepts are but tools of thought: verbal umbrellas which enable a range of ideas to be held together, for example - family. In everyday life and especially in academia concepts frequently become reified, thing-ised, their genealogy and temporality scarcely remembered.

A process of esoteric masturbation may become a substitute for thought in educational institutions as concepts are stroked and played with till they have lost any contact with human praxis. Ideas are abstracted from one context and used to shore up models in another, and the hermeneutic circular process repetitively activated, assured, and unnoticed.

Thought, like other nouns, needs to be changed as a part of grammar, into a participle, to illustrate process, change:

What is important in our thinking ... is not so much a 'thesis or position' ... as 'the texture'. Its quality is a constant stretching of the otherwise-given, in which it must remain constantly aware of the traps into which it may fall. The exercise seems to require something like a 'connoisseur of edgework.'

Adorno, in Mackie, 1977:xxviii

- Thinking: an ongoing process, a combination of understanding, knowing, questioning, a concrete process emerging in human praxis.
- Body-thinking: a 'total' process enabling individuals to grasp the world, or aspects of it.

Thinking, knowing, understanding, questioning ..

When does a child know its mother for the first time? When it sees her for the first time? No. Then when? How does it take place? Can we really say ... there is a single event in which a first knowing extricates the child from the darkness of not knowing? ...

Aristotle ... says it is the same as when an army is in flight, driven by panic, until at last someone stops and looks round to see whether the foe is still dangerously close behind. We cannot say that the army stops when one soldier has stopped. But then another stops. The army does not stop by virtue of the fact that two soldiers stop. When does it actually stop, then?

Gadamer, 1976:14

When does knowledge start? Knowledge is bound within cultural codes, subject to time and place distinctions. Knowledge has become a commodity, packed into digestible and acceptable segments to be dealt out on television screens, in computer packages, in lecture theatres, in school texts. Knowledge is damaged irrevocably in being received as finite, and as belonging to the 'experts' - whether in law or medicine, in the bureaucracy or in education, in child-rearing, in human relations. Knowing is more important than knowledge, for knowing implies process, change, and the possibility of not-knowing.

Knowing is part of human praxis: never complete, always changing, always partisan, a process of doubting and gaining certainty (see Young, 1960), a 'total' process using all of human being, all the senses and the unity of these.¹⁸ We deal with 'knowing' by wording the process, but this involves both an interpretation and translation. Often knowing is a 'gut' process. We feel 'it' in our bones; for example, we

¹⁸ See Csaky (1979); see also Lasch (1979:19-21, 107-110).

'know' someone loves us, or is indifferent to us; we 'know' something is going to happen, or that this act is 'wrong' .. we sense an argument is brewing, or a statement does not make 'sense'. Knowing defined in this way is vastly different from knowledge perceived as 'facts' or 'objective information'. Objectivity, and objective facts are culturally defined, not absolutes; for example, the world is flat was a fact known to many people: that Jesus Christ is coming to earth a second time is a fact known to many people. Truth is always relative.

In academia, however, there are rules about what is acceptable knowledge, and what is not, rules which become ingrained, fixed, and choking in their impact (see Appendix A).

... there are gatekeepers in the academic community. These are the people who set the standards, produce the social knowledge, monitor what is admitted to the systems of distribution, and decree the innovations in thought, or knowledge, or values.

Spender, 1981:187

Knowing, as I am using it, is both universal, that is, part of the world, and 'individual', part of the person. Knowing is an aspect of intersubjectivity, and we use our knowledge, our 'knowing', to make sense of the world.

Knowing has a quality of depth; it builds on already-there knowing:

Asked to conceptualize 'tree' ... we could not, we would not dream of doing so by merely enumerating and detailing an endless sequence of particular trees.

Steiner, 1978:52

We start with some awareness of what a tree 'is'.

Likewise with parenting: we learn, we come-to-know, because we are attuned already to 'something' called parenting. The German word *stimmung* means mood and what we come to know in the world is affected by one's mood, one's 'tuning in' (see Pelz, 1974:89-90).

Knowing: becoming more aware, learning, growing ..

Thinking, knowing, understanding, questioning ..

I am at home in the world
when I know it, still more so
when I understand it.

Hegel

Understanding, too, is ever underway: part of human praxis, grounded in time and space and experienced through our bodies. Understanding demands readiness-to-understand for we close off opportunities to learn if we claim we already know, we already understand; for example, a parent not-listening to a child, a teacher not-listening to a colleague, an 'expert' not-listening to a lay-person because s/he already knows.

Understanding requires 'total' involvement: 'I put on my glasses to hear better' (p. 56) sounds non-sense, but can be understood. I recoil from a picture in recognition, or shock, in fear, in guilt .. again understanding is 'total', not a mind-only process. Thinking, knowing, understanding .. are not linear processes, but simultaneously past, present, future, inseparably dealt with in and via language; aspects of human praxis.

Understanding emerges in context, in and through inter-existence, in dialogue. We may know, but not understand, may think, but not understand: meaning that is 'clear' (in the Heideggerian sense 'clear' is the opposite of concealment) embodies thinking, knowing, understanding ... but it is always partial, ambiguous, grounded. Meaning, that is, what is grasped, is always lopsided, emerging in a context particular to a person/s in concrete time-space. Understanding is understanding from his/her point of view, from his/her stance-in-the-world, his/her involvement with an-other, or an object or ..

The meaning of what they are talking about
lies in the whole shape and flow of the
process of communication they are engaged

in, rather than in any 'conclusion' or particular set of words in a particular thought-box that can be lifted out to sum up the whole process.

Mackie, 1977:147-148

Meaning is always complex, always dynamic, rich, and varied and never fully grasped.

In every moment of dialogue, the speaker holds together what is said and addressed to the other person with the "infinity of the unsaid."

Linge, 1976:xxxii

Hence the importance of seeing understanding as a process for we are continually moving, only speaking, wording, expressing a minute amount of what we understand and relying on a person, a conversation, a book, letter, some form of catalyst to provoke us into new space.

... understanding is not a reproductive procedure, but rather always also a productive one ... It suffices to say that one understands differently when one understands at all.

Gadamer, in Linge, 1976:xxv

Understanding: knowing-with-insight; understanding is to risk comprehending meaning.

Thinking, knowing, understanding, questioning ..

We feel, we know, urges Heidegger, that there is something else there, something utterly decisive. But when we seek to articulate it, 'it is always as though we were reaching into the void'.

Steiner, 1978:46

To ask questions is frequently more 'safe' than to question: the latter process may imply 'knocking' or criticism, yet for Heidegger the hallmark of being genuinely alive is the capacity to question.

The font of genuine thought is astonishment, astonishment at and before being. Its unfolding is that careful translation of astonishment into action which is questioning.

Steiner, 1978:56

Heidegger (and as I understand him, I follow him), emphasises the futility of constantly asking 'why' questions for these, he claims, are tautological. Yet to accept blindly habit, tradition, routine .. 'they' standards of education, dress, language, 'answers' to life and spiritual questing, traditional routines or petrified customs, that is to be half-dead, to be existing, rather than alive. As with thinking, knowing, understanding, questioning is grounded, not an abstract process, but 'part' of us erupting in interaction, arising through our participation, our being-in-the-world.

A distinction is drawn between fraglich, questionable, and what is fragwürdig, worthy of being questioned. The first kind of questions include those such as how many people live in a certain area? what is the velocity of the wind? questions which have finite answers, are pragmatic, but inert. The latter are questions of being, of definition, of is-ness, of 'essence'; for example, what is parenting? In this research the questions need to be fragwürdig.

Two of Gadamer's notions have been accepted as part of the research modus operandi. They both affect the questioning process for they force the too-quick, too-simplistic answers to be set aside.

Collisions with the other's horizons makes us aware of assumptions so deepseated that they would otherwise remain unnoticed ...

It is precisely in confronting the otherness ... in hearing its challenging viewpoint - and not in preliminary methodological self-purgations that the reader's (researcher's) own prejudices (questions) ... are thrown into relief and thus come to critical self-consciousness.

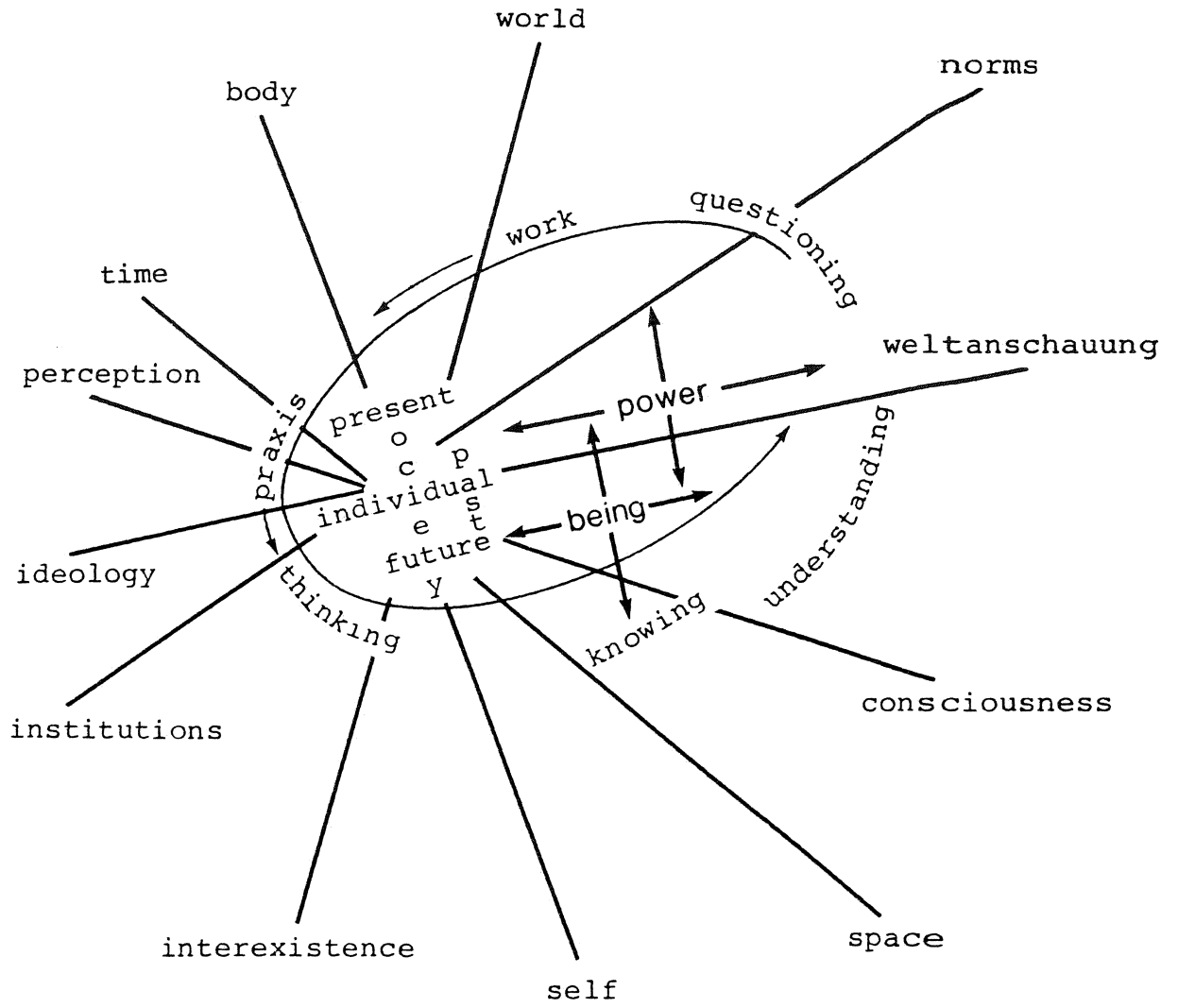
Linge, 1976:xxi
(brackets added)

To question, in this Heideggerian sense, requires some sense of 'self', and a sense of security (or measured disregard for one's fellow travellers?). It involves the risk of being thought a fool - by one's family, friends, colleagues. With so many 'experts' readily available and recipe books of techniques on assertiveness training, management programmes, economic housekeeping, coping with funerals .. there grows a tendency not to ask, not to reveal one's doubts, ignorance, ambivalence, or questions. Thus questioning becomes stultified and blocked: people stagnate, stifle - old habits get revamped, served in the idiom of the 'moment' rather than new directions or quests embarked upon (for example, nowhere is this more apparent than in the debate on 'the family is dying': see Cooper, 1971, Lasch, 1979, 1980). However,

Radical doubt means to question; it does not necessarily mean to negate ... (It) is a process ... a widening of awareness, of imaginative, creative vision of our possibilities and options.

Fromm, in Illich, 1976:10
(brackets added)

Questioning: being alive, astonished, ready to learn, to search, change, grow ..



*Ontological definitions*Individual, self, body ..

The one truly individual act is when a person dies: birth is a social activity, as is life. 'Individual' is the lowest common denominator of human being, yet the concept of an individual is culturally defined, anchored to a specific time and space. In Eastern thought the boundaries between 'an individual' and the 'other' are blurred: in western society such boundaries are artificially sanctified, for individualism is one of the cornerstones of the western weltanschauung (see Part 3:4).

In orgasm two individuals can join as one. Freud, too, talks of the oceanic feeling where one has a sense of being one with the external world (see Mackie, 1977:ix).

Mergence occurs when I cease to feel my presence to myself at all and am entirely absorbed in you. This is the limit of human individual identity at which it loses itself in another. The other is no longer experienced as other; I am no longer experienced as myself ... an undifferentiated "we" arises.

Stein, 1970:226

The concept of an 'individual' is riddled with ambiguity. The individual can be held responsible for his/her actions, yet be actively discouraged from behaving as an individual in many social contexts. Language denies recognition of individuality to some people - for example, Mrs Bob Hazlewood, Sarah's mum, and in factories, government offices, prisons, schools .. people are commonly perceived not as individuals but cogs or numbers, as role-people.

Yet the individual is a social being, not an entity:

The individual is the social being ...
Though man is a unique individual - and it is just his particularity which makes him an individual, a really individual communal being - he is equally the whole ...

Marx, in Avineri, 1969:88

Individual, self, body ..

A sense of self starts developing as a reality in early infancy. Initially it is simply a differentiation between me/not me but grows and hopefully matures to an awareness of 'I am me-myself'.

... the self gradually builds up like some highly intricate piece of crochet work - deeply woven back into itself.

Proust, in Shattuck, 1964:68

The self is socially constructed and therefore one's sense of self is highly dependent on interaction, feedback, and experience. The learning of one's self, being able to recognise and acknowledge and enjoy one's self, means learning, knowing, what it is to be human.

This learning takes place in a variety of ways. Zaner, for instance, talks of self-awakening moments

... which so characteristically vault the self out of the usual style and move of daily life ...

Zaner, 1970:176

and about the difficulty of trying to deal with these moments. Because a child's world is one of faith (or more so than an adult's), Zaner believes these experiences to be frequent in childhood - perhaps of the I-am-me kind (see p. 73), or what one describes as magical moments. The difficulty for children, and for adults, is that ordinary language cannot deal with such 'astonishment', yet one crucial aspect of these experiences is the need to 'tell'.

Such experiences have a threefold effect because of their intensity. They waken the self to the physical surrounds, often with an acute awareness. Secondly, they waken the self to other selves, often opening up the potentiality of communion with others, and thirdly, they awaken the self to itself.

Because of these 'effects' such experiences serve as transforming 'punctuation marks' in a person's life.

A sense of self, or one's many selves, includes the perception of one's body, identity, one's worth, one's sense of alone-ness. A self is less anonymous than the abstract 'individual'; as a concept it bridges the gap between the particular and the social. There can be no self without the 'other'.

Schutz talks of the 'We-relation' where two selves experience a 'mutual tuning-in'. This can be positive, enhancing, or smothering, if one is more dominant than the other.

A mother who lacks a sense of self will tend to merge with her child in a way that prevents both from developing.

Dally, 1982:199

As a person grows, the self can get drained in a stream of negative experiences through belittling, betrayal, lack of nurturing¹⁹ .. though a person can seemingly 'function' without an awareness of oneself.

... it can become so encrusted, hardened, embittered, opaque to itself that even it can no longer "tell" itself its own condition. It may become merely a faint memory of itself ...

Zaner, 1970:172

That is inauthentic living.

¹⁹ See Part 3: the growth of a 'self' is one of the most crucial aspects of parenting.

Individual, self, body

Our body is not in space like things; it inhabits or haunts space ... it is our expression in the world.

Merleau Ponty, 1964:5

I am my body.

Merleau Ponty, 1962:198

Through our body we are situated in the world: all that we are, all that we experience is through the body, and all that connects us to the world is the body. The body anchors us in the world in a concrete material sense. We eat, sleep, make love, go to the toilet, write, play sport .. using our body. So too we think, know, learn in this concrete way in the body.

... there is no entry to the abstracted conceptual mode of working (the head world) without passing through and making use of the concretely and immediately experienced.

D.E. Smith, 1979:171
(brackets added)

I am my body yet I can never possess it for as with other fundamental aspects of human existence both the concept and physical reality of the body are socially constructed (constructing): we view ourselves, our bodies, through a social lens, one coloured by gender, age, religion, class .. time.

Body is not a fixed entity: parts of one's body can feel separate, distinct, severed, extended, owned.

When I was pregnant I sometimes thought I was a large incubator moving through space. I was not me, not a person ... just a vessel, a receptacle, bearing something with which everyone was very concerned.

Turner, in Women, Vol. 7:2:1980:1

And Jonathan Miller, in the television series *The Body in Question*, talked of a person holding a pencil. The point of contact between person and paper was not, he suggested, at the grasp but on paper.²⁰ Our body 'flows' through the pencil. He talked too of a 'natural' driver backing a car into a small space. He said that the person becomes one with the car, for the body extends to be part of the car; for example, the rear passenger corner feels like part of the body. I know this for when I am tired I choose not to park the car in a small space: I may get hurt.

One of the main thrusts of feminist thought has been to liberate thinking about the female body, to encourage women to reclaim the right to own, deal with, care for one's body as one pleases, rather than have one's body treated in a singular way, that is a male way.²¹

To be born a woman has been to be born, within an allotted and confined space, into the keeping of men ... A man's presence suggests what he is capable of doing to you or for you ... The promised power may be moral, physical, temperamental, economic, social, sexual ... a woman's presence expresses her own attitude to herself, defines what can and cannot be done to her ... A woman must continually watch herself ... One might simplify this by saying: men act and women appear.

Berger, 1972:45, 46, 47
(emphasis added)

The body is at the centre of this conception and organisation of the world. In Part 3 this argument will be taken up and examined in a number of different ways using Foucault's concept of biopolitics as a central theme.

Our body is our physical presence in the world; part of

²⁰ See also Merleau Ponty (1962:152-3).

²¹ See Ehrenreich and English (1979). Also Barrett and McIntosh (1982).

it, part of the flow, energy, praxis forming the world - not atomised, not singular but complex, everchanging, plural in image and existence.

My hands
Open the curtains of your being
Clothe you in a further nudity
Uncover the bodies of your body
My hands
Invent another body for your body.

Octavia Paz, in Csaky, 1979:212

In search of truth nothing should be taken for granted or pre-judged.

Jung and Jung, 1972:37

These words are taken from an article 'Revolutionary Dialectics: Mao Tse-Tung and Merleau Ponty' (Jung and Jung, 1977). My reliance on the authors for the following definitions is heavy, not through lack of reading, thinking, agonising through other texts or definitions, but simply because in the five plus years of this research I have found none more satisfactory (see also Pelz, 1974, for further definitions with which I found myself in accord; and Giddens, 1976, 1979).

Definitions freeze words, and my understanding has moved on, even as I write. The next listing is even more abbreviated: I repeat, I am simply drawing attention to these terms which read almost as meaningless when presented in such a dry fashion. Their meanings emerge in/out of the context of the research. The words are presented in alphabetical order.

Being ...

The total process of participating in the life of the world. To be-human is more than to exist for this can imply a physical process only. Trees exist, factories exist ... human beings (or humans being) have the potential to be alive, to grow, to know, and to die. Mary Daly's quote I used on page 14: it is repeated for I know of no other words which so capture the essence, the is-ness of being:

"Be-ing" is the verb that says the dimensions of depth in all verbs, such as intuiting, reasoning, loving, imaging, making, acting, as well as the couraging, hoping, and playing that are always there when one is really living.

Daly, 1979:23-24

Consciousness ...

Being aware - of oneself, of others, of the environment. Consciousness, in part, is the human equivalent of antennae, or nerve-tips, enabling participation in the world. Consciousness is always idiosyncratic and close-at-hand: it is limited in its vision because of this.

I do not understand the conception of 'layers of consciousness' but borrow from other sources the notions of the preconscious and the unconscious.

The preconscious is that taken-for-granted 'stock of knowledge' we use to live-in-the-world. The preconscious enables us to participate without having to 'check' out each movement or action - our cognitive selves. The unconscious is that dimension of a person's life which cannot be drawn on voluntarily, but which influences behaviour in the everyday world. At times an event, a picture or sound or taste .. can trigger memories and enable a person to make contact with his/her unconscious. ²²

Ideology ...

An ideology may be defined as a connecting set of beliefs which have an element of dogma or legitimation, and a sense of social change inherent as aspects of its praxis. Ideologies have more density than a weltanschauung. Rhetoric is an essential part of any ideology (in Part 3:4 the concept and problem of ideological thinking is explored at length).

Institution ...

Likewise with the concept of institution (see Part 3:1). Institutions may be defined as layered practices 'deeply sedimented in time-space' (Giddens, 1979:80) or as

²² See time (below) for elaboration: also Giddens (1979:58).

... the ground of our common and individual achievements, enriching us and impoverishing us with a legacy ... never quite intended for us and yet never totally rejected by us, even when we refuse it.

O'Neill, 1978:213

Interexistence ...

The intertwining network of relationships of person with person. I prefer this term to that of intersubjectivity for two reasons: first, it is rid of any notion of subject/object distinction, and secondly, as Merleau Ponty defined it, it is existence which has an active thrust; it is not a passive notion of co-existence for it involves a sense of being-with-others. Put another way, interexistence is:

... the dialectic of the self and the other which make up a whole without reducing one to the other: it is an ongoing complicity of the self and the other.

Jung and Jung, 1977:40

Norms ...

Habits, beliefs, standards which influence behaviour. Non-compliance can lead to the imposition of sanctions (see Giddens, 1979:85-88).

Perception ...

According to Merleau Ponty, perception is

... the infrastructure that supports all human activities.

in Jung and Jung, 1977:44

I prefer to change the word to perceiving - and describe this as the process of 'seeing', absorbing, interpreting, and dealing-with-that-knowing which then enables a person to participate in the world. Perceiving draws on the preconscious,

the taken-for-granted 'inside-us' knowledge. Perception involves all our body - eyes, hands, ears, tongue ... and no instant of perception is ever the same for we grow: nor can we share 'total' perception, for we are me and you. For instance, I can never comprehend what the colour red means to another person - or what love or beauty or pain (see Merleau Ponty, 1964:17) means ... perception is one of the key processes in human-being, and one that underscores the uniqueness of each person.



Power ...

Is somewhat analogous to energy in the physical world. The effects of power can be observed and measured, yet it is difficult to locate power in a specific sense. Power is an integral part of all human interaction; is both constraining and enabling, and always ambiguous. Power can be perceived in many forms - force, domination, authority, attraction .. and in its potential. Power is not simply a matter of decision-making nor conflict. Power is power because it is unseen, because arrangements, traditions, habits, norms, ways of behaving, of social structure-ing come-to-be-seen (assumed) as 'natural', as 'normal' and the 'mobilisation of bias', and the structure-ing that such arrangements indicate are ignored/forgotten until an irruption/eruption takes place (see Giddens, 1979:88-94; see Part 3).

Praxis ...

Understood in the Marxist sense of human being's conscious shaping of the world - physical and social world, around us. Praxis is the whole process of thinking, knowing, understanding, questioning, deliberating, working which enables people to live in a material world. In Merleau Ponty's interpretation, praxis is

... the meaning which works itself out spontaneously in the intercrossing of those activities by which man organizes his relations with nature and with other men.

Merleau Ponty,
in Jung and Jung, 1977:40-41

Revolutionary praxis ...

Is different: revolutionary praxis, or radical praxis, is not an aspect of the everyday concrete world but a challenge to overturn the everyday world, to neither bandaid existing forms of praxis nor accelerate change, but to rupture, and transform. Therein lies a contradiction: how does one change the world whilst being a member of it: this is the constant paradox and pain (angst) of a revolutionary, or a critical theorist.

Those who speak of revolution without making it real in their own daily lives talk with a corpse in their mouths.

Vaneigem, in Cooper, 1972:107

"The vision of a new man and a new society may be taken as a celebration of human potentiality, but it is a potentiality to be unfolded on the other side of a cataclysmic leap out of the present, out of history."

Marcuse, in Reid, 1977:120

Space ...

Is a complex concept. One can talk of physical space meaning natural space, earth, sky, desert .. or geographical space meaning urban/rural space .. or body space - meaning the physical insertion of our bodies in a particular space, or the space around us which can feel invaded - in a medical examination, by touching, abuse .. the list is endless - emotional space and social space and .. Space is never static for the meanings of space vary according to one's perception and mood, and age and gender and nationality ..

The social management of space is none the less in definite ways a feature of all societies.

Giddens, 1979:206

Spatial arrangements differ according to class: for example, architects design houses where children have separate rooms but adults share, even for those with money, yet in 'poor' families children may share a bed, or beds for both adults and children may be used on a rotating basis.

One of Proust's word pictures illustrates class spatial arrangements; writing of Princesse de Luxembourg

in her desire not to appear to hold forth from a sphere superior to ours, she had miscalculated the distance, for, by an error in adjustment, her looks were filled with so great a kindness I foresaw the moment when she would pet us like two loveable animals who had stretched out our necks ...

in Shattuck, 1964:10

Spatial arrangements in a society can involve axes of centre and periphery, front and back, and linked inextricably with time, a sense of immediacy, of here and now, or distancing. Spacing is important in conversation - as pauses between words, between ideas and in the whole process of communication: in face to face or formal language. Space has

infinite dimensions and meanings.

Time ...

Is commonly assumed in our society to be linear time, to be standard time, yet time too is infinite in meaning.

Time ... has no single measure ... time can be like frost or lightning or a tear or siege or storm or sunset, or even like a rock.

James Clavell ²³

The dollar watch I bought a few days ago ... ran out at seventeen minutes past ten the day before yesterday morning, and time by machine measure was over for me at that hour.

Agee, [1939]1966:49

Time can drag, spurt, accelerate, hang .. 8 a.m. on a week-day commonly means rushing time, yet sleep-in time at the weekend. 8 p.m. time can mean relief that the children are in bed, or acute loneliness, or relaxation, or time to start work. Time, like all concepts, changes in meaning and emphasis and interpretation and focus because of gender, age, ethnic differences.

Time can become a master, a slave, can become bankrupt in its emptiness.

Awareness constantly gravitates ... from 'here and now' ... towards a practical goal in the future ... Time experienced in this way necessarily impoverishes the awareness of the present.

Jephcott, 1972:23

²³ Words copied from a friend's card: no details given, information untraceable.

Time is not discrete in meaning, nor singular - for a person, a group of people. Time can leap, hinge present to the past and future; time can rule.

"Prick me and I bleed time!" is a motto for man-in-the-West.

Henry, [1965]1973:11

When Ben is alone, he aches with time;
only when his brother comes home does
this pain leave him ...

[1965]1973:167

Time is a 'total' experience:

I know of the lateness and full height by
the quietly starved brightness of my senses,
which some while ago made the transition
past any need for sleep without taking
much notice of it ...

Agee, [1939]1966:49

In family living time is one of the plumb-lines of relationships. T.S. Eliot writes of people frozen in time, and of the returning son.

Nothing is changed ...

Everything is kept as it was when he left it ...
Nothing has been changed. I have seen to that ...

The man who returns will have to meet
The boy who left.

T.S. Eliot, Family Reunion,
Part I, Scene 1

Proust writes of experiences buried in the past which are raised to consciousness through events. He tells about an incident in his adulthood:

I raised to my lips a spoonful of the tea
in which I had soaked a morsel of the cake.
No sooner had the warm liquid, and the
crumbs with it, touched my palate than a
shudder ran through my whole body, and I

stopped, intent upon the extraordinary changes that were taking place. An exquisite pleasure had invaded my senses ... I was conscious that it was connected with the taste of tea and cake ... (p. 58)

And suddenly the memory returns. The taste was that of the little crumb of madeleine which on Sunday mornings at Combray ... when I went to say good day to (my aunt) in her bedroom ... (p. 61)

... it was a real state in whose presence other states of consciousness melted and vanished. I decided to attempt to make it reappear. (p. 59)

I had ceased now to feel mediocre, accidental, mortal. Whence could it have come to me, this all-powerful joy? (p. 58)

It is a labour in vain to attempt to recapture (our past): all the efforts of our intellect must prove futile. The past is hidden somewhere ... beyond the reach of the intellect, in some material object (in the sensation which that material object will give us) which we do not suspect. And as for that object, it depends on chance whether we come upon it or not before we ourselves must die. (pp. 57-58)

Proust, Swann's Way, Part I, 1966
(brackets added)

The incidents such as Proust describes are deeply important for human being. They can be self-awakening moments (see p. 87); they may be painful in evoking memories from the past yet such incidents serve to anchor us in a concrete way; they reinforce the idea of a past, a present and a future, or put another way, they give us a history, perhaps serve as a reminder of our roots. 'Family' is the context for many of these experiences, these punctuation marks.

More immediately, we live (in) time.

Weltanschauung ...

Is a philosophy of life: I make an artificial distinction between a societal weltanschauung and a personal ..

Societal weltanschauung may be defined as orientation to the world; it includes elements of ideology, but also beliefs, values, priorities accreted through generations and centuries; attitudes towards life/death, good and evil, are examples of areas covered by a societal weltanschauung.

Personal weltanschauung includes aspects of the societal weltanschauung, but is coloured by the life chances and experiences of the person.

Work ...

Used in the Marxian sense of labour.

Work is not work-in-order-to-satisfy-another-need: it is the human need to live in nature and to give a meaning to itself and nature.

Paci, in Reid, 1977:121

(Though discussion of work does not reappear in an abstract sense until Part 3, I point out at this juncture that I dissociate myself from traditional dichotomies of work and leisure: the reasons will become apparent in the context.)

World ...

... not what I think, but what I live through. I am open to the world, I have no doubt that I am in communication with it, but I do not possess it; it is inexhaustible.

Merleau Ponty, 1962:xvi-xvii

We are born into a world already-made: it is our inheritance, never to be owned, nor grasped, except in part.

Conclusion ...

In writing and re-writing these pages the task has at times been exciting, exhilarating and tautological: on occasions I wondered if I was ever to emerge from the dense abstract thinking, and always at the back of my mind was a jester, mocking the simplistic efforts, ridiculing the need to place these letters, words, thoughts down on paper.

Yet it was/is necessary. Ambitiously, perhaps ill-advisedly, I set out to comprehend parenting and that is a difficult task. I wanted not to stir, to confound, to do or be anything different, but. Doing phenomenology on the tools of the research continues in the next chapter, where emphasis is on the research process rather than the 'underpinnings' or ontological aspects of human being.

Having laid out the tools of the research and presented my understanding of how human being is, having developed an awareness (become tuned-in-to) human praxis and become more humble about how narrow and limited my vision, my perception of the world was/is I could/can move into the research process more freely. At times, in the third sections of the triptychs and in Part 3, these definitions will be specifically referred to.

As the process of consciousness continued,
I realized with relief I no longer had to
walk a tightrope and pretend to be what I
wasn't.

Lippard, 1976:4

I could/can now work from the centre out. 24

24 Meaning I work from I-am-me outwards; from my experience - personal, professional, academic .. struggling always to regain, retain an integrity and not be submerged in the 'they-world'.

Part 1:4

Most methodology chapters in theses, textbooks, are as dry as dust. As with so much sociological writing human beings are conspicuous in their absence, focus instead being given to the need for sampling frames, data-gathering, statistical procedures, hypotheses, and generalisation. Much time is spent in rationalisation and/or justification for the selection and use of certain procedures/techniques, the authors showing an almost god-like reverence for traditional, that is positivist, requirements of scientific procedure. Objectivity is still worshipped; sophistication measured by time spent with the computer, reputation acquired and stature enhanced by the manipulation of jargon and big words, and scholarship recognised by the number of publications (see Emy, 1980; Roberts, 1981; Stanley and Wise, 1983). The gap between 'theory' and 'research' becomes a jarring chasm, for example

Two academic sociologists were heard discussing their dissertations; both had completed their fieldwork.

'I still don't know what theoretical framework I am going to use,' said the first.

'Neither do I,' replied the other. ¹

In this research that world has been turned upside down, inside out. The 'methods' used in the creation of the data evolved during the research. They formed part of the process of doing-phenomenology on parenting: as I grew, so too did my ability to extend conversations, to highlight, to become embroiled, and to let go. My respect for those participating in the research stretched beyond hinted-at-horizons; my understanding, sense-ing of the research catapulted, so too my commitment in trying to grasp what it means to be a parent/

¹ Personal conversation, Melbourne 1982.

to be parented, to 'catching' the experience of parenting, whatever shape or form. The 'methods' used are the consequence of that phenomenological grounding; they are part of the dialectic of the research.

Like the questions which constantly bubbled through the research, the modus operandi utilised had, therefore, to be 'worthy', to be enabling rather than restricting, revealing rather than concealing and/or distorting. The central task was seen to be one of encountering human beings in their context: to gain admittance into people's worlds, be given an opportunity to work, to observe, participate and then withdraw. That is for the people research.

The methods used in Part 3 to explore the structural dimensions of society are more traditional, and only in the third chapter of Part 3 does the data from the people research become integrated into the structural data. This is an artificial divisioning, but a step imposed by the limitations of being able to focus only in one area of complexity at a time.

The choice of placing the people data prior to the structural data is a deliberate one. As in real life, so too with research. The everyday world is the world we experience and others experience: only when we 'know' the world can we try and make sense of it.

This chapter has two main parts. The first outlines the research design - the questions leading to the research - makes points about sampling and choice of research tools; it includes comment on the pilot study and an evaluation of that, and a discussion of some of the principles underlying participant observation. It explains why it became necessary to live with people for an extended period.

The second part describes the actual research experience; what happened during that time - to them, to me, to the research. It outlines the problems encountered, the joy, the

exhilaration of making contact with human beings, the sharing, the growth, understanding, and the trouble spots: it also reveals the times of anger, mis-communication, and laughter. One section describes in detail 'being there', a peculiar form of madness, and the chapter concludes with a discussion of the presentation of the data explaining both the format of the triptych and organisation of the material.

Such discussion then frees the triptychs for concentration on the people central to the research. Great pain has been experienced in the translation of human being into flattened words: that wording, however, forms the bulk of this thesis.

Thinking about doing research

In 1972 I asked a social worker (in New Zealand) the area in which she saw the need for adoption research. She couched it in these words:

The worst situation is when a girl places her baby for adoption, gets married, and can't have a child.

I had been thinking about adoption for a long time: I am adopted, though I was not told until I was 26, and I know both my mothers; two of our three children are adopted, and I had worked with all parties involved in adoption as a social worker. The belief I had then about there existing much non-understanding about adoption still remains, but I found, once I started to plan a research project round adoption, that there were more fundamental questions, such as:

What does parenting mean?

How does parenting 'fit' into family life?

Why do family ties take precedence for many/most people?

What is at the heart of being a parent?

How does parenting change over time and in different contexts?

In 1978 ² I started on the research: I decided to explore parenting per se, and I went through all sorts of existential hooplas trying to work out whether I was examining a concept, or a 'real relationship'. I read 'the literature'; minutely

² Between 1972 and 1978 our family increased in size, moved to England, then NSW, Australia, then Victoria, Australia. In 1983 we returned to New Zealand.

'I am so pulled hither and thither by circumstances. The calm, the coolness, the silent grass-growing mood in which ... to compose ... can seldom be mine' (Melville, in Olsen, 1980:7).

scrutinised sociological abstracts, journals of family research .. theses. I questioned people, ad infinitum, ad nauseam, about doing research, and studying families. Morgan's book (1975) was a godsend: solid, questioning and reassuring, for many of the ideas he suggested needed exploring fitted with what I intended doing (see pp. 222-225).

A number of other books jolted my thinking (see Part 1:3); all contributed to the growing definition of the research project. As noted previously (see Part 1:1, p. 10), one of the most consequential of these was O'Neill's Making Sense Together. I responded totally to his writing, lugging the book away for weekends, delving in and quoting to friends and family, enjoying the 'high', the thrill of finding a serious academic who cared about human beings. O'Neill is omnipresent in this research for his words are part of me.

Sociology is nothing apart from its attachment to the world.

O'Neill, 1975:80

Sociological care is mutual: it remains active only in giving and being given life ... is not simpering. It is not exercised from empty need or from loneliness. It is a musical response, a dance ... It does not work from obligation. Nor from guilt or any self-abasement.

1975:71

It is to be expected that such a sociology of everyday life will involve a certain outrage as well as systematic misunderstanding when viewed from the perspective of establishment sociology.

1975:22-23

Two comments in the literature hit me forcefully, and painfully:

For all the research studies we have read and reported as we have sifted our way through ... something is missing.

Ritchie and Ritchie, 1978:174

Often people are missing

... the scholar who lacks ... firsthand familiarity (in the field) is highly unlikely to recognise that he is missing anything.

Blumer, 1970:31
(brackets added)

A number of key dimensions to the research had emerged by mid-1978.

1. The research was to be 'done' with people .. not reified images or role-people.
2. As far as possible I wanted to work with families of differing shapes and sizes, 'ordinary' families .. I repeat the definitions (see p. 34): families where no member was currently receiving counselling for relationship difficulties (see Bott [1957]1971:10). Other criteria for selection included:
 - that the family spoke English as their main language (I am a language illiterate);
 - that they had been in Australia for two years and intended staying;
 - that no families would be included who were friends (at the commencement of the research).
3. All concepts, definitions, assumptions should be bracketed (see p.viii).
4. Ontological problems were not going to be sorted out by further intellectual brainscratching (see Part 1:3, p. 75).
5. The idea of generating theory from the data appealed. I

disagreed with Glaser and Strauss' (1967) limited definition of theory (pp. 2-3), and thought the idea of going to a study area without any preconceived theory somewhat naive, but the overall plan made sense.

It was decided to select a small sample for a pilot study. I felt tentative about approaching families, let alone asking them to participate in the research.

Bott ([1957]1971:6-7) and Morgan (1975:224-225) talk of the problems of access to 'ordinary families':

Family life goes on inside homes, not in the street or in universities ... to which research workers might have easy access. Unless one is invited inside a home one cannot learn much about a family as a working group.

Bott, [1957]1971:6

I was fortunate: I found no such difficulties. Each of the seven families I approached agreed to consider the research; two declined, one because of illness, the other through the public attention surrounding the birth of their first child.³ It was decided that five families would suffice for the pilot study.

Jules Henry (see Part 1:1, p. 16) talks of five questions he was always asked about his research:

What was your entree into the family?
 Didn't your presence distort the family way of life?
 What did you do?
 How did you stand it?
 What did you record?

Henry, [1965]1973:457

³ This couple operated a drop-in centre in a housing commission area.

Me too: all these questions are answered in this chapter, although they are enriched in the discussion in Part 2.

Contact with the pilot study families was made ...

Lawrence and Suzanne: *L. is a pharmacist: I had been impressed by the service he offered and approached him about the possibility of being involved. He agreed to ask his wife. A few days later I phoned Suzanne at his suggestion and made an appointment to see her (this family continued through to the 'research proper').*

Roger and Jean: *Caroline, their eldest daughter, had answered an advertisement about housekeeping at Monash .. Caroline started coming to the house - I asked her if she thought the family might become involved - she asked them, then I arranged to go and visit one night.*

Beth: *I met at the National Adoption Conference in 1976 - met again by chance and discovered she lived locally. I simply asked if she would like to be involved.*

Jon and Trish: *Trish is a fellow-Kiwi: her mother-in-law is a secretary at Monash and she suggested I might approach them.*

Rick and Gloria: *Are neighbours of friends; over dinner one night I heard them discussing their family. I moved in quickly for they had a different shape family - three children - twins of 12 - adopted, and one*

⁴ For convenience only the six families in the research proper are given surnames and referred to by that name: for example Strahan Family Triptych. Others are referred to by Christian names only, and a special script is used to designate them.

son, eighteen, born to them.

Details of these families are presented in table form at the end of this chapter.

Three of the families in the pilot study are Catholic. One of the difficulties of research where one is wanting to become involved over a period of time is that to use a check list of characteristics seems inappropriate, the main goal being to establish rapport in the initial stages. Not till the second, third .. visits did I necessarily ask about religious affiliation; nor am I sure that this, or other 'objective' factors, for example education, age, are as important either in themselves or to ensure a 'spread' of sample as I originally thought. I think that the quality of relationship able to be established is the crucial factor.

During the months of July, August and September 1978 I visited each family at least five times: ate with them, popped in for coffee, questioned, probed, started to move inside, or in Giddens' term, to become 'immersed' (Giddens, 1976:161).

I recall one of the first evening visits to a family. I arranged to call and was invited back for a meal.

We talked of everything but the research: later I accepted two glasses of wine because of my nervousness .. when I left about 10 p.m. I was nearly asleep because I don't usually drink.

'Casenotes' from another first visit illustrate the 'beginning researcher':

.. concluded session by calling from front entrance - next time I will try not to look so much a student.

Strahan triptych
27 July 1979

I was 35 at the time: as a schoolteacher in both country and urban areas, and as a social worker I was/am used to going in and out of people's homes, but with the status of 'researcher' I came unstuck. Part of me wanted simply to respond in my usual gregarious manner but I carried that burden-of-needing-to-negotiate-a-research-relationship, that is, to be invited back, to be free to make notes, possibly to tape record, to be given the privilege and responsibility of using that family for research purposes. That was an onerous and difficult responsibility.

Few research reports talk about these difficulties, or counsel about how to wend one's way through the labyrinth of research advice, nor how to meld the requirements of the research with other responsibilities - professional, that is in my case, teaching, bringing up three children, being a wife, daughter, me. For example, about this time (just into the pilot study), I was told by a colleague:

... you haven't really got a sociological problem, have you? Why don't you do something on blended families ... his, hers and ours.

My ideas were simply and blatantly dismissed.

One of the most 'underestimated' effects of research is the constancy, the intensity, the ubiquity of the research. C. Wright Mills puts it this way:

You do not really have to study a topic you are working on ... once you are into it, it is everywhere.

C.W. Mills, [1959]1970:232

Moore agrees:

I discovered that full-time research is not a job; it is a way of life, and so one's life becomes woven into the research ... For a year I ate, breathed and slept Sparkbrook.

Moore, in Bell and Newby, 1977:87

Adding to the strain of research is the research topic or area. As one family researcher said ...

When I first started everyone I met I interviewed.⁵

Most people are willing to talk about their family experience. Comments such as this were common:

Oh, you're doing research on the family:
I'd love you to do my sister and her
husband. I'd love to know how they tick.

Bott's comments, though made some time ago, are still pertinent:

It is difficult to study families calmly because there is so much emotional concern over what is wrong with them and how they should be made better. It is difficult to be modest and realistic in one's research aspirations since one feels that authoritative statements about families in general are expected at the end of the study.

Bott, [1957]1971:7

From this vantage point the pilot study experience seems shallow: mostly we talked and the 'technique' being used could best be described as the 'open-ended interview'. Throughout the pilot study time I also interviewed a cross-section of people: parents, social workers, researchers, 'adult children' .. all the time trying to extend my vision and comprehension of parenting. I heard people tell of their experiences sometimes with laughter, often through thinly veiled pain. I committed myself to continuing with what is euphemistically called qualitative research.

⁵ Personal conversation, Melbourne 1981.

Oakley (1981b) writes about interviewing being an ambiguous research tool. I think intuitively I came to the same decision. Interviews can elicit key information, be an effective form of communication, a sharing of ideas .. but they can be artificial, even if both interviewee and interviewer are trying to be open, honest .. Frequently, the conversation rests on a loaded assumption base which may never be challenged: language can be a clue to these assumptions. For example, many questions appear in research studies about happiness, about before and after situations - before the birth of the first child, or after the break-up of a marriage .. Most use the terms husband and wife, father and mother, caregiver, or primary parent - seldom does one have an opportunity to 'check' out if the researcher's interpretation of these terms matches with that of the researched - nor the genealogy of such terms and/or the reification of them. There is rarely room for collision (see Part 1:3, p. 84) and collusion is frequent.

One of the crucial questions is the status of the people involved; power normally rests with the interviewer so his/her perception of the other person/people is vital. Oakley talks facetiously about interviews as unequal dialogue:

Getting involved with the people you interview is doubly bad: it jeopardises the hard-won status of sociology as a science and is indicative of a form of personal degeneracy.

Oakley, 1981b:41

In a 'male defined' science I was fast becoming a degenerate. For instance, Rick (p. 111) said to me that first night:

We're as interested in you as you are in us.

How one perceives the people in research, perceives people, colours the whole research process (see page 120).

Though I was able to listen, talk and observe as we drove to the swimming pool, or walked to school, visited with grandma, or shared a meal, the experience still seemed superficial, even artificial. With one family I tried a family sculpture: this was on the third visit and Rick and Gloria had stressed the complementarity of their power, their joint decisionmaking and sharing of responsibility.

In a sculpture each person is asked to arrange the family "as if" they were making a sculpture; they can position the people wherever and however they choose. When the people are in position each person is then asked how it feels to be in that space.⁶

Notes: Gloria was the last person to have her turn. She told Mat, 18, to sit at the feet of Linda and Paul, 12; Rick she placed on a stool over to one side, and she sat herself on a chair, facing everyone. The power dynamics ate into the room. There was an abominal silence. Mat broke it with the words:

There's no need to say anything,
is there?

Taking the research away from words showed another picture. I believe in the tool but did not use it again in the research. I was too scared: the power ate into the room.

I learned too the difference between doing a research study 'within' sociology rather than working as a social worker or 'analyst'. Sometimes these boundaries were not understood by others. I nearly fell into a trap. One couple asked if I would like to talk with them. I was tempted, for they expanded the sample: they were immigrants, Jewish .. and willing but after two intense evening sessions it was apparent they perceived me primarily as a social worker. I

⁶ Family sculptures can be effective tools: the 'sculptor' has to know what he/she is doing, and be aware, acutely aware of the dynamics .. of what is happening.

terminated the research contact.

One of the telling experiences which served to propel me into a round-the-clock involvement for the research proper can be summarised as ...

Notes: Jon and Trish .. had one son, Timothy, aged 3. The family had a 'smooth' way of interacting, with Trish playing the mediator, the hostess to Jon and Timothy's needs. Jon had opted out of teaching and elected to set up a pancake parlour which enabled him to be home much of the day. He was/is trying to gain a 'total' education, ploughing through books on philosophy, mathematics, economics ... I had seen his needs as being the steering ones for the family until I saw them in a different context.

In a different environment both adults focussed on Timothy: I wrote

Methinks that Timothy is boss in this family - seems like life revolves round him.

I started to think how different parenting is in the home context, outside, at different times of the day, in the presence/absence of various people.

As with so many 'dawnings' in this research it made sense, yet the interview kind of research could not tap these shades, subtleties of meaning, nor the blatant changes: nor could I learn the silences of family interaction, the change of mood or observe the quiet unspoken power games.

Yet the pilot study worked, on a number of counts. It confirmed that it was possible to make contact and work with people. It proved that a variety of methods could be effectively utilised and that taping of the more formal sessions was both possible and advisable.

I made tapes there, on the way home, in my study. I knew what Howell was talking about:

Unconsciously I would even mimic their accents and take on their mannerisms. I found myself shouting, whispering, and

occasionally almost weeping into the taperecorder.

Howell, 1973:377

I had/have rules, though, about recording: I would not record 'secretly', nor against people's wishes. Particularly in the 'research proper' conversations became so intense that at times I switched off the recorder: it seemed like a crude mechanical intrusion into what was essentially a human dialogue.

I agree/d with the Newsons:

The taperecorder is not a timesaver. Transcribing takes hours of labour ... However, if one cares at all about the subtleties of feeling and attitude, the taperecorder is necessary to put flesh on the bare bones, and indeed to ensure that the bones have been correctly strung together in the first place.

Newson and Newson, 1976:33

Transcribing the tapes was at times tedious, time-consuming and very expensive. When I started living with families I decided my time, resources and energy should go into that. For the first three families I paid for transcription: that cost over \$1600 and resulted in 2000+ pages. For the last three families I transcribed by hand and paid for 'typing-up'.

A number of decisions were made at the conclusion of the pilot study: the main one was that the questions central to the research could/should be explored by extending the research methods, especially with a more involved form of participant observation. Though I had become immersed in people's lives, I felt I was seeing only minute aspects of people's existence, and assuming the contexting of parenting as-I-could-comprehend-it.

I would like to imagine that I had sorted out my thinking about participant observation before I commenced the research proper. I knew I had done much soul searching about the rationale for what I was about to do, partly in self defence and constant justification for focussing ..

- a. on family - commonly dismissed as 'women's' area of inquiry ... not important like deviance, health and illness, theory.
- b. on such a small sample.
- c. on doing what was mistakenly seen as 'microresearch'. Argument of any strength failed to convince Marxist colleagues and/or doubting Thomases that I was attempting to weave this intensive work into a structural framing. I was an 'outsider' if I wanted to be both a 'structuralist' and a phenomenologist.
- d. on real people, on human being-in-the-world.

Participant observation is both a privilege and a responsibility.

There is a certain obscenity about watching any human being, standing outside of his life ...

O'Neill, 1975:59

I recall hearing how a Maori tribe in North Auckland charged \$100 for an MA thesis and \$250 for a PhD thesis to be done-on-them in the 1960s. The possibilities for exploitation by a researcher are immense.

All research is political in that in its very praxis it involves relationships of unequal power; too often that power is perceived as belonging to the researcher rather than utilised in a complementary way. Sociological research is not primarily a form of social espionage yet it is practised that way.

In much of bourgeois fieldwork, the field-societal praxis - is artificially turned into a laboratory. The participant observer is conceived as nothing but a researcher; stripped of his full humanity, he is expected to act out as a heartless and spineless researcher-role. He claims and may even demand the right to participate in the setting without being a participant in the same way that the experimenter conducts his experiment.

Bodemann, 1979:156

... the sociologist's own activity risks monstrosity in its pretended freedom and in its rootless possibility.

O'Neill, 1975:81

And Gouldner:

Much of our noble talk about the importance of "truth for its own sake" is often a tacit way of saying that we want the truth about others, at whatever cost it may be to them.

Gouldner, 1970:490

Two crucial 'happenings' served to give impetus and direction to the research: they emerged in the time-space context of the pilot study. One was the recovery of a tool (learned in my anthropology undergraduate studies), the total social fact. This enabled me to hold together much of what I had learned (see below). The second was ongoing, an increasing awareness or sharpening of me-as-me, resulting in an intense wanting/needing to sort out what I believed about humans being, and how this affected the research process (see Part 1:3).

Any conversation is predicated on a number of assumptions: often we are unaware of these assumptions - about people, about the use of words, meanings, about the 'body-language' being used and how this might be interpreted/mis-interpreted; seldom do we pause to discover what we believe, think, know .. for conversations fill the taken-for-granted world in which

we live.

These assumptions influence what we do as researchers, not only at the level of method selection or organisation of the project, but in the choice of area, the adoption/creation of a theoretical framework, and ontologically.

... the major theoretical streams in the social sciences in some way reflect on the ability of man actively to change his condition either by stressing the limits to that ability ... or the potentiality. Such theories also reflect on the ways in which man might change or be changed.

Morgan, 1975:58

My core beliefs about human beings emerge in the context of Quaker beliefs; that is, there is that of 'god' in every person: Marx's idea of species-being impales a similar meaning, that of a life force, universal yet distinct.

I was/am trying in this research project to grasp what a certain number of people believe, do, mean .. as they work-at-parenting. I wanted, when I was sorting out how to approach people and to comprehend people-living (rather than staying with still life shots of human praxis) to ensure that these people grew through the research, or at least were not injured. Howell's words capture the tension and some of the ambiguity:

At times I felt guilty about my role in the community and never completely resolved certain ambivalent feelings of my own. In many respects I was just another exploiter ... People were taking me into their trust and sharing their lives with me for which they would receive quite little in return.

Howell, 1973:371

The juggling of the 'layers' of reality in the research process is complex and always exhausting. I had to 'see', and then decide whether to share what I was learning with the

'families': if I told, my blind spots could be removed, misunderstandings revealed and people could use this knowledge to grow, change, make a stand, reject (see p.129). If I did/not tell, then I was usurping people's lives, reinforcing an unequal power position. I was/am always enmeshed in the ethical problems of doing research. And I am still struggling with this: I feel a responsibility to give back to the people what I have learned, in the course of the research and later; yet this can only be a part-picture for this data 'fits' into another more academic context. Phenomenology stresses the potential for change both as an inherent aspect of being human and, logically, in the course of research; critical phenomenology is grounded on the need for change. Therein lies a risk.

I found myself interrupting, interpreting ahead-of-time, listening-and-not-hearing, taking over by becoming a third parent, a teacher .. and realising, often with a pinioning thud, that in doing so I was claiming to know already. A friend said to me years ago ..

Marg - for goodness sake stop analysing,
will you.

Doing research this way is like walking a tightrope: I was trying to converse with people rather than at them or to them; my awareness that I was a guest in their home and that I had initiated that invitation never left me, yet I felt under pressure to analyse, to interpret, to question. I did not know if I could ever understand; perhaps the goal of such research is not understanding but illumination, an increasing awareness of the 'loose threads' which together form the fabric of human praxis.

'Total social fact'

One of the breakthroughs of the research project came when I pounced on Mauss' idea of total social fact, or more correctly Jan Pouver's use of that:

... a total social fact (is) a dominant social symbol by means of which the participants conceive of different and diverse things social as "going together" ...

Pouver, 1974:247

Marcel Mauss developed the concept in the context of 'early' societies:

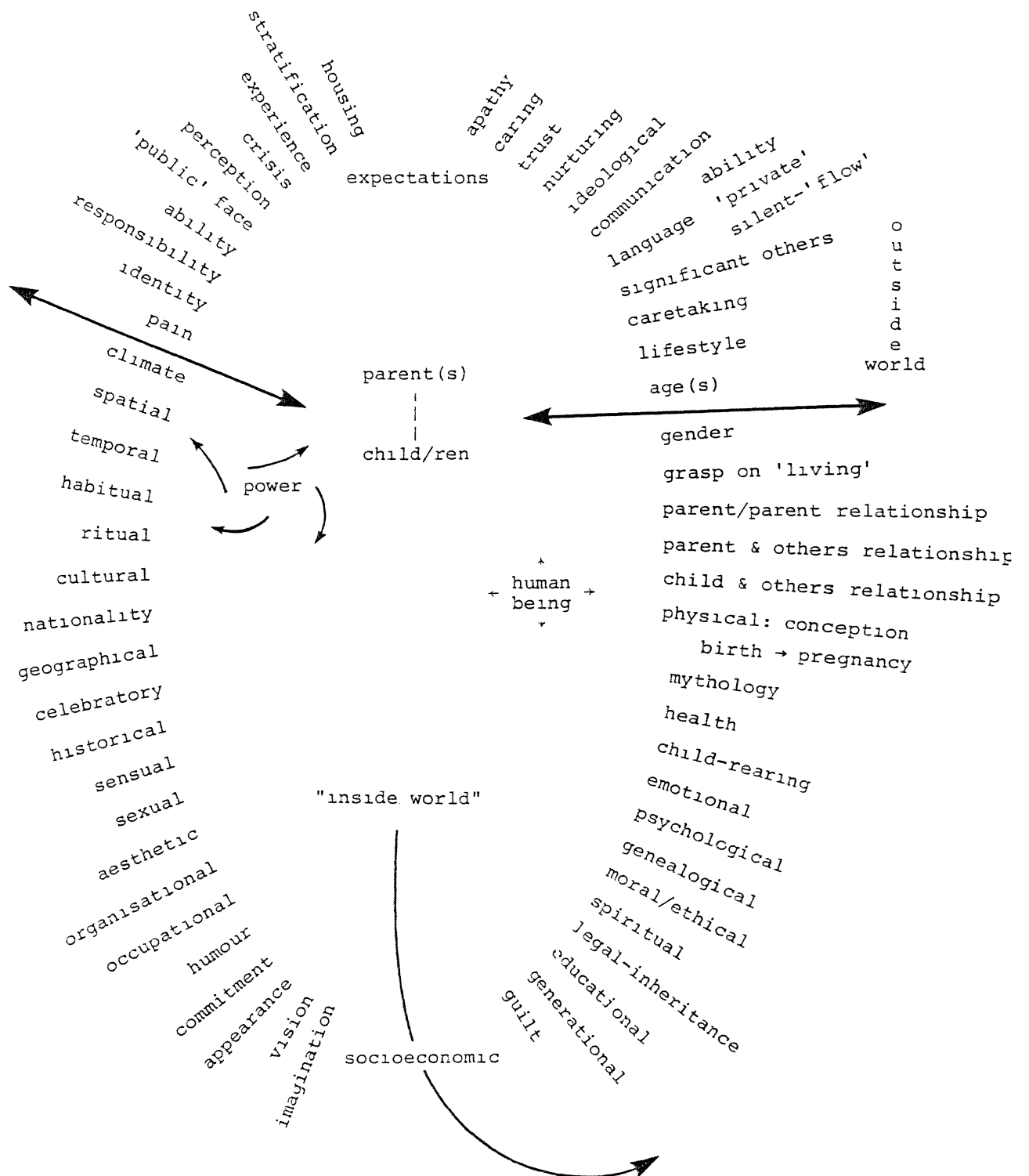
For, in these 'early' societies, social phenomena are not discrete; each phenomenon contains all the threads of which the social fabric is composed. In these total social phenomena ... all kinds of institutions find simultaneous expression: religious, legal, moral and economic.

Mauss, [1954]1970:1

I was specifically instructed by an academic colleague (1978) not to use such a notion for it belongs to anthropology; I think there was a confusion with a Durkheimian 'fact'.

The model of 'total social fact' developed essentially by the end of the pilot study has served as one of the most useful tools: it enables me to 'hold' many of the different facets of parenting together; it was/is never used as a checklist. By placing the definition and discussion of this tool at this juncture in the thesis it continues its task of stretching, jolting the imagination; it catapults one into thinking about one's own parenting experience, and therefore frees one to learn about others. What the following diagram is being used to illustrate is that any/all of these facets of being-in-the-world may affect the relationship of parent(s) and their child/ren.

Model of total social fact: base tool for research



For example, people do accept a legal definition of their parenting relationship: they register their child/ren, accept compulsory schooling, acquiesce to custody decisions .. many parents feel the need to provide a religious education for their children, to maximise educational opportunities, to ensure an adequate social environment for their child/ren. Other factors, such as the health of everyone concerned, the age, sex, lifestyle .. all affect the parenting relationship. To hold such factors together in one conceptual umbrella as a total social fact made sense.

Berger and Luckmann comment:

... we are convinced that only an understanding of what Marcel Mauss called the 'total social fact' will protect the sociologist against the distortive reifications of both sociologism and psychologism.

Berger and Luckmann, [1966]1971:209

Protection or not, the use of the tool enabled me to gather together a disparate number of facets of parenting. I have deliberately fought to keep the tool crude, that is, I have not made words into regular parts of speech, so nouns rub against adjectives, nor have I ordered it.. for most of the research period words have been flung onto a yellow sheet of cardboard. Never have I removed a word, only added; the tool has been developed as learning has taken place. I did not want a sophisticated piece of apparatus nor a tool so refined that it has become a conceptual depressant. I simply wanted this model to 'be there'. Later, in the third part of each triptych and in Part 3, I have used it in a more specific way.

Two decisions were made about the 'families' in the research proper: one concerned the size of the sample, the other the definition of 'family'.

Playing the numbers game

One of the greatest misconceptions of capitalist thinking is that more is better than less; so too with scientific thinking. In a biological experiment it is obviously vital to check, recheck and check again one's procedures, ingredients, results. Not so with human experience. One cannot ask people to 'do a replay' of a conversation, a hug, an event. I don't have to have three husbands to know what it is like to be part of a 'husband/wife' relationship: parents of an only child can experience the depth, frustrations, the anguish and joy of being parents. That experience is unique to the three as people, not because they have one child, two, three .. I can learn many things from my friends, enjoy the excitement with one, the quiet with another .. yet if I spread myself too thinly I may lose out.

So too with this research. I wanted to catch the multifaceted experience of parenting: I did not want to limit the research to child rearing, nor to power relationships, family rituals .. I wanted to grapple with the impossible, the intangible .. the space between people, the silences, the distance. I needed to ask what seemingly others took for granted or put in the 'too hard basket': what 'goes into' parenting .. why, how .. when does 'it' start?

I needed to give myself space-time for sufficient immersion in other people's lives, and space-time for a dialogue to develop which would be authentic. The maxim that abstraction is a defence against complexity (and involvement) and risk took on new force.

I felt the pressure then (and now) of the 'numbers chums' and the hangover from positivist induction about the need for comparison/generalisation. I knew/know that this is exploratory research. To 'get inside' a limited number of ordinary families - to eat with them, picnic, attend school functions, visit grandfathers .. to try and capture parenting interaction, ideology, assumptions .. seemed a sufficient task in itself,

particularly when others, for example Bott ([1957]1971:6) and Morgan (1975:224-225) said this was what was needed.

When I started out I had only general ideas about the sample: I thought I would try to live with ten 'families', perhaps six two-parent and four one-parent - an arbitrary sense-ing. I knew I wanted some families locally, others in the inner suburbs, at least one rural family. I (still) wanted a spread of religion, occupation, education, nationality, and shape and size of 'families'. The main requirement, realistically, was that people would make themselves available for the research.

I decided, intuitively, to ask Lawrence and Suzanne to continue through to the main study: they agreed. My reasons for not asking any of the others were not clear but I had doubts. For years I have operated with a personal philosophy of 'if in doubt, don't - if no doubts, do.'

Like Fallding, I then endeavoured

... to open up a variety of sources for obtaining cases and to keep a watch on cases as they accumulated to see that they were diverse in respect to certain things in which they were not required to be uniform ... I had to be tapping sources all the time, making arrangements with new families as I was completing the investigation of the others.

Fallding, 1956:27-28

This juggling was one of the strains of the research: people did/do not slot into time/space schedules; nor could/should they be manipulated into doing so. I found myself embroiled with details and family events, in heavy contact with a family, yet reluctant to sidestep an introduction or an opportunity to interview someone.

I responded strongly to Agee's comment:

We found no one family through which the whole of tenantry ... could be justly represented, but decided that through three we had come to know, our job might with qualified adequacy be done.

Agee, [1939]1966:xiii

Definition

Another decision was made about the definition of a 'family'. With the pilot families, people outside the immediate family had been important; for example, work colleagues. I decided to use the term parenting network as a sensitising term. This is based upon Speck and Attneave's concept of a social network:

A social network includes the nuclear family and all of the kin of every member. But it also includes the friends, neighbours, work associates and significant (others) ... Many network members know each other intimately and will continue to do so over time. They have a history of impinging on each other's lives. Privacy and confidentiality have quite different connotations ... The relationships in a network have a quality of regularity and dailiness (?), of intrusive excursions into one's past, present and future.

Speck and Attneave, 1974:xxii-xxiii
(brackets added)

Anglo-Saxon time is linear time. In the first half of this chapter I tried to journey in 'straight time' through the beginning stages of the research, but people don't necessarily live that way; nor does the research proceed from a to b to c .. Nevertheless I have ordered this part chronologically. Inevitably, the insights, the 'knowing', show hindsight. Edited out by time and distance is some of the bruising, the gaucherie. The research process lurched: exhaustion followed exhilaration; contact and acceptance of ideas, of people, came swiftly, slowly, and I was often alone,

whether in the university or when sitting watching television with a family.

The people involved in the research became friends: we shared too much to remain strangers - yet that has its price. For example, I cannot necessarily 'pop in' for coffee unless I am feeling strong, accompanied by someone, or have specific information or a request .. though time is changing that feeling also. Howell captured this feeling of privilege and humility:

They shared themselves and their lives with me in a way I still find hard to understand. I will always feel close to them, respect them, and consider myself fortunate to have known them.

Howell, 1973:xvi

Being there

In February 1979 I 'moved' in on the first family/parenting network. I did not sleep in the home of this family (Strahan's): I turned up as the alarm was going at 6.45 a.m. and left as the lights went out on several days. Other times I arrived for breakfast or at 9 a.m. Nor did I sleep at the Saunders' house: we live in the same neighbourhood and it did not seem to matter that I appeared on the doorstep to be greeted with a yawn. With all other families I moved in ...

Contact was made with the parenting networks:

Lawrence and Suzanne Strahan See p. 111.

Rebecca, Jane

*Tony and Lucy Mathews ..
Kylie, Christina, Mandy*

I met Tony and Lucy one weekend when Tony was truck-driving, moving house for a friend: we had to drive some 100+ kilometres and at the end of the trip I asked

*if I could visit and talk about the re-
search.*

Ann Saunders ..
Shaun, Megan

Shaun was a friend of my son Simon's.

Diana McAlpine ..
Rachel

I met Diana at a barbecue and asked ...

Rob and Jenny Montgomery
Lisa

*We stopped by their cottage to ask di-
rections: we played cards, then in a
few weeks I phoned and asked if they would
consider being involved.*

Kevin White
Michelle, Catherine, Sandra

*I met Kevin at Quaker Meeting and asked
if he would consider 'being researched'.*

At the initial session I always tried to explain what I was doing, why, how they could help - what that might mean in terms of time input, what kinds of things we might discuss. I talked about the taperecorder, about my taking notes, about their privacy and the fact that they could pull out of the research at any stage. I told all people involved they were welcome to (try and) read my notebook. I also said they could read the transcripts.

With the four 'families' where I moved in I paid board, usually negotiating the amount (about \$20.00) and this was supplemented by gifts of fruit and treats for the children as these seemed appropriate and acceptable. I could not afford to have the gift misinterpreted. I helped with the dishes, general housework, babysitting, chauffeured, went shopping, walked to and from school, went to the kindergarten .. With the other two 'families' I gave gifts ..

In a farm cottage with limited space, in a Housing Commission flat where one's space is the couch in the living room, at night, or a mattress on the floor of the dining room in a third home .. there is no cave to run to, to hide. Connie Hansen, a trained family therapist, lived with three

'normal' families for a week in the mid-1960s. Of her time with one of those families ...

The happiest times for me were when I could leave the house to type up my notes. One of those days one of my colleagues took me out for a hamburger. I felt nurtured beyond belief and with great relief I said to him, "You know, I feel like I'm out of prison for a few hours."

...
 Inside I experienced sadness and protest, all of which I had promised myself to disguise in order to preserve my research role ...

Hansen, 1981:72

The intensity of participant observation is boggling, and exacerbated a million times when in 'family surrounds', for it is then both family-iar and strange. It is so easy to assume that one can make a cup of tea, or ask for one mid-morning: Suzanne Strahan told me "no", when this happened .. "we'll be having lunch soon", but Lucy Mathews told me "to go ahead".

Within days both Suzanne and Lucy 'used' me as a babysitter without requesting this. Lucy walked out of the house to take Kylie to school before I even realised what was happening. The night after I moved in with Diana and Rachel McAlpine, Diana borrowed my car and went out with David, her ex-lover. She returned the following morning (see end of McAlpine triptych). None of this 'phased' me, but I was glad I was 35 plus and not tied to textbook definitions of the situation. Perhaps it was because of the 'grey hairs' that such trust was assumed.

I found it disquieting the night at Kevin's when he, his new fiancée and I were asked to join hands in prayer; I also quaked most of the time with Rob and Jenny - whether I was genuinely scared of Rob I don't know; whether it was a selfish thought that if I put my foot in it I would be asked to go, I don't know.

Only the most heavily blinkered have not had to confront squarely the profound ambiguity and often sheer unintelligibility of so many social situations from which we draw our data ...

Bottomley, in Bell and Encel,
1978:224

There were funny sides: Kevin playing the record of Dracula to wake his daughter up at 6.45 a.m. and blasting me at the same time; Suzanne sending me home to change within 45 minutes of my arrival on the first day - 'Marg, you'll be too hot' - I was so glad my one other frock was clean.

And the awkward times: Diana accepted me 'totally' from the start; this was 'par' for Diana. Anyone, everyone was/is welcome at her home as long as they accept her and her surrounds. But I have never liked cats so I found cats wandering all over the dirty plates in the kitchen distasteful; likewise the ants. In fact after Diana had gone to work two mornings I sneaked down to the local hot bread shop and bought croissants, rather than negotiate with the myriads of tiny black things. Fleas, too, were a hassle, especially as I was sleeping on a mattress on the floor. Diana also expected us to continue talking while she was undressing, sitting on the 'loo' .. whenever, whatever: I hiccuped silently, and survived.

More difficult, perhaps because of my strong values in people, and my identification with the 'underdog', was acknowledging, learning, and plunging myself into different lifestyles, especially those in contrast; for example, Lawrence and Suzanne. Theirs is a moneyed lifestyle: they spent more on the leasing of their two cars per month than the total income of any of the other families. From the first visit I was made aware of this; as I was leaving on that occasion Suzanne brought out to the door two dresses she had bought that day for Rebecca and Jane: 'They cost \$25.00 and \$17.00 respectively', I was told. Yet five days into the research I found myself saying to Suzanne,

It's surprising how fond I have become
of you ...

which sounds gauche, cruel out-of-context; in-context, however, it was a drawing together of what had been going on .. Our differences in lifestyle and priorities were/are obvious yet we had grown in mutual respect, and honesty (because Lawrence and Suzanne had been part of the pilot study our contact had extended for some eight months).

People do change whether in the presence of an aunt, or neighbour, or researcher. This is one of the main 'findings' of the research .. my presence surely had an impact, and as far as possible I tried to talk about that impact, and see what effect it might be having. Hansen talks, for instance, of families endeavouring to get along better while she was there (1981:71), and Michelle, Catherine and Sandra White said that 'Dad had bought them more iceblocks while I was staying with them.'

One of the most draining aspects of the research process was at the beginning and end of each sojourn. For a week or so before 'each' family I would become tense, fragile, apprehensive: how was I again going to move into that situation? would it work? .. how would I be able to stand the intensity of a 24 hour day, 8 day period. This was the self-centred side of the process, and an integral part of it: I imagine the families felt the same.

The tension was more fundamental, though I was slow to recognise it: most participant observers seemed to be male and/or single. I was also leaving my family, easing my way out emotionally, physically, socially, so I could be free to concentrate, to immerse myself in another family. Don (my husband) is an academic - he too had done a PhD, though an 'armchair' one, so could understand the absorption required. As well, he was/is equally capable of handling the day to day caretaking responsibilities, though I was/am, like so many women, chief coordinator: our children were then three, four and seven. Don was/is also solid, emotion-

ally .. for all of us.

I could/can never stop being a parent/being parented. Three examples illustrate the dilemmas posed by split obligations.

During my stay with Diana and Rachel McAlpine it was Michael's birthday (our son). Birthdays are punctuation marks in our family - special events. Did I honour the research contract or Mike? We compromised and all three of us went to our house for a birthday tea. In part, I felt like a visitor.

Ana (our daughter) was sick three times with bronchitis when I left to stay with the families.

Marg: Ana's sick

Kevin (White): My God - you earn your 'thesis' blood, sweat and tears.

My mother has cancer: she lives in another country: should I have spent my time with her?

The conflict of loyalties on such occasions was acute.

The three children handled the experience in different ways. Ana, three, tried to talk it out, and she came with me on one of the eight day periods. Mike, four, always seemed a little flustered, yet coping; Simon, seven, seemed the most perturbed; he needed the most hugs, the most reassurance. I tried to ease this by each time arranging for them to come to see where I was staying. This had the dual effect of introducing the children to the families, and the families to them. This helped my credibility, so Suzanne said.

The exhaustion at the other end also played havoc with me. I had withdrawal symptoms; each experience was so rich, so demanding, so total, so humbling, and so, so tiring. I took at least a week to unwind, but a much longer period to

adjust. Seldom do we live, become intimate, with 'un-like' people.

Twenty-four hours of every day for weeks now I had been in the company of another person, and now I was alone, driving in this bright day. I knew now how much greater the strain had been than I had been able, while under it, to realize ...

Agee, [1939]1966:341

The sample folded when I had lived with six families: I considered I had made an entry into the lives of so many people, caught what I 'needed' .. and it seemed 'right' to conclude (see Glaser and Strauss, 1967:61-62). I kept on making contact with other families; for example, I spent several evenings with a family who had been introduced via a lawyer friend. I had asked her if she could recommend 'someone with a senior status job': I was still feeling fragile about the low numbers, but exhaustion proved a stronger emotion.

I don't know if any of the families would do it again: all ten adults .. nine parents and me .. said they learnt something. Ann says that the research time proved to be a 'growing time'.

Participant observation is based on honesty; it is a farce otherwise, a charade and always a violation. To 'get inside' the parenting praxis of a selected number of networks I had to move in 'boots and all' and then move out, and that too was difficult. All the families remain in contact three years later ...

Making sense of people's lives ...

Because of the wealth and variety of data and a reluctance to simply categorise or develop types of families, I needed a form of presentation for the data which was simultaneously a way of ordering the data, or making sense of it, and a way of retaining the uniqueness of each person, each parenting network. The form decided upon was the triptych.

The six triptychs cannot be read passively, for their purpose is to enable a meeting with other people, at least a response to them (see Berger, 1966:35). The fullness of meaning in these triptych presentations of people is both immediate - that is, in giving access to people's lives - and cumulative, in the later integration of this 'people data' with the structural data.

In the first part of each triptych a portrait of the 'family' is presented. This description includes relevant details of age, family structure, educational background, financial situation, type and location of housing .. as well as comment upon lifestyles, values and priorities. This is not meant to be a comprehensive picture but a portrait:

A portrait is not a replication; it is a likeness, drawing out what the portrayer sees as essential, what will absorb attention long after the person portrayed is gone. It is not life itself but the transformation of a particular life in such a way that it brings the wider terms of existence into the minds of the portrayer and the viewer ...

A portrait is not a model, nor a prediction. Precisely and paradoxically because it is not an abstraction,⁷ the good portrait transcends its subject, the portrayed. It does not present its subject as one experiences oneself and others in actual life, in bits and pieces, never quite fixed into a whole, but gives 'raw' material a

⁷ I disagree.

configurational shape, even if it is a shape which because it concentrates on particulars fools us by seeming most 'life-like'.

Wylie, 1979:35

I am not a writer, yet what Katherine Mansfield was endeavouring to do in her stories, I too am attempting:

Swiftly and unpredictably, she flits from the inside of one character's mind to another one, and the reader, treated as someone who already knows them all, is tricked into familiarity before having time to feel lost.

Alpers, 1982:191

I lived with 'families' because I wanted to understand as wholly as possible their praxis: in dealing with these people I wanted to meet them on their home ground, to respect their complexity and their dignity, and to tell this in their 'stories'.

Cathy Wylie, from whose work I borrowed the idea of the triptych presentation, and the definition of a portrait, found when she presented her material at a seminar that those present did not understand what she was attempting.

They missed the point of presenting the material in the form of a portrait; they sought 'the meaning' not in it, but outside it, in the more customary forms of models, generalizations (or abstractions), case studies.

Wylie, 1979:36

The first two parts of the triptychs in this thesis are presented in a similar guise though models are used in the third section. The intention is the same: to allow people to appear, to be revealed in context, rather than amputated, and denied their human-ness. Some aspects of human beings are emphasised more than others: people are different and

it would have been artificial to have chopped and changed their lives in order to make the triptychs systematic.

It is not the most obvious way of telling a story, nor is it the easiest. To make the content so dependent on the form ... by relying on the method of presenting ... without distorting the facts ... and without any comment, is to risk complete failure ... the point is so bound up with the telling that if it cannot be brought home the telling has no purpose ... at all.

Daiches, in Alpers, 1982:330

It is in this sense that the triptychs have been constructed. Therein lies the rub.

The ordering in any presentation of data is critical for comments can be taken out of context and used to bias or sway evidence; for instance, it is easy to build an image of a 'snob' or a 'dreamer', or a 'person-out-of-control'. As interviewees can be said to sabotage research, so too can those doing the research and/or writing it up. I relied on being as honest as I could, and on the relentless practice of the phenomenological process. I also tried to stand back from the data and look through different analytical blinkers (see Pouwer, 1974:251).

In the second part of the triptych, focus is specifically on parenting: on 'the grandparents', the upbringing, and early years of the adults, and on 'now'. My comments are limited for I wanted the people to tell their lives.

In the third part the task is more subtle than 'telling it as it is': the goal is again the 'un-covering' of parenting praxis complemented by a desire to interpret, analyse, and explain. Several different tools will be used systematically for each parenting network. They are, in order ...

1. the use of the distinction between parenting, parentwork, parenthood (see Part 1.2, p. 38).

2. the model of a total social fact (see Part 1:4, p.124).
3. a four-level analysis, again a tool borrowed from Jan POUWER (1974:244-253):

descriptive
normative
cognitive
explanatory.

- d. and a tool learned in family therapy training - an exercise called 'eggs in the basket' (see p. 190, Strahan triptych).

As well, additional comments are made about the research experience.

In my effort to be always honest I made one commitment which has since caused much anguish: I offered to make available not only the transcripts but what I wrote.

When I took the first draft of their triptych back to Lawrence and Suzanne, they denied making some of the comments. I had prepared for the evening by singling out some of the more 'delicate, tetchy' areas and I realised only later that I had 'done unto them' what both spend time preventing: that is, letting ambiguity, contradiction, 'out into the open'. I doublechecked the information I offered, found I was 'correct' in the transcription, so uneasily decided not to continue with that commitment, unless asked. Two of the people, Diana McAlpine and Ann Saunders, have read, at my invitation, the entire triptych. Some of their comments are attached to the end of their triptychs.

In summary, then, for this is the 'end' of Part 1, what I have endeavoured to do is satisfy Kipling's six serving men in relation to the research. Each demands an answer to questions beginning with ... what, how, where, who, when, why. Also in Part 1 I was parrying an attack: I did/do not want to be accused of being one of those researchers to whom the rationale for their research is perfectly clear, yet who leaves others floundering in the dark. The phenomenological method scarcely allows such luxury or mistake.

Part 1 was the introduction to the research; in the prologue a brief overview of the research project was presented, as well as comment made about why the project was undertaken. In the next chapter other people's works were examined, and the reasons for the shape and design of this thesis drawn more clearly in contrast to that of other researchers.

The third chapter is crucial: it is unlike other theory chapters in that it does not present a 'normal' framework but it serves as the grounding for the whole thesis.

In this chapter the research process has been outlined, comment has been made about the principles underlying the research process, the experience of doing the field research and, in the last pages, about the presentation of the people data. To conclude Part 1 there is a series of tables giving details of the people interviewed during the research and the families involved in both the pilot study and the 'research proper'.

Part 2 has six chapters or triptychs; Part 3 four chapters plus a prologue. Each part precedes the next, yet is dependent not only on what is past, but on what follows.

The idea of going straight to the essence of things is an inconsistent idea ... What is given is a route, an experience which gradually clarifies itself ... Thus what we tear away ... is not an already-made reason; it is ... a natural light, our openness to something.

PILOT STUDY

	Age	Area	Accommodation	School Tertiary	Work	Religion	Key facets (?)	Contact	Research time
S E E O T H E R S H E E T									
Lawrence Strahan									
Suzanne +++									
Roger Foley	51	Ashburton	Own house	Cath.Coll. University	Scientist, govt.research	Catholic	1. Mother's illhealth - unable to cope with stress	Through Caroline at university	Aug 78
Jean	48		brick	Catholic Cath.Coll.	Medical receptionist				
Caroline	20			University Cath.Coll.			2. Caroline becoming parent		
Helen	18						3. Power for decisions rests with Roger		
Wendy Lee	14			Cath.Coll.					
Paula	10			Cath.					
Rick Butler	44	Camberwell	Own house	Cath.Coll.	Own metal business	Catholic	Selfmade and successful Gloria in power.	Followup after dinner party	Jul 78
Gloria	42			Catholic					
Mat	18			Cath.Coll. Tech.Inst.					
Linda } Paul } twins } adopted }	12			Catholic primary					
Beth Reynolds	38	Camberwell	Renting	Convent - nursing	Nursing p/t	Catholic	1. Single mother 2. Strong close family, cushioning, supporting demanding ...	Met at Nat. Adoption Conference	Aug 78
Joanna	9								
Wendy (placed for adoption at birth)	18	(now back in contact, 1983)							
Jon O'Rourke	33	Healesville (country)	Own house	Cath.Coll. University	Ex-academic - owns pancake parlour	Atheist	Trish/Timothy 'fit' in with Jon.	Through Jon's mother	Aug 78
Trish	34			State sec. Teach.Coll.	Teacher	Uniting Ch.			
Timothy	3								

MAIN RESEARCH FAMILIES

Age	Area	Accommodation	School/ Tertiary	'Work'	Significant others	Own definition of class	Key facets	Religion	Nationality	Research time	
Lawrence Strahan	30	Camberwell	Own house:	Priv.Catholic, tertiary	Pharmacist	S's parents	Middle, upper middle	Public/private exchange	Cath.	Australian	Pilot + AngloSaxon Feb/Mar 1979
Suzanne	29			Pharmacist							
Rebecca	3			Own 2 shops							
Jane	11 mths		Kindergarten								
Tony Mathews	33	Collingwood	Housing Commission flat	Cath.College	Driver - own friend, truck		Middle	'Traditional'	Catholic	Australian	Aug 79
Lucy	24			Priv.sec.College	Not empl.	Stella	T: Liberal L: Labor	division of labour		A/S	Aboriginal
Kylie	6			Cath.primary							
Christina	3										
Mandy	18 mths										
Ann Saunders	33	Camberwell	Living in parents' home	Priv.Presbyt. + Teachers Coll.	Teacher, doing Dip Spec.Educ.	Peter - boyfriend Ann's parents	Upper middle	Power	Uniting Church	Australian	June 79
Shaun	8			Primary							
Megan	4			Creche							
Diana McAlpine	39	Inner Melbourne	Rented flat	Priv. Convent + Nursing University Primary	Welfare Coordinator		Middle	Social Labor member	Catholic	Australian	Dec 79
Rachel	7							justice		A/S	
Rob Montgomery	24	Gippsland	Farm cottage	State	Farmer	J's friends	?	Power:	Uniting	Australian	Feb 80
Jenny	23	(country)	belonging to	Priv.Presbyt. +	Nurse - not empl.	parents	Middle	Rob: I rule this joint		A/S	
Lisa	2		J's parents	Nursing			Liberal				Dutch orig.
Kevin White	42	South Oakleigh	Brick veneer - own	State	Taxidriver: own car	Dora - fiancee	Middle	Health Spirituality	Quaker	Australian	Mar 80
Michelle	14			State secondary		A.Christine					
Catherine	12			State secondary							
Sandra	10			State primary							

PEOPLE INTERVIEWED

Age	Area	Accommodation	School	Work	Religion	Key facets(?)	Contact	Research time
Mick Austin	40s	Gl. Waverley	Rented	University	Social work	Children from Mick's marriage come and go - more than access, less than custody	Through Cilla, student	2 sessions
Cilla Killen	30s	house	University	Social work				
Rosemary Baker	40s	Ashburton	Own house	Nurse, not in paid employment		New Zealander - depressed	Met Rosemary at swimming pool	2 sessions
Judy	19			Doing PE course		Husband/father in control		
Felicity Delahunty (husband, chrn)	40s	Camberwell		Priv. school University search phys-ician		Husband's wish for anonymity prevented research continuing. Very rushed u/m-class lifestyle	Through friend	1 session
Paul Whitelaw	28	Sunshine	Renting	State sec. Welder		Paul has lost contact/ knowledge of his daughter from first marriage	Paul is a relative of mine	1 session
Carol Sterner	23		flat	State sec. Hostess on railways				
Mike Appleby	30s	Richmond	Own house	Cath. Coll. Director, Community Centre	Catholic	1. Janet → China on visit M: I'm looking forward to seeing how I make out as a first parent	Through friend	2 sessions
Janet	20s			Cath. Coll. Journalist: Christian media		2. Janet just discovered she has a genetic disease.		
Kirsten	4							

Group session with five people:

2 adoptees, one 'partner', one adoptive parent, plus me
 Stan Thomas, Steve Greville & Mary Becroft (partner), Steven's father, Frank, me.
 Steven was placed with a couple who were both blind: tension a constant ever since between Steven and his parents who are divorced
 Met Steven at Adoption Conference

PEOPLE INTERVIEWED (cont.)

	Age	Area	Accommodation	School	Work	Religion	Key facets(?)	Contact	Research time
Phillip Thompson	51	Balwyn	Own home	Private University	Judge	Methodist	Family decision had been made when David was very young to keep him at home	Through friend	1 session
Sally	47			Private University	Teacher not employed				
Sarah				Med. school					
Kate				Journalist					
Liz				Arts/Law severely handicapped					
David									
Meg Archer	39	Gl. Waverley	Own home	Private, nursing university	Nursing not employed	Uniting	Trying to rebel within traditional family structure	University	1 session
(Ray, husband, & two sons)									
Scott Hudson	20s	Richmond	Own cottage	? Tertiary	Academic teaching youth studies	Uniting	Awaiting birth of first child	Through friend	1 session
Lynne	20s		(but c'ty dropin centre)						
Linc Collins	30s	Newcastle	Own house	Teacher/PhD	Univ. lecturer	Anglican	Talked of infertility/ adoption - Linc's area of academic study	Through	2 sessions
Judith				Teacher	Not employed				
Saul (adopted) & Judith's parents									
Glen Chandler *	35	Ringwood	Own house	State sec. University	Student	Atheist	Continuing reflexive comment for Glen is involved in research as friend and 'devil's advocate'. Reverse research session when she questioned me about my parenting	Through University	many
Bridget	10								
Kelly	8								
(* only real name, used with permission. All others changed to 'fit' perceived needs of anonymity)									

PEOPLE INTERVIEWED (cont.)

Age	Area	Accommodation	School	Work	Religion	Key facets (?)	Contact	Research time
37	Ferntree Gully	Own house	University Tertiary	Student		Special, close twosome relationship	Through University	1 session + letter
35	Outer Melbourne		University PhD	Academic		Thrown in tenured lecture-ship, sold house, to re-turn to US with Jane (2nd wife) in order to be near his two daughters of his first marriage (both adopted in Vietnam). No hope of custody; Bob says he hates Chicago where they live - little hope of job in his area but needs to be with his daughters	Through university	1 session
	9mths							
40s	Ballarat	Own home		Family printing business		Traumas with youngest child caused by an accident resulting in severe burns. Health & fitness become priorities	Through friend	1 session
30s								
Group session with seven women - CR Group - at my request, focus on parenting Vivienne, Nina, Penny, Kate, Carol, Glen and me.								
38	Doncaster	Own home	NK & Teach College	Director, Community School	NK	Trying to provide rich environment for children to have 'now'	Through friend	1 session

You know, all this shit you're
going to write in your book and
all that you're going to put down,
nobody's going to believe it.
They're going to say you made it
up.

Howell, 1973:3

Lawrence and Suzanne dress well, speak well, live well. There is a neatness and cleanliness about their appearance and that of their house. Lawrence is thirty, about 5'10" in height: he has brown receding hair and wears glasses. Suzanne is 29, about 5'6" in height: her hair is light brown and naturally curly. Suzanne is attractive, more vivacious than her quietly spoken husband; she is usually smiling. Rebecca, mostly called Becky, is three; she is blonde and blue-eyed, and speaks with a slight lisp. Jane is eleven months old, also fair and not yet walking. The family live in a two-storeyed brick home in Camberwell, a well established middle class suburb, on the eastern side of Melbourne.

Both Lawrence and Suzanne went to private secondary schools. Suzanne's parents, David and Mary Anderson, moved to Melbourne from a Victorian country town in order that their two daughters, Suzanne and her younger sister Janet, would not have to be boarders as Mrs Anderson and her sister had been. Lawrence had gone as a boarder to a Catholic college when he was fifteen:

Lawrence: We never did all that many things (as kids), the two girls played together ... this may be why I was shipped off to boarding school.

Bob and Louise Strahan, Lawrence's parents, still live in the country.

Suzanne thinks this move was a particularly important one for Lawrence because it took him outside his own environment and allowed him to see how others live. Of the school experience she says:

L. was Captain of the tennis and Vice-Captain of the school and you've got to be the right sort of person to do this, but once you get into these responsibilities, they make you even better. They bring you out of yourself.

Lawrence was accepted into Monash Medical School in the mid-1960s but elected to do pharmacy. He explained that he did not like the lack of responsibility and sensitivity of the medical profession:

I've yet to find anyone in the medical profession that ... would be a source of strength for anybody ... I don't think they are trained to cope (with people) ... I guess we see so many of the ins and outs of things where people aren't given a fair go ... in any other trade or profession (they) would be treated as being unscrupulous behaviour ...

Lawrence gets very upset about the conspiracy of silence in the medical profession and the lack of monitoring of doctors' behaviour:

... it just frustrates me ... We have so much more stringent controls ... a government who monitor every single thing that is done ... the big thing that controls most pharmacists is that it is a retailing profession ... you've got to be on your mettle because you can upset people so quickly and then you ... just lose business.

Both Lawrence and Suzanne are pharmacists, Lawrence graduating one year ahead of Suzanne. They met at a ball at the Pharmacy College. Suzanne was nineteen at the time and her parents thought Suzanne was too young to be going out with just one boy. They also objected because Lawrence is Catholic and their family Anglican. For the first few months Suzanne says her mother insisted on calling Lawrence by the names Lawrence Joseph Xavier Strahan,

then she grew to love him and everything was okay.

They married in 1972 and prior to the wedding Lawrence and Suzanne met with a Catholic priest:

Suzanne: for over an hour he tried to convert me - everything he threw at me I threw back. He realised I knew my Christianity.

Of their wedding day, Suzanne says:

(it) was such a happy day; every girl should have one ...

and of their first year in a flat, that she enjoyed the experience, particularly the independence.

When they were first married both Lawrence and Suzanne worked for other people. Lawrence had little money: he had in fact borrowed \$400 from his parents to buy a Mini. They asked for the money back later on to pay for their daughter's wedding. Suzanne had money of her own, about \$4,000, mostly gifts from her parents and grandmother. One night Mr and Mrs Anderson arrived at the flat and gave them a further \$10,000, money from a share in a company in which Suzanne thought she was only a nominal member. They used this money to buy their first pharmacy (\$45,000) and a house (\$26,000), borrowing from the bank with Suzanne's father acting as guarantor.

That first house was a modest three bedroomed weather-board house about three minutes' drive from the pharmacy. A mini-van was used for work purposes, Lawrence providing a twenty four hour a day service to the community. A BMW was also leased for taxation reasons. When Mrs Anderson first heard about this she refused to visit or make contact for a number of weeks because of the expenditure, but then an uncle acted as peacemaker.

In 1978 when I first met Lawrence and Suzanne I was told they were looking for another house, a move encouraged by Mr and Mrs Anderson.

Suzanne: My parents want us to move up.

A second pharmacy had been purchased by this time, one in the same strip shopping centre as the first, a move made to prevent competition. The shopping centre is uniquely located in that the road forms a dividing line between two very different kinds of area: on the one side is a huge Housing Commission area, with large populations of South American, Italian, Greek people: the other is 'solidly middle class', and it was on this side

Lawrence and Suzanne searched for their second home, and on this side they felt comfortable, though customers came from both areas.

They sold their home for \$90,000 (making a profit of 300 percent in less than eight years) and purchased another for \$120,000, about five minutes' drive from the pharmacies.

Suzanne: We wanted a bigger house, and now we've done it, big and proper. We've put our head in through a noose.

Suzanne said her parents liked the house: they had looked at it before it was bought. Mrs Anderson commented:

Children can't really expect to start off where their parents end off can they? But Suzanne has got here earlier than most.

The house has four bedrooms upstairs, the main one with an ensuite. Downstairs, to the left of the front door is a den: Lawrence sits at the desk in the den one evening a month to do the pharmacy accounts, otherwise the room is rarely used. Likewise the formal lounge on the other side of the entrance way: there are a number of prints on the walls - Breughel, Folland and two original paintings bought at a local Rotary Art Show in 1977. There are a few books on the shelves in both the lounge and den; neither Lawrence nor Suzanne are avid readers, though Suzanne does belong to a book club which meets once a month.

Lawrence: It isn't a book club, it's a hen session. They don't read the books.

Suzanne: That's not true! Two girls had! (read the book for this month) I didn't appreciate your comment one little bit.

Lawrence: I'm sorry. I take my comments back.

The front part of the house, the stairs and bedrooms are carpeted in white. Two Telecom people came to fix the phone:

Suzanne: One took off his boots, the other didn't and he just dragged (his feet) right through.

The kitchen is a walk-through one, joining the dining room, breakfast area and the family room. This opens onto a large in-ground swimming pool and patio area. All the family seem to enjoy the pool.

Lawrence: We've had so much fun and pleasure in these last weeks - its great.

Suzanne spends two/three hours every day cleaning the house. She also has a 'cleaning lady' who comes in four hours a week; in the previous house there was also an 'ironing lady'.

Suzanne: I can't bear to have my place untidy. I can sit down with a cup of tea and the newspaper for thirty minutes but never longer.¹

Suzanne believes that however clean she keeps the house it will never be good enough for her mother. Before Mrs Anderson arrived one day Suzanne warned me her mother would find something wrong within twenty minutes. She did: the kitchen sink she said was dirty. She set about cleaning it.

A couple come once a fortnight to mow the lawns: this takes twenty minutes, but as Suzanne explains:

Suzanne: I don't believe Lawrence should have to do these things with the long hours he's working ... (and) he doesn't like to see women mowing the lawns.

Cooking is Suzanne's responsibility: their diet is very conservative:

Breakfast: Cereal and toast (Lawrence opened a small tin of ravioli for himself a couple of mornings I was there). He cooks the toast.

¹ See Oakley (1974b), especially Chapter 6.

Lunch: A boiled egg and one slice of bread most days, scrambled eggs occasionally.

Dinner: Chops, steak, roast beef or lamb, chicken ... with potato and other vegetables. Lawrence likes potatoes with every meal apart from Friday nights when he brings home 'Chinese' when he closes the shop at 8.30.

Suzanne says she does not cook spaghetti or anything like that.
Janet (her sister)

might have weiner schnitzel but I prefer to spend my time with the children rather than cook.

Suzanne says her parents would have a similar menu. If she is sick or away, Lawrence buys takeaways or eats out. One time when Suzanne's parents were there biscuits were passed around for afternoon tea still in their packet.

Suzanne and Lawrence seldom entertain or have people in for dinner, except for once a year when a group of friends gather for a pot-pourri dinner. Occasionally Suzanne will invite a friend in for lunch, but she says that always makes her feel so tired.

Each day Suzanne drives to the local shops to do food shopping, claiming she is not organised sufficiently to buy for a deep freeze. She takes the children into the pharmacy each time, partly to collect the prescriptions which she then delivers to a local hospital, but mainly for the girls 'to see their dad':

Suzanne: I'm always so very proud of Becky when she wants to race in and see Lawrence because it shows they've got a wonderful relationship.

Lawrence: and I am very proud of Suzanne to walk in and people say - hello, how are you?

Lawrence likes Suzanne to be neatly dressed when she goes out.

Lawrence: I absolutely insist on it because I see so many people with rollers on at 9.45 a.m.

One time Suzanne wore green linen trousers and a tailored white shirt when she and the girls went to the shop, but Lawrence complained that the clothes

... were not good enough.

In the pharmacy where Lawrence is based there is a display board of photographs of the two little girls. These photos are changed regularly with ones from a similar board at home. When Jane was born, instead of getting a second diamond ring as she did after the birth of Rebecca, Suzanne had been given a movie camera by Lawrence: this and other cameras are 'kept ready'.

Suzanne: They grow up so quickly.

When the two girls were born, the news was announced in twelve inch high letters painted across the windows of the two shops.

Suzanne: The customers are interested in the children which means good business and everyone needs to live. When Rebecca was born we had over 150 cards and presents from customers. It was wonderful, because nearly every one of those came from people who at some stage Lawrence had given of his time, and you don't always know if they appreciate it.

Lawrence and Suzanne are both concerned with people's perception of them:

Suzanne: Our credibility is fairly high ...

Lawrence: Our credibility is fairly high because we have a good standing in the community to the point that at election time we have a flood of people asking which way they should vote.

Suzanne: Lawrence would never walk out on this community ... too many people rely on him and he's aware of that.

Lawrence works four days a week and Saturday mornings. He plays golf, tennis and squash regularly and on Wednesdays goes to a health club. Suzanne said that Becky monopolises Lawrence on the mornings of his day off, and then when he disappears she and Becky can get into strife. Suzanne also plays tennis, squash, and goes to the health club once a week, as well as taking Becky there for swimming lessons.

Suzanne works in the pharmacy on Saturday mornings:

I don't really want the responsibility of the shop but before Jane was born I wanted to go back and manage because I could see things I wanted to change. It also helps me to keep my hand in and when I go to the shop I feel as if I'm more useful than just as a mother.

On Saturday mornings Pamela, aged fifteen, babysits the children. During the week, Mrs Coates, aged sixty, babysits if Suzanne goes out. Lawrence doesn't approve of Mrs Coates, for he doesn't trust her.

Suzanne: He thinks she's too old and doddering.

Money is taken 'off the top' of the shop income for food and living expenses. Their net income for 1977 was \$25,000. Neither worries about spending money if they want or need to. Lawrence takes home health supplies, cosmetics and toys from the shop; one time he neglected to take home some toys from the 'specials' table. Suzanne told him off, saying in rather strident tones that their children were entitled to such things: 'Why should anyone else have them when we can't?'

Lawrence does not monitor what Suzanne is spending for, he says ...

It wouldn't have much effect. You wouldn't take any notice of me.

Suzanne: It's my money!

There are a number of boutiques in the shopping area

where the pharmacies are: Suzanne frequents only two, Felicity's, for herself, and Benje's, for the two girls. She spends about \$200 to \$300 per season on herself, and a similar amount on the two girls.

*I dress to please me, and the children for me, and
I like them to look nice for other people.*

Lawrence and Suzanne describe themselves as 'solidly middle class', class being defined by them as dependent on one's circle of friends, how people entertain, and language. Lawrence thinks people in the upper class miss out on a lot because

they are so superior in their attitude.

Suzanne thinks that language is all important. She says of Lawrence's parents:

anyone who uses the word BLOODY couldn't be considered middle class.

One Saturday (research time) Lawrence and Suzanne attended a wedding of the daughter of a fellow shopkeeper.

Suzanne: We shouldn't really be going ... we should go round and meet the groom. (People) Shouldn't go to a wedding without knowing the groom. Bob (bride's father) has made a lot of money ... what Jessie (bride's mother) tries to be tough and what she came from ... its very difficult if you change class ... they're very nice but he's rough. It shows through sometimes ... the (bad) language Jessie uses - not swearing, but the grammar.

Suzanne was horrified when she saw the flagons of white wine and claret:

Bob told Lawrence he was going to use some of the wine left over from their son's twenty-first ... Lawrence would use them to light a fire.

Suzanne said she talked about this in the pharmacy to other members of staff (Bob's shop is next door). Suzanne is so certain her values are 'right' she expresses astonishment that others differ in their thinking or behaviour. Of their relieving manager and her family:

Her husband's a PhD engineer. They have four sons and she still does all her own work.

And of people finding it hard to make ends meet, Suzanne says:

Such people aren't working hard enough, or they are spending too much on cigarettes, alcohol or gambling. We're working hard for what we're getting. We don't see much of each other, we look forward to a night of sitting together watching TV. We're not making that much money compared with a professor when you consider how much we've invested.

Suzanne's parents are very much involved in Lawrence and Suzanne's lives, not only in a financial sense, but they are consulted about business matters, housing, child rearing ... and influence Lawrence and Suzanne in their attitudes, though Suzanne claims that

I do what I do because I am me.

As an example: Lawrence limits his involvement or attendance at meetings to one night a week. Mrs Anderson believes fathers should not go out at night but stay home with their children, and this attitude has 'rubbed off'.

Lawrence is a member of the local Senior Citizens' Club committee. He has been asked to stand for Council but declined, and is involved in setting up a new Rotary Club, as Suzanne's father had done many years before.

Suzanne: It's a big responsibility ... you have to decide who goes in it and you've got to keep it up to standard. Its so important to make sure you get the right people.

Suzanne is equipment officer for the committee at kindergarten where Becky goes three days a week. Since being elected to that position the kindergarten has been flooded with new equipment. Suzanne explains:

Someone's got to do it ... if your children get something ...

and with the same exchange philosophy:

I'm not good at looking after other people's children, but if you want to have a break from your own children at times, you've got to look after other people's.

Both Suzanne and Lawrence are members of the Liberal Party, Lawrence explaining:

I'm a Liberal because I believe in democracy and free enterprise, not so much for me but for my kids.

One day a person from the local voluntary care association called and asked if Lawrence and Suzanne would be able to assist by driving an old lady to see a relative in hospital each Wednesday. Suzanne agreed, saying to the person:

Its lovely to be able to help people who are in that position, particularly people who are in the area ... we're only too happy to help. Maybe when we're old someone will do it for us.

She then telephoned Lawrence who groaned a little and reminded Suzanne that Wednesday was his day off. Suzanne added with a smile ...

Marg's thinking we're doing it for business.

At one of our first meetings, Suzanne had said:

If you want to know about our family you'll have to ask - because we don't have any problems, nor do any of our friends.

Six months after the research period Lawrence and Suzanne sold both shops, their 'new' house, and moved into a business partnership with friends. Together they bought a 'bigger, brighter, busier' pharmacy; bought a larger, more expensive house nearer the new shop and in a more salubrious area, commonly known as 'snobs' hill', and both partners immediately leased Mercedes Benz cars.

Suzanne: We've only been here three weeks and Lawrence is loving it. We're making lots of money. Lawrence was sick of all the old people whingeing. Here there are a lot of young mothers and babies.

Lawrence: It is good to work with a man ... being with a woman all the time can get boring, and at least men don't have a week off once a month.

When asked 'why the move', the explanation was given that they couldn't pass up an opportunity to buy into a partnership with these friends, especially seeing the pharmacy is one of the busiest in the State.

Triptych: 2

Lawrence and his family

Lawrence is the eldest in a family of four children: his sister Rosemary, one year younger, is married, also to a pharmacist, and they live in the country. His other sister, Leonie (25) and brother, Peter (21) live at home with their parents.

Bob and Louise Strahan, both in their fifties, live and work in the area where they grew up: both are from large Catholic families - both attend church, 'rain, hail, sleet or snow'. Bob is the manager of the local dairy factory. Of nine boys in his family, seven died of heart failure. The last grandparent died twelve years ago.

Lawrence and Suzanne believe that Bob is a conscientious boss and that at times Bob puts work duties before family matters. For example, Bob and Louise were late driving down from the country for Lawrence's thirtieth birthday party because there had been a power failure at the factory. Suzanne was very annoyed. Lawrence can acknowledge his father's priorities:

Lawrence: He ... takes pride in his work. I think its an admirable thing but its the sort of thing that shortens your life span eventually. He has a string of qualifications that aren't tertiary qualifications. He has always maintained that tertiary qualifications are the greatest scourge that's hit primary industry ... he works like a navy ... he just burns himself out. He delegates things then checks on them.

And Suzanne can be admiring, though she finds Bob and Louise's priorities hard to understand:

Suzanne: Lawrence delegates responsibility to six people, but Lawrence's father to sixty or 120.

Bob Strahan had just been offered a big promotion: both Lawrence and Suzanne were really concerned about Louise's abi-

lity to cope:

Suzanne: Quite frankly we didn't think he'd be offered this job (because of the social side of it).

Lawrence: ... The organisation exports a lot to Japan ... there will have to be entertainment of overseas visitors ... it actually horrified me to think that all of a sudden mum would have to cope with this.

Suzanne: She's never desired or owned a good piece of crockery, cutlery or glassware ... to her material things don't matter at all. They might be given this magnificent house ... you would die if you saw her house ... I've never let my mother in the door. She'd rather play tennis than clean.

If they get this beautiful house - even Lawrence's father's got enough sense to sell the manager's house and buy them something in between because then she could afford a cleaning lady ... I don't think anyone would clean for her.

Lawrence: We laugh and joke about this. There's nothing derogatory - its just that mum's like that ... In country life there doesn't have to be the attempts at being socially involved as you do in the city - it really depends on how you're made up I guess. I just don't think mum can cope with it ... (Dad) will be there until he's 65 although I don't think he'll last that long. I don't think he could ever enjoy retirement ... he can't sit still for a moment - he's always up and down.

Lawrence and Suzanne and the two girls drive the sixty kilometres to see Bob and Louise quite regularly. They also keep in contact by phone. Suzanne says Lawrence gets annoyed with his parents when he gets there and wants to have a game of tennis because 'they're wanting to sit down and talk and not do anything.' But ...

Lawrence: Dad's tremendous with our kids, and my sister's two ... he just entertains them full stop and enjoys doing it.

Lawrence and Suzanne call their own parents mum and dad and each other's parents by their Christian names: of the relationship with each Suzanne says

Its still like a parent/child relationship in both our families but mine isn't a parent/child (situation)

with Lawrence's parents and his isn't with mine - I suppose mine is a bit more with yours (Lawrence's) ... because Lawrence deals with adults all the time though, and he plays golf with my father so its more an adult to adult ...

Maybe they think I've made Lawrence quite a good wife. They thought we were too young ... now they've said they think what's okay for us is okay.

Bob and Louise Strahan do not have the impact on Lawrence and Suzanne's lives that Suzanne's parents do:

Suzanne: We don't take Lawrence's parents opinion in things ... they've never bought themselves a house ... they can't quite see the value in things, and yet Lawrence's father has done extremely well ... they are just socially a little bit different, aren't they Lawrence?

To support her argument, Suzanne said:

I can't help but compare when Mum gives us something and Lawrence's mother doesn't ... birthdays and things ... I get better presents from them than Lawrence does. He's hard to buy for I'll admit ... all they've ever given Jane, and I can't help feel bad about it, is one ghastly mobile ... and Mum buys just everything - another complete new set of nappies, singlets and nighties ... whereas Lawrence's mum - she doesn't buy anything because she doesn't think about what she can buy.

Lawrence: But then Mum would no sooner look into windows of shops and assess things than fly to the moon.

Suzanne: Yet when she was in hospital in the Mercy Private there was a nun there; years ago she'd been in the same monastery as Lawrence's aunt; this woman was dying of cancer and Lawrence's mother bought from us a sheepskin blanket for this nun to lie on - about \$25.00 worth ... our girls wouldn't have had as much in three and a half years.

Lawrence: It doesn't worry me because I think its completely different. I can only compare my sister Rosemary's relationship with mum and they get on fairly well as Suzanne and her mother get on fairly well. I think with mothers and daughters its a completely different thing. It would be interesting to know, if you wanted to compare, what Len's (Rosemary's husband) parents had given ... but I think you can just dismiss it ... it doesn't worry me because that's the way they are ... so often they've given things that have been completely useless that they've probably given up. It shouldn't worry you.

But worry Suzanne it does. At other times she can be quite blunt with Louise. One day Suzanne was talking to Louise, who said she'd forgotten her grandson's birthday:

Suzanne: Oh Louise you are silly, fancy forgetting. I keep all my dates on a calendar just here beside the phone.

And then:

Lawrence's mother is a bit dumb ... she organises everyone but they don't take much notice of what she does.

Lawrence thinks differently:

In my humble opinion mum tends to be a better mother than Mary but Mary leaves mum for dead as far as being a wife's concerned.

Suzanne talks, rather wistfully, about the relationship between Lawrence and his parents:

... he knows they're there, and that's enough.

Suzanne and her family

David and Mary Anderson were married in 1948 when he was 33 and she 24. David spent four years as a prisoner of war in Java and Thailand during the Second World War; he was still having malaria attacks when they were married; he still goes 'quiet' for periods now, and two to three years ago withdrew from a number of committee positions ... all this is related to that prisoner of war period, Suzanne thinks, though there is a family vow of silence and no questioning of David about it, so she is not sure. Mary worked in a bank prior to their marriage but has not been employed since: David is a retired engineer who was in partnership in his own business. At one stage in the early 1970s, the two partners had \$20,000 they wanted to invest. They did so, in the timber business, and made a profit of a quarter of a million. Money has never been short in this family, nor in the latter part of Mary's upbringing. David and Mary live in a seaside suburb of Melbourne.

Mary's father was an Anglican minister who died when Mary was three. There was little money: the house was left to Mary's two brothers, with provision for Mary's mother to live in for life. To make an income, Mrs Lonsdale, Mary's mother, opened a drapery store in the country town where they lived, and Mary was placed as a weekly boarder in the local Anglican school. Mrs Lonsdale was very successful in her business, and Suzanne and her younger sister enjoyed spending school holidays helping out in the shop. When Mrs Lonsdale died in 1973, she left \$68,000 to both Suzanne and Janet (16 months younger), this to be held in trust until Mary's death; meanwhile Mary draws the interest and both Suzanne and Janet can borrow against the money.

David's mother is 91 and lives in Melbourne. She, too, was married to an Anglican minister. David has two brothers; one is an accountant, the other a Liberal Member of Parliament in Victoria: the latter said, when visiting one day and told of what I was doing:

You are wasting your time. It all comes down to
LOVE.

Twin sisters completed the family: both are married; of their children, Suzanne says:

The eldest son topped Queensland University and couldn't hold a conversation. (The other) has two drippy sons.

There is little contact. About growing up, Suzanne says:

It was always made easy for me to study. We didn't have to do anything else around the house ... dishes or washing or ironing. We had to keep our rooms tidy.

Things came easily to me ... I was encouraged and always had a goal. Mum used to send us back to the bedroom and I'd often have a book hidden underneath or something when I was meant to be studying. I used to curse her a lot. And then you change ... when you get to Matric you don't hide the book any more.

... our grandmother used to tell her not to spoil us, but we got to the stage where we'd tell her not to give us some money because we wanted to be more independent.

But there's never been anything that I wanted that I didn't get - nothing that mum and dad thought we needed within reason. They brought us up with a sense of value that we only wanted reasonable things ... I hope we do that. At the moment Rebecca seems to get everything she wants.

I hope to bring up our children about as strictly as I was. No as I wasn't, I should say. I wasn't brought up strictly at all.

Suzanne and her mother used to argue just as Suzanne and Rebecca argue:

My mother always had a rule that when Janet and I were fighting or arguing or one was crying, she always used to smack both of us. She didn't ever want to know what had happened because she figured that one might have done something worse but the other contributes ... I guess it wasn't a bad policy.

Mum wouldn't stand much shouting ... if mum was against me Dad would always take my side. I would

go to my room and I could hear raised voices: that used to upset me 'cause I was causing trouble but it wasn't my fault ... By the time I was fifteen that had eased ...

Janet did not have the problems with her mother when growing up. Janet says she has always had a different relationship with her mother.

Janet: Mum is really fair about things if you sit down and talk to her about things and argue. Suzanne will not reason with mum: she gets straight on the defensive and gets her back up and (she gets) all agitated.

Lawrence, too, recognises a difference in the relationship between the two sisters and their mother:

Lawrence: It has always puzzled me ... how things Suzanne has done are often frowned upon by her parents, her mother particularly, and then Suzanne's sister can do exactly the same and it doesn't even raise an eyebrow.

Suzanne: Yet it doesn't worry me particularly because I've always seen it other ways. I've always felt a little better off than she has ... I feel close to Janet. Sometimes we talk three times a week - sometimes we'll go for a fortnight, but if there's any news mum will pass it on ... Janet and mum are alike - they never relax.

Suzanne finds it hard to brook any hint of an argument between her parents and herself now they are adults, or any criticism:

Defending your parents - it's part of love, isn't it?

Mrs Anderson has no such scruples:

Suzanne has inherited many of my good points and bad points. If you see Janet you would realise she does everything exactly the same way I do - Janet is more organised.

And Lawrence says, dismissively:

I can never understand how women think anyhow - your (Suzanne's) mother's no exception. If Suzanne's grandmother was alive today there would be four people with exactly the same personality: Becky, Suzanne, Suzanne's mother and her grandmother.

Talking of her parents, Suzanne said:

I don't feel closer to mum or dad. I don't think it could ever be any different between me and my parents because they've always been mum and dad - they'd never be just friends on a casual basis. Mum and dad always valued our opinions and usually our decisions.

Mum's an absolute perfectionist. Louise would never think of entertaining, for instance, but Mum would serve dinner to thirty people and it would be just like a banquet.

But for two days we wouldn't go near her. Dad just goes out to golf.

Suzanne is, however, caught: she says ...

As far as I'm concerned, the way Mum does things is the best and that's the way I do things ...

but she knows her standards will never be acceptable to Mrs Anderson (see p. 150).

Almost from the time I got married I felt torn between Lawrence and mum and dad. I felt I belonged to them both.

Janet, too, is influenced by her mother. Prior to her marriage Janet studied for a science degree and a Diploma of Education. Phillip (her husband) is a doctor. Talking of getting pregnant, Janet says:

We were really trying but the next month I got pregnant and it was a shock. I remember saying to the doctor ... whatever you say doesn't really worry me whether it is positive or negative. He just couldn't believe that anyone could be in two moods about it.

I left work only six weeks before he (Luke) was born and I don't think I had time to get used to

the idea of being stuck at home. I had everything organised for the baby, but I don't think I had everything organised for me.

Phillip gets terribly upset when he hears me talking of having to adjust ... but I don't think I had that really intense feeling ... I think from nine months old ... (yet) Phillip said the minute Luke was born he'd never seen anyone get so maternal in ten seconds ... I definitely love children. I think it's very hard just to love a child just like that. I don't believe a lot that Dr Jolly² says, but believe him when he says there should be a sign in every maternity hospital saying 'It takes time to love your baby.' I just adore being pregnant and I loved giving birth ... Emma was more fun - it was such a challenge.

Suzanne: She has what I call nice labours: mine were pretty good, but Janet didn't have any real pain.

Janet: I just found that a child was totally demanding and takes a while to get into a routine. I am just a creature of habit - I am just like my mother. I like to be totally organised and there's no way you can be totally organised with a baby. I think that's why I was willing him to grow up quickly. It was not so much that I didn't love him. I couldn't wait for him to drop the night feed. I think that's why I am enjoying this one because I have no expectations.

We are in bed by nine o'clock each night: we don't overdo things but if we are, we don't tell mum because she feels the children are going to suffer.

All three women monitor each other's behaviour: one day Suzanne phoned Janet. Luke answered the phone.

Suzanne: Hello Luke darling.

(Silence, followed by bewilderment, with Suzanne trying to work out what was going on. Eventually Janet came to the phone).

Suzanne: What were you doing washing the windows? I could hear Emma crying.

Suzanne was angry with Janet because she had locked Luke and Emma inside and then gone outside to work.

² Dr Hugh Jolly, an 'expert' in infant medical care.

Both Lawrence and Suzanne have difficulty in getting on with Luke who they see as a little 'wild'. Suzanne puts it down to being male, Lawrence to Janet's lack of discipline.

Lawrence: I have a lot of time and respect for Janet - a tremendous respect for both of them but I completely disagree with the way the kids have grown up - every time I go there it gets more dangerous (Luke had been throwing things at Emma in the playpen on a recent visit, and had also urinated on Jane).

Suzanne: She just can't stop him.

Lawrence, Suzanne, Rebecca and Jane

Suzanne: We wanted children because we wanted someone else to love, someone else to live for. You miss out on so much if you don't have a baby.

Lawrence and Suzanne always intended having children, but Suzanne had difficulty in getting pregnant. Becky was born in June 1975 in a private hospital, with a gynaecologist in attendance. Lawrence was there for both Becky's birth, and Jane's.

Suzanne: I would never have got through either time if Lawrence hadn't been there.

Both births were by induction: Suzanne had arranged for euthanasia if the children were handicapped. Lawrence said quietly:

The thought always went through my mind ... sitting next to the delivery table waiting for the baby to pop out, thinking if an arm or something would be missing ... what would you do - well, that is life: if it happens, it happens.

Suzanne breastfed both girls and enjoyed it. She considers herself proficient at doing up a dress or cardigan of Becky's while continuing to breastfeed Jane. Becky was fed until the age of nine months when she refused to take the breast so she was weaned, instantly. Suzanne says Lawrence didn't like her overdoing things while she was breastfeeding. This included cooking, shopping and entertaining.

Jane was having difficulty with feeding so she was taken to the doctor. It turned out she had a lax cardiac sphincter the doctor advised more solids, liquids, and the problem has been overcome. Suzanne continues, as she did with Becky, to take Jane to the Health Clinic once a fortnight. One visit we made together: Becky was allowed to clamber all over the floor in the waiting room which seemed a contrast with the emphasis on hygiene at home. Suzanne was also obviously delighted to chat with the nurse about Jane and her progress.

Suzanne says she likes babies and would like them to remain 'everlasting babies':

I absolutely adore them when they're tiny like this - she's absolutely beautiful at the moment - she's so placid and perfect. And today Rebecca's been perfect too ... she's really growing up into a little lady. Once you put them to bed and see how beautiful they look you forget all the bad times.

Becky, when younger, was a 'terrible eater' ...

Suzanne: I'm very impatient - especially when Rebecca was between one and two. I used to look forward to Lawrence coming home at night to take over with her for a while - just to give me a bit of time back to myself.

Becky sucked her thumb when she was young. Jane has been given a dummy to overcome this problem, but Suzanne's mother strongly disapproves. Mary also tried to persuade Suzanne to toilet train Rebecca at 19 months: on these two counts Suzanne held out and went at her own pace.

Lawrence has strong and dogmatic feelings about Suzanne's care of the two girls, even though he seldom looks after them by himself. Suzanne says he is scared that if both screamed at the same time he would not know what to do.

When Becky gets angry, Lawrence, according to Suzanne, says it is Suzanne's personality coming through. Suzanne can see how powerful Becky is, but she thinks the relationship will ease like the relationship between her and her mother.

Manipulation and compromise are threads in all the family relationships: a number of incidents illustrate this in regard to 'parent and child'.

Suzanne: Come and have a shower.

Becky: Yes.

Suzanne: You better come and have a shower.

Becky: No.

Suzanne: Well, come in a few minutes.

Suzanne: Shift your towel, Rebecca. Do you want me to pick it up and smack you with it? I will pick it up and flick you ... do you want to go to kindy? Get dry then.

Suzanne: What would grandma and dadda say to this? (Mary and David Anderson)

Suzanne: If you don't ... Marg won't be able to come again.

One night Becky asked if she could get out of bed: Suzanne said no, and went to make a cup of tea. Becky got up and sat on her father's knee. When Suzanne came back she smiled, but said nothing. Another time Becky asked Lawrence to read her a story: he said no, but was reading to her within five minutes.

In the mornings Becky is allowed to watch some of the children's television programmes providing she joins in and sings the songs. One morning, after these had finished Suzanne asked Becky to pick up some toys on the floor of the family room. (Suzanne can't stand a mess: she followed Becky and her friend round one day literally picking toys up if they moved eighteen inches away.) Becky refused to pick them up; she and Suzanne argued, Suzanne insisting she pick them up. Suzanne went out of the room to avoid further confrontation: three quarters of an hour later, Becky picked the toys up and put them away, in the cupboard next to the right one.

Naming has significance: when Suzanne or Lawrence is annoyed with Rebecca she gets called that; Rebecca Anne if it is frustration rather than anger.

One night Suzanne went to tuck Becky up in bed and told her this story:

Once upon a time there was this father whose name was Lawrence who was the best father in the world. He had a little girl called Becky who had a mummy and daddy all to herself and along came a little girl out of mummy's tummy called Jane. When Jane came along Becky had to wait because mummy and daddy

*were feeding ... and she had to share and she didn't worry because she was a good little girl and they loved her all the more for it.*³

Manipulation is a three-generational practice. Suzanne's mother phoned one evening and criticised Lawrence and Suzanne for going to a Liberal Party dinner at a cost of \$25.00 a couple.

Mary: With your financial situation, you shouldn't be going.

Suzanne listened, and said not a word. Afterwards,

Lawrence: *I'm very pleased with Suzanne: she kept her cool whilst her mother went on. She's growing up.*

Suzanne: *I didn't say anything because I want them to come and babysit tomorrow afternoon.*

Suzanne can recognise that Rebecca is strong, yet she showed little recognition or understanding of the ambiguity and tension in her relationship with her mother, whilst talking of the tension between herself and Becky.

I nearly phoned Lawrence last Friday and wanted out from motherhood. I honestly felt if I didn't do something I'd finish up a childbasher.

Becky was just frightful ... she was tired ... I was at the stage where she was almost scared of me, but she still wouldn't pick up the puzzles. I realised if I didn't calm down ...

I suppose I get upset on a Friday because Lawrence doesn't get home till 9 p.m. They were both down by 7.15 p.m. (that night). I didn't think that was too bad seeing I was on my own - I thought I did quite well.

I could give her (Becky) back sometimes.

Lawrence finds this honesty and Suzanne's acknowledgment of stress hard to deal with.

³ Taken down verbatim.

Suzanne, talking of when Becky was younger, said:

I'd always pick her up if she hurt herself; it was like me hurting myself. I couldn't bear it ... she was so much part of me. I just couldn't help it.

yet for this reaction, Suzanne said she was censored by her mother, and her sister.⁴

Suzanne talked of another occasion when one of the girls fell on a train seat, got a bump on her head, and scratched her face. The injuries were serious enough to warrant a visit to the doctor:

Suzanne: I felt such a fool. I wasn't thinking my middle class background would exempt me from child abuse ... because here I had a child I was trying to force a bottle into morning, noon and night, and then I was getting to the stage where I could hit ... and then I sat in the waiting room and there was a lass who was a fifth year medical student and I just had to tell her why she had all these things ... and I said - I know he is going to think I have hit this child.

Lawrence's reaction to this 'confession' was stifling: throughout the following conversation Lawrence sat controlled, but tense. Suzanne was trying to get Lawrence to listen to her: she sounded more indignant than angry for the first part.

Lawrence: No ... you can tell a person who will go to the extent of child abuse. That's not just the isolated case of smacking him too hard or just hitting too hard ... (that person) has obviously got something wrong somewhere ... its all very well to say we are all capable of hitting too hard ...

Suzanne: Its not ...

Lawrence: Let me finish ... or doing the wrong thing, but we do know we are adults who are mature enough to know when we can stop.

Suzanne: Don't you think I have ever thrown Becky down on the floor?

⁴ See Sennett (1981:143) for discussion of 'doubling'.

Lawrence: I have seen you do it.

Suzanne: Well, there only needs to be something in the road ...

Lawrence: But there never is anything in the road, is there?

Suzanne: Do you think I think before I do it?

Lawrence: Subconsciously you think.

Suzanne: I have picked up a teatowel and thrown it down instead of hitting Becky.

On another occasion, Suzanne related the story of visiting a friend and her two children, and told of the four year old son accidentally pushing over the basinette when the baby was inside. Lawrence's comment, as relayed by Suzanne:

If you ever let that happen, I don't know if I could ever forgive you.

Suzanne: I am not allowed to leave Jane in the house when I go to collect Becky from kinder. I know there are lots of people who do, but I could never live with myself again if something did happen, like fire.

Lawrence too focussed on himself when asked how he would respond to an accident to one of his children - for example, if one was drowned in the pool. He said he would feel ashamed.

Both parents handle the children, Suzanne taking the major responsibility for 'caretaking tasks' or parentwork. There seems little 'oomph' in the cuddling. One morning, Becky climbed on her mother's knee, pretended to be sick on an imaginary nappy, then started to unbutton Suzanne's blouse and pretended to suckle. Suzanne, with an embarrassed giggle, said:

See, everything's open in this house.

In Lawrence's family it was the opposite. Lawrence has never seen his mother naked, nor realised till recently that his father and brother were not circumcised. David and Mary, on the other hand, had a policy of no clothes in the bedroom/

bathroom areas. Lawrence and Suzanne have continued that policy, but emphasise they restrict their lovemaking to in bed at night. Suzanne says, with a coy grin, that Lawrence has been making all sorts of suggestions about what games they could play in the pool.

Much of their philosophy is based on Suzanne's parents' philosophy of life - a quantity of lifestyle, without the weathering of years nor the prisoner of war experience and trauma of David Anderson's experience. Lawrence and Suzanne and their two daughters are a physically attractive group of people, the adults always courteous, smiling ... they would win a 'family of the year' award. Lawrence believes that being mature means being 'cool, calm and collected': conflict, anger within the family or home environment should be ignored. He was not at home when Suzanne made the following comment; nor did I consider I had the right to broach the question with him.

Suzanne: I love him dearly, but I don't know how we would have been had we not had so much (money).

Suzanne says they have no intention of parting company, though believes if they got to the stage 'where we might as well be living separate lives' they would part. She claims they would both want the children, though she says she could not cope alone and would move straight away to live with her parents. Even when Lawrence has an evening meeting she says she would take the two children and spend the time with her parents if they did not live thirty minutes' drive away.

In 1978 two of their friends, Robert and Julie, died, one of cancer, the other of kidney disease. Both people were married and had young children. Suzanne said she initially heard that it was one of the children who had died in one of the families, but when she heard it was Robert (husband and father) she was more upset:

... you can still replace your children, can't you?

Both Lawrence and Suzanne talked, too, of a mistake they considered the other family had been making prior to Julie's death. They said the couple had been in the process of signing everything over to the children:

Suzanne: I think that's silly. What if one of the kids goes onto drugs, or ... ? (see p. 178)

In many ways Lawrence and Suzanne live in a taken-for-granted world so tightly controlled that contradictions and unpleasanties are swept out-of-sight. Even the physical environment is 'brought under control'. For instance, Suzanne talked of a friend who had been caught in a storm when out driving:

How frightening it must have been, but how silly. I would never allow that to happen. I wouldn't get myself into that situation.

Lawrence and Suzanne have firm views about who their family is, what their goals are - or could produce these in response to questions. They are now summarised.

Definition of family

Lawrence: I regard family as people I see every day, whom I have a close working relationship - Lawrence and Suzanne, Becky and Jane.

Suzanne: (horrified and upset) Yes, but can't you see from how I get on with mum and dad that as soon as you say family to me, they come in on the same level as you and the girls?

Lawrence: I feel very sorry for those people who haven't been able to partake of being a happy family. I'm always very proud of our family.

Parent 'role'

Lawrence: I have definite ideas on what a parent should be: if you've got a problem child you can really look at the situation and the environment in which they live ... the under twenty age group to me today seem to be, without branding them, usually fairly irresponsible and immature. Everything seems to come too easy today for many people and

they don't strive to get things and that takes away any sense of responsibility, the sense of achievement ...

Suzanne: You've just got to try and be around when they need you.

Lawrence: One of my aims in life is to make sure, as a professional and in our case two professionals, that our kids don't suffer because there are so many of our parents' vintage who put their careers before their kids.

Suzanne: He is telling you you should be home, Marg.

Lawrence: No I am not. I am just saying what happens to our kids. I couldn't care less about anybody else's kids. I am not interested in anybody else's kids.

Suzanne: Anyone can be a mother: not everyone can be a good mother.

Lawrence: You get the softer things in life from your mother normally, and you get the finer honing things and often the completely different opinion of the same thing from your father ... the net result should be the same though ... someone who is prepared to help others, get involved, have an opinion, not be a follower.

Lawrence: I think if I ever had the choice, I'd much rather stay here during the day than go to work, much rather.

About having more children

Suzanne: When it's a bad day we say no; we have a good day and say yes. Lawrence doesn't think I could cope with another baby. I don't think I could cope with a boy.

Lawrence: Its probably the way they are brought up from birth.

Suzanne: There is a difference ... the boys don't want to play (with dolls) ... its the mothering instinct.

Lawrence (spoken very quietly): I don't think I've missed out on anything by not having a son.

In 1981 Suzanne and Lawrence went to New Zealand for a pharmacy

conference: soon after they returned Suzanne got pregnant. Lawrence, in a phone call, said they had done a lot of re-evaluation of where they were as a family, and where they were going. Suzanne said in a letter to me:

Becky and Jane are delighted to have a sister - Kirsten - and I am thrilled, as is Lawrence. Three is a good number; certainly Kirsten is the last. I hope you hadn't described us as the zero population growth couple and that we haven't ruined any conclusions, etc. I got clucky when Jane turned three.

Education

Both girls are booked into an Anglican girls' secondary school but they are to go to a state school for their primary education.

Suzanne: I want them to go to state schools to see that people who do not go to private schools are also nice people ... but I must admit to having two minds about that ... The people who live in our old house ... if Becky is in the same class as their little girl I would be really worried because they have some queer friends.

Suzanne: I will never push more learning on her (Rebecca) than her peers because I have seen it.

Suzanne: I'd like Becky and Jane to do something that leads them to a job, not just an Arts degree.

Goals

Suzanne chose to concentrate on the children and themselves as parents:

Suzanne: If we can bring up two daughters successfully - give them an education and a career, and a means to find a husband who's got an education and a career, maybe that's enough.

I just think that parents are happy when their daughters meet men who they know are going to be able to keep them in the way to which they are accustomed.

I hope one of them gets married and gives us grandchildren that will give us as much pleasure as our children give their grandparents. If in those days they don't get married, as long as they've got lasting relationships.

I'm trying to bring them up to be happy - not to become drug addicts. If marriage is what they want, I hope they marry nice people. I can only say that because I'm so happy.

In different vein:

Suzanne: If your child is part of the family ... you can't give them any more responsibility than to be part of your family.

Lawrence: I think its important in life to have an opinion. It can be any opinion at all. I respect people who have opinions provided they are not derogatory of others.

Two questions which emerged as the only ones I deliberately asked of each 'family':

Marg: What is the worst thing you could do by your children?

Suzanne: Go off and leave them.

Marg: What is the worst thing that could happen to your children from your point of view?

Lawrence: From our point of view, probably drugs because we see it so often. We're involved in so much of it and can see the ramifications ... from the housewife drug addict with her analgesics through to the teenagers ... I think that would be the most cutting and cruel thing I could ever imagine.

Suzanne: That would be cutting, but the most upsetting thing associated with that would be that you lose them, these children, adolescents who go off on drugs.

Lawrence: Because they're never the same.

Suzanne: They don't care about their parents - and to me that part of it would be worse than the fact that

they were actually taking drugs. They go off, they don't stay at home, they don't care about their parents, and they don't return the love that you've got for them ... I suppose if they went off like that you'd have to lose some of your love for them but hopefully we'll bring our children up as we've been brought up so they won't go off and stop loving or caring for us.

Triptych: 3

All visible things are emblems; what thou
seest is not there on its own account ...

Carlyle, in Sennett, 1977:153

One really knew about a person by under-
standing him at the most concrete level -
which consisted of details of clothes,
speech, and behaviour.

Sennett, 1977:153

His children and his good friends consti-
tute for him the whole of the human species.
As for his transactions with his fellow
citizens, he may mix among them, but he sees
them not; he touches them, but does not feel
them ...

Tocqueville, frontispiece,
Sennett, 1977

... stability had a high place in the list
of virtues. The concrete embodiment of
these ideas was a man's home ... the father
was the guarantor of order and security ...
It was also a refuge from the world outside
... all the cares of life (were) so punc-
tiliously circumvented.

in Sennett, 1977:178-179

These quotes refer to bourgeois life in Europe in the
nineteenth century, yet the ideas capture aspects of Lawrence
and Suzanne's lifestyle. Both share a remarkably fused out-
look on life, and this is maintained consistently, diligently,
by them. Lawrence and Suzanne weight different factors: for
example, for Suzanne accumulation of money and resources is
important; for Lawrence professional responsibility and
material success go hand in hand. 'Underneath' this lifestyle
are two structuring principles - that of exchange and control.

Suzanne: We're working hard for what we're getting ...

*Lawrence: ... you've got to be on your mettle because you
can upset people so quickly and then you ... just
lose business.*

These two principles can be seen 'at work' in many aspects of the Strahan family praxis.

Parenting, parentwork, parenthood⁵

Both Lawrence and Suzanne are involved in parenting (nurturing) relationships with their parents and their two children. All six adults involved obviously care for and about one another; all are important to one another. For Lawrence, members of his immediate family - Suzanne, Rebecca and Jane - are the important people in his existence. Suzanne considers her parents to be as important as Lawrence and the two girls, and this can cause conflict.

Suzanne: Almost from the time I got married, I felt torn between Lawrence and mum and dad. I felt I belonged to them both.

Caring is not taken for granted: with regard to her own marriage relationship Suzanne says ...

I love him dearly, but I don't know how we would have been had we not had so much (money).

With regard to her parents ...

My parents don't take anything for granted but we give them obvious pleasure when we go to see them - just as much as we enjoy it. We still get a lot of love from our parents and give it.

and in relation to her own children ...

Hopefully we'll bring our children up as we've been brought up so they won't go off and stop loving or caring for us. I suppose if they went off like that you'd have to lose some of your love for them.

With Suzanne and her parents the caring often takes a tangible

⁵ See Part 1:2, p.38.

form: gifts of money, clothing, time (babysitting ..) are common; also David Anderson has several times offered to act as guarantor for bank loans for Lawrence and Suzanne. However, for Lawrence, tangible signs are not important in his relationship with his parents.

Suzanne: He knows they're there and that's enough.

Neither Lawrence nor Suzanne share a parent-child relationship with each other's parents.

Parentwork

This is seen primarily as Suzanne's task. She is responsible for the daily bathing, clothing, feeding .. of the children, and the teaching of developmental tasks such as toilet training, eating skills, the acquiring of 'neat' habits, polite speech .. Talking of Becky, Suzanne says 'she's really growing up into a little lady'. Suzanne is expected to do the housework, or arrange for it to be done. Babysitting is seen also as Suzanne's responsibility, although Lawrence monitors some of the arrangements. Suzanne walks a tightrope hung between Lawrence, her mother and herself.

As far as I'm concerned, the way Mum does things is the best and that's the way I do things ...

but it will never be good enough. On some matters, however, Suzanne becomes independent - for instance, in the matter of the children having dummies, and in toilet training. Lawrence and Suzanne's mother both oversee Suzanne's behaviour.

I am not allowed to leave Jane in the house when I go to collect Becky from kinder.

Parenthood

Both Lawrence and Suzanne have a very definite sense of what a parent should be, what a father and mother should be ..

Suzanne: Anyone can be a mother: not everyone can be a good mother.

Lawrence: You get the softer things in life from your mother ... the finer honing things and often the completely different opinion of the same thing from your father ... the net result should be the same.

Suzanne finds it difficult to meet her expectations, and those of her parents and her husband:

Suzanne: I'm so busy, yet when I look back on a week I don't know what I've done.

I'm very impatient ... I used to look forward to Lawrence coming home ... to take over with her for a while - just to give me a bit of time to myself.

I'm afraid I feel me is fairly important.

Suzanne needs acknowledgment and reassurance that she is managing her 'role' satisfactorily: she glowed as the Infant Welfare Sister complimented her on Jane's progress, and basks in the adoring comments made about the two girls - by people in the shop, at kindergarten, by Mrs Coates the babysitter. Lawrence spends time when he is at home building a sandpit, cuddling either of the children, reading stories to Becky, but he never takes complete responsibility for the children and finds it extremely difficult to listen to Suzanne admit her frustration or fears.

When Becky is angry, Lawrence believes this is Suzanne's personality coming through: when Suzanne is angry, he attributes it, in part, to Suzanne's inheritance from her mother and grandmother.

Lawrence assesses maturity by his own standards:

I'm very pleased with Suzanne: she kept her cool whilst her mother went on. She's growing up.

He admits to not knowing how women think, and to frustration with women in the paid work situation:

*... being with a woman all the time can get boring,
and at least men don't have an off week once a
month.*

Lawrence, then, cannot hear Suzanne, as Suzanne, or as a 'mother' when she tries to talk about her feelings and concern about the likelihood of her abusing the children: he tried to stifle one conversation about child abuse, and interrupted continuously when Suzanne was talking. He then distances himself, and by implication Suzanne, from such dangers:

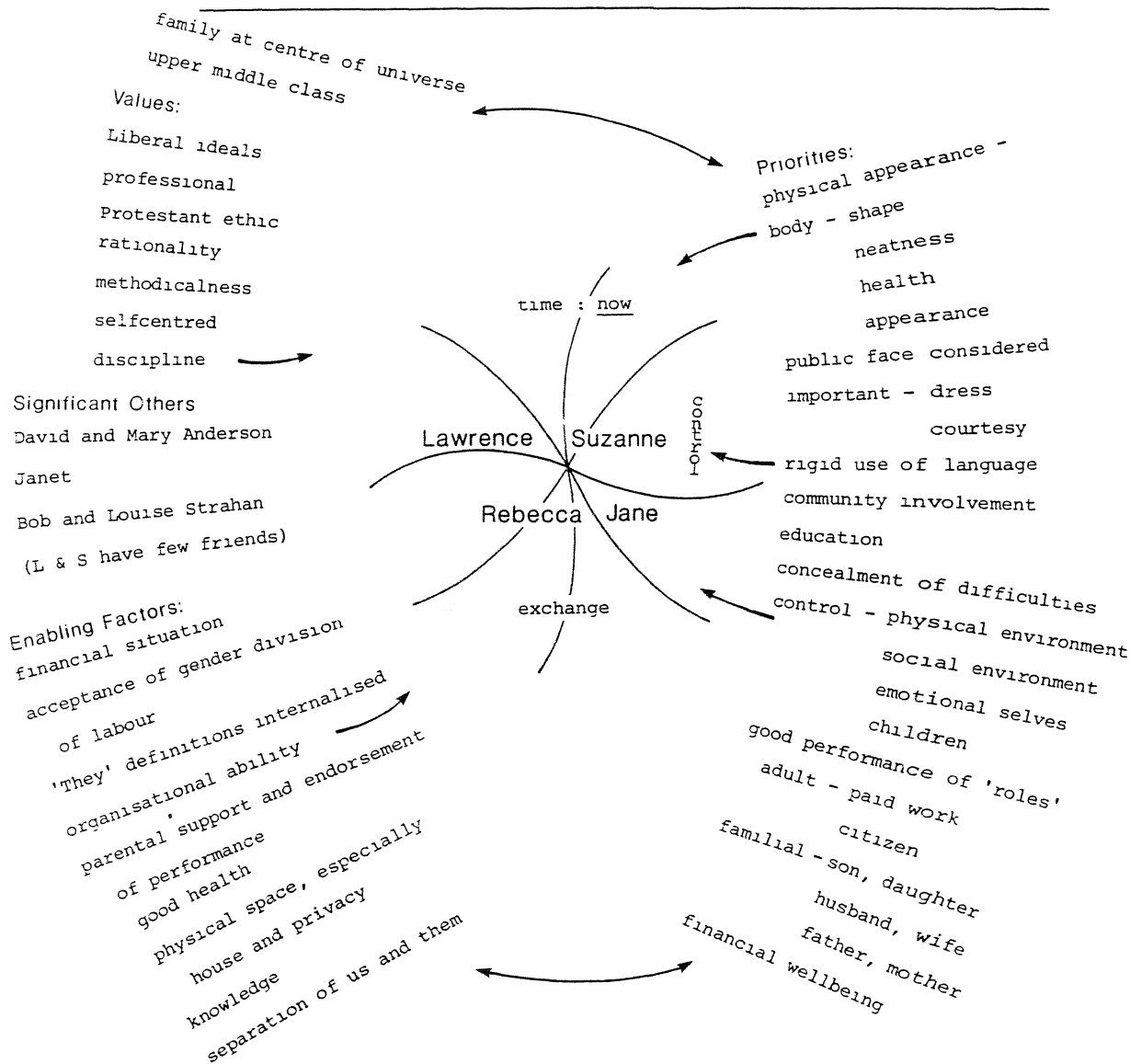
*... we do know we are adults who are mature enough
to know when we can stop.*

Lawrence knows how adults should behave (and the way to behave is to be cool, calm and collected) and one achieves this maturity by self-control. Women, he infers, do not necessarily manage this, and Suzanne particularly fails as can be seen, he would suggest, by the number of times Suzanne gets het up, or starts to argue, or shouts at Becky. Lawrence imposes his standards on both himself and Suzanne, and fails to recognise what Suzanne is experiencing, and the tension she is endeavouring to disguise. Both concur in defining the ideal situation, for Suzanne, too, dislikes conflict:

*I absolutely adore them when they're tiny like
this - she's absolutely beautiful at the moment -
she's so placid and perfect.*

Total social fact

In this context I am using the model to simply place, in diagrammatic form, some of the words/concepts which represent important aspects of Lawrence and Suzanne and Rebecca and Jane's lives (the twirling lines depict energy, or the dynamic of being alive).



Suzanne: We wanted children because we wanted someone else to love, someone else to live for.

*Four level analysis**Descriptive*

(Or in Jan Pouver's terms, 'what really happens on the ground'). This has mostly been covered in the first two parts of the triptych and in the preceding pages.

Normative

Lawrence and Suzanne operate conscientiously inside the parameters of a 'should' world. Each knows for him/her self and for the other what a husband/wife, father/mother, a child should do ..

Suzanne: I don't believe Lawrence should have to do these things (mow the lawns) with the long hours he's working ... he doesn't like to see women mowing the lawn.

Suzanne telling a bedtime story to Becky:

... When Jane came along Becky had to wait ... and she had to share and she didn't worry because she was a good little girl and they loved her all the more for it.

Suzanne has also taught Lawrence the correct way of behaving in regard to etiquette. She talked, for instance, of an incident when they were going together and she had to tutor Lawrence on the proper way to reply to a wedding invitation. Too, the 'right people' who can be accepted in to a Rotary Club are those who know how to behave.

Lawrence and Suzanne reinforce each other, and allow for little variation from the 'they' rules which have become owned. Variations or discrepancies - such as Suzanne's stress - are swept out of sight, or edited in some way. The girls are going to be brought up the same way.

Suzanne: I'm trying to bring them up to be happy ... I just think parents are happy when their daughters meet men who they know are going to be able to keep them

in the way to which they are accustomed.

Others - neighbours, friends, customers - are also expected to operate in the 'correct' way.

Suzanne: If I ever saw any of our friends, or you Marg, coming out of Jamieson's (the third pharmacy in the area) I would be horrified.

Cognitive

Lawrence and Suzanne do not usually stop to analyse what they are doing or why. Their taken-for-granted world is dependent on a pollyanna view of the world. Lawrence and Suzanne want to be happy, and that happiness is permissible only if the cracks in their lifestyle are not revealed.

Lawrence: I feel very sorry for those people who haven't been able to partake of being a happy family. I'm always very proud of our family.

Three interlocking groups of ideas serve to justify and legitimate their behaviour. They are: believing that one should live a lifestyle befitting one's socio-economic status; believing in a division of labour based on gender; and believing in professionalism. That Lawrence and Suzanne perceive their lifestyle to be an upper middle class one is apparent in their choice of residential area, style of house and furnishings, use of money to buy 'luxuries' .. and in their comments about those living a 'different' way. Lawrence, for instance, talked of the differences between those living on the same side of the shopping centre as themselves, and those on the other.

... There are a lot of alcoholic fathers ... if you've got a problem child you can really look at the situation and the environment ...

Suzanne: I want the girls to go to state schools to see that people who do not go to private schools are also nice people.

Lawrence said one day, though not very convincingly:

I think if I ever had the choice, I'd much rather stay here than go to work, much rather.

but what he would do at home is debatable for tasks inside the home are considered Suzanne's responsibility, and those outside the home, apart from the 'heavy' work such as mowing the pocket sized lawns, Lawrence's. Lawrence values people with an opinion, but there is no need to have an opinion about the division of parentwork nor parentroles, for these are 'natural' facts of life.

Professional ideology shores up his lifestyle. Lawrence 'lives' the four attributes noted by Barber in his listing of essential characteristics of professionalism (Barber, in Haralambos, 1980:70-71). He takes pride in his up to date knowledge of his profession, regularly attends pharmacy guild meetings, and has also seriously considered standing for the council of the guild. He is strict about the professional code of ethics, and talks of 'dobbing' people who are giving a below standard practice. He enjoys the prestige and acclaim and the 'high material rewards' and manages to bridge the one remaining area which might have caused considerable strain: professionals are 'meant' to be concerned with public service, yet pharmacies are both providing that service and operated for personal gain. Lawrence is good at both sides of the 'business'.

Though Lawrence and Suzanne share the same profession, Suzanne's professionalism is secondary to her gender 'role'.

I don't really want the responsibility of the shop ... when I go to the shop I feel as if I'm more useful than just as a mother.

Too, both Lawrence and Suzanne appear to have inhaled a strong dose of the Protestant ethic: key characteristics of this ethic include self-discipline, an inclination towards hard work, an inability to relax and 'do nothing', all qualities apparent with Lawrence and Suzanne.

Explanatory

Power to enable Lawrence and Suzanne to live as they do is exercised primarily in terms of exchange. This operates as a key principle in the relationship between Lawrence and Suzanne, increasingly with Becky (and presumably later on with Jane); with Suzanne's parents but not necessarily with Bob and Louise Strahan for they do not necessarily recognise or play the same rules. Lawrence and Suzanne also negotiate 'the world' via the principle of exchange.

Lawrence considers himself entitled to monitor what Suzanne does in the home, in the pharmacy and in the 'outside world'. Whilst he does not become embroiled in the day to day minutiae and responsibilities of the children, he does censor what Suzanne does, gives praise where he feels it is due, and makes some hard and fast rules. He also joins with Becky 'in opposition' to Suzanne. Suzanne accedes to Lawrence's demands superficially, yet considers herself, and knows herself, to be in a position of power, primarily, one suspects, because it was her money which gave them such a start, and money is important in their lifestyle. That balance is the underlying dynamic in their relationship.

The examples on page 169 indicate the same principle operating between Suzanne and Becky, but at three years of age Becky had learnt how to win. In whatever area of Lawrence and Suzanne's lives one exposes, so too does one find some form of exchange operating. Exchange implies a balance, a complementarity, an ongoing maintenance of the checks and balances. In order for a relationship such as that between Lawrence and Suzanne to survive, control must be continuously exercised.

This exposes the relationship to a number of risks, for another person, event, change of habit .. can expose and/or change the fragile balance. Perhaps one of the reasons neither have many friends nor entertain very often is that other people are likely to upset the balance, to inject spontaneity, to cause Lawrence and Suzanne to 'look over the fence' at other

people's way of doing things. Their defence walls are high:

Lawrence: I am not interested in anybody else's kids ...

'Eggs in the basket'

As part of the research each 'family' (adults) was asked to participate in a family therapy gimmick: I explained it as that and said I was using it as a tool to try and get round the constant barrage of words.

Each person was asked to place in the baskets the number of eggs which they thought represented their investment at that time. Total numbers varied: in this instance a total of fifty eggs was suggested.

	<i>Self</i>	<i>Husband</i>	<i>Father</i>	<i>Retail pharmacist</i>	<i>Son</i>
<i>Lawrence:</i>	(15)	(13)	(11)	(6)	(5)
<i>Suzanne:</i>	(15)	(13)	(14)	(5)	(6)
	<i>Self</i>	<i>Wife</i>	<i>Mother</i>	<i>Pharmacist</i>	<i>Daughter</i>

Both Lawrence and Suzanne put more in the self baskets than I would have placed in theirs; likewise, I think Lawrence undervalued his pharmacy basket, and both their son/daughter baskets. The exercise does, however, give a clue to what Erikson defines as their identity .. the sense of 'the meeting point between who a person wants to be and what the world allows'. Perhaps Lawrence and Suzanne were 'wishfully thinking' when they completed this task.

Research comment

One of the comments I recorded before 'moving in' on Lawrence and Suzanne was:

I'm scared - the opportunity of a lifetime to get inside and I'm frightened I'm going to blow it.

On our first day in the 'research proper', Suzanne introduced me to a number of women at the swimming pool, saying with a giggle ...

Marg's going to be with us for a week 'cause she's studying normal families.

Also on the first day, two other 'incidents': the comments below are as recorded in my notes.

First morning, within 45 minutes of arrival: 'go home and change' - *Marg, you're going to be too hot at the pool.*

The first night ... I asked at 6.30 p.m. for a shower as we were going out to a fashion parade. I was told 'no' by Suzanne, then an hour later, five minutes before we were due to go out, was told I could. The explanation: *We only use the shower at the top of the stairs ... when we moved in three weeks ago it took Lynda (cleaning lady), my mother and I an hour and a half to clean each one (there are three): the girls are asleep now ... its fine.*

I was told at the new house that I could park the Datsun in front, but the VW at the side (it's a corner section). As with other families, I took gifts of flowers, fruit ... didn't pay board here though.

Suzanne checked my child care arrangements, checked and double checked: my credibility was established because of having children (she said).

Lawrence: I can understand why you are doing it ... for the betterment of yourself - an acceptable goal. But if you really thought ... your family and your family environment were going to suffer, you wouldn't do it.

Suzanne seems to tempt me to be an expert: she is, perhaps, seeking reassurance, e.g. *Lawrence thinks I should have more things for Jane to play with ... what do you think?*

One time I was aware of the intensity of eye contact: had been shown a big cupboard - tucked away on a top shelf was a jigsaw. I asked if I could do it, and set it up on the

dining room table so I could be part of what was going on if needed: could hear but was out of the way. A superb research move. I can recall being 'piqued' because when I had finished it and called out to Suzanne, she didn't take the six or seven steps to see. I broke it up and packed it away.

Becky: Give Marg a kiss.

Becky came home from kinder with a picture of Marg Gilling - this was stuck on the side of the fridge.

Suzanne: Did Lawrence tell you I told him off for correcting me in front of you?

During the eight days I wrote:

It's a family where I don't feel I can explore under the skin too much because I am frightened of what I am going to break out (open).

With each 'family', when setting up the ground rules for the research, I had offered to return after I had transcribed the pages of notes/tapes ... and discuss my 'thinkings' with them. I did this with Lawrence and Suzanne, and they denied much of what I said. I retreated to my study, feeling somewhat humbled, uncomfortable and shaken, but when I double-checked my notes, listened to the tapes, what they had said and what I had taken back to them was the same. In my innocence, ignorance/stupidity, I had selected issues, points of contradiction, 'sore' areas for discussion, all that this family carefully and punctiliously circumvent (see, too, Part 1:4, p.138). Their lifestyle is so 'taken-for-granted', and so similar to that of David and Mary Anderson, that any reflection on this, or any comment made which does not suit was likely to be not-heard or denied. That they allowed a stranger to be part of their family for an eight month period (pilot study and research proper) is a miracle: perhaps, though, this period was a catalyst for the re-evaluation which has gone on since this period. What, then, the ethics of research?

They are playing a game. They are playing
at not playing a game. If I show them I
see they are, I shall break the rules and
they will punish me. I must play their
game, of not seeing I see the game.

Laing, 1972:1

Tony, 30, and Lucy, 24, and their three daughters, Kylie, 6, Tina, 3, and Mandy, 13 months, live in a three bedroom Housing Commission flat in Collingwood, one of the inner suburbs of Melbourne. Their flat is on the second floor of a three storey building. Tony grew up in the area; his parents still live in the single-fronted cottage in nearby Abbotsford where he and his two sisters were brought up. Lucy's family are scattered through Victoria. Her parents separated when she was nine and from that time onwards Lucy and her five younger brothers and sisters lived with their grandmother, their mother's mother, in Swan Hill, about 300 kilometres from Melbourne. Lucy is Aboriginal; Tony Anglo-Saxon.

Tony and Lucy have been living together for nearly six years. They met when Lucy was on an Aboriginal Education Scholarship and studying for her Higher School Certificate at a Melbourne secondary school. Lucy initially boarded in Camberwell, with a woman who was 'very upper class and divorced'.

Lucy: I think she had us to stay because she wanted to help, or perhaps she wanted us to agree with everything she said. I think it got to her that I stood up to her a little bit. She was pro abortion and I didn't agree. She was a feminist ... silly old women's lib and all that stuff. We'd be so hungry after tea we'd go for a walk and buy biscuits and hide them in our rooms. (Then) the board was going up; I was talking with Aunty Stella (mother's sister) and she told me to come and stay with her.

Aunty Stella took Lucy to a local dance each Friday night. One night she met Tony:

Lucy: Right from the first time we met, there was a little bond between us. Sexual intercourse started pretty early with us. We just went to his flat or to a motel but we didn't go home to Aunty Stella's to sleep together. Plus I preferred the luxury of staying in a motel (or) even going back to his old flat. I prefer the motel because you've got the telly there and coffee.

We never thought what we were doing was sordid. There was no guilt there - never has been. The only sort of guilt I've ever had was when I found out that Tony was married and then I thought I might be cutting in on another woman's marriage, but when I found out the marriage had finished I started breathing again. If it hadn't been, I would have cleared out for sure ... it's just one thing I don't believe in.

Soon after Tony and Lucy met there was an unfortunate incident which she still recalls with distaste. One of Tony's friends arrived at Aunty Stella's and invited her to a party at Tony's flat. She did not realise it was a setup.

Lucy: I was a bit tentative. It was before Tony and I got serious with each other. I knew the guy by sight but I didn't know his name. Like an idiot, I got in the car with him and we've gone round to his flat only to find ... they (his friends) had them all lined up for his bedroom. But I got myself out quickly, but not without having some sort of fight. Tony didn't know I was there.

Lucy got pregnant about three months after they met. Lucy told Tony, left school, turned down the position she had been offered for Teachers' College the following year, and returned to live with her grandmother in the country. Initially Tony suggested an abortion; Lucy promised to think about it, decided against it. She asked for some aid but none was forthcoming. Tony had asked her to keep in touch; she did so by phoning him at work each Friday.

Lucy: I didn't keep my hopes up. If I was in a bad mood, I'd miss out on a week - let him sweat it out.

Lucy kept the news of her pregnancy hidden from her grandmother and other members of her family until she was eight months pregnant. Her size helped her disguise the pregnancy.

From the time Kylie was born, and until she was fourteen months old, Tony and Lucy saw each other at irregular intervals, mostly when Lucy travelled to Melbourne, sometimes with Kylie, sometimes without. When Kylie was fourteen months old, they went to Melbourne for a fortnight's holiday, and never returned

to the country. Tony and Lucy think they may get married 'one day'.

In the past six years, Tony has had a number of jobs, and they have lived in a variety of places. They moved from his old flat into a flat above a television store in Doncaster when Tony was appointed manager. Unfortunately there was a burglary, insurance hassles, and they were forced, for financial reasons, to move in with Tony's parents, Jim and Betty Mathews. With four adults and one toddler in the small house, there were a number of awkward moments, so they moved to Aunty Stella's, then to the flat where they are now.

In that period Tony has tried his hand at assembling pre-built furniture, working for the taxation office, been involved with a company trying a new design for marking surfaces - they lost heavily over that contract, and are still paying back the debt of over \$3,000 - and now Tony drives a truck for a wine and spirit firm. His boss promised him a new truck if he stayed two years; he's been there three, but the truck hasn't eventuated.

Tony: I'm going to be successful ... I had a few opportunities and they didn't go the right way ... but I don't intend to be a truck driver all my life, though I'll probably finish up that way. I've started three businesses.

Lucy: He's got good ideas, its just sort of keeping them going. He's supposed to be (at work) by eight each morning; he's been threatened with the sack twice.

Tony and Lucy are not on the phone, but Tony has cards for his businesses (he describes himself as a sales manager) with his parents' phone number on them, so he phones his mother most days to see if there have been any calls. The businesses are vague in description, and there are few calls.

Tony does a lot of cartage jobs 'out of hours', jobs he gets by hanging round the pub most nights after work. He always goes to the same pub:

Tony: I drink in the saloon bar ... I like a nice quiet drink ... I don't want to get involved in politics or strikes every night ... but I don't look down on the guy in the public bar - I don't look up to the guy in the saloon bar ... the people who drink in the saloon bar rubbish or shit on the ones in the public bar ...

I'd like to be the Liberal Member for Collingwood ... I probably never will be, but if I had the chance ... I'm anti-Labor ... the Liberal Government have got more sane ideas ... the Labor Party are still giving people a false view ... a fantasy ... that is a bit strong ... giving them something more than they're ever going to have ... a sort of utopia.

Lucy: We're always flying into each other if something goes wrong ... I say you and your Liberal Government ... he can't say anything to me because Labor haven't been in for a while. I think I'm more inclined to vote for Labor because of their policies for Aborigines.

On Friday nights Tony stays late at the pub.

Lucy: I let him go then he can do what he wants. He gets drunk, he's hopeless. I don't let him drive home. He's either got to walk or catch a taxi.

Tony has lost his licence twice for being over .05. The first time was just after Tony and Lucy had met; the second time it was more dangerous:

Lucy: It was a stupid mistake. He was coming home from a pub ... There was this car and he thought it was a few louts so he decided to give them a rough time ... and he got quite scared because the car was still on him (there was an accident) and then he found out it was a police car, and he'd wrecked the police car so they were real dirty.

The next time it will be trouble. I keep on saying to him, what will happen to me and the kids when you go inside?

As well, Tony gets parking tickets, regularly.

Lucy: He gets the parking fines about once a month and he doesn't pay them until the policeman knocks on his door. He's become quite a friend.

Money is a continuous hassle for Lucy and Tony. Tony defines himself as the breadwinner:

Tony: Basically the male is the breadwinner ... and what you try to do when you are a father is bring in as much bread as possible. The man's always been the breadwinner, the builder of the house, the hunter of the game ... natural instincts have got a lot to do with it. The man accepts the situation ... an Australian (male) ... he doesn't sit home and do the dishes while his wife goes out to work.

Lucy accepts this, and agrees that it is Tony's responsibility to apportion the money.

Lucy: Tony does all the wheeling and dealing. I just write out the cheques and send them away. He banks it. I'm more or less the secretary. He's on parcels rate - how many parcels he drops, that's how much he gets. We're surviving ... trying to get something behind us financially so we can survive ... surviving more or less one day at a time. He'd be getting \$200 to \$300 a week. It just works out ... There's nothing left after the bills. We can't plan.

If I want something for the girls, I get that out of child endowment, or if I want, I just ask for it.

Put it this way ... its a problem, but he's never let us down anyway. We've got a roof over our heads, clothes on our backs ... that sort of thing, and food in the cupboard - and if one of those things is going to be threatened, then his betting or gambling or drinking will go down.

I think I could say he's spending \$20, \$30 a week on gambling. He's got a phone account for his bets. You've got to have money in there to cover it. He doesn't see it as wasting it yet I do. Petrol's \$50 a week, and he always pays his pub bill each week. He works out how much each cheque is going to be and that goes in the bank. Gas, electricity ... the car accident he was in ... his car was insured but they sued him (the police).

Tony's mother handles the large bills, for example the \$3000 bill from the design company, and the \$4000 bill from the television burglary/insurance hassle. Mrs Mathews gets very 'up tight' about these debts, and hounds Tony for more money than he is able or perhaps prepared to pay. This makes Tony

angry and worried, and when Tony and Lucy were living with his parents, one of the things that most concerned Lucy was this monitoring of their money.

Lucy: If he's a week over she pays it. She pays everything on time, or before time. When you're with Tony, you expect to pay a few things late.

Eventually Tony and Lucy hope to buy a home. Lucy is eligible for an Aboriginal housing loan at two percent interest. They put their names on the list three years ago.

Lucy: They pay for the house and you pay them back over 32 years. No deposit. Its a long wait, about six years.

Its a bad time to move just yet, but I wouldn't mind getting a nice little house, lovely little back yard and a nice laundry.

I enjoy the washing - it's not a chore for me, but when you have to carry it downstairs and race up to get Mandy, and carry her ... it puts one off. I prefer to do it when Tony's home so he's supposed to be watching the kids. He lies in bed, or he sits there reading his paper which he loves doing ... reading his newspaper on Saturday morning for the horses.

An additional reason for getting a house is that there would be more room for Lucy's family to come and stay. Sometimes they do stay in the flat, especially Ray, one of Lucy's brothers who knocks on the door late at night when he is too tired to go home.

The flat is always tidy; the two younger girls share a bedroom, Kylie has one of her own, then there is the main bedroom, a kitchen, dining area and living room.

Lucy: I can be almost dead but I like a tidy house. If I'm sick, I want to be sick in a tidy house.

More energy goes on keeping the house tidy than on personal appearance. Lucy, who was four months pregnant at the time of the research, wore a pinafore most of the time. She owns three. Sometimes one was put on over her nightie.

On Sundays, she tries not to get dressed, unless they are going out. Tony wears overalls most of the time; they are always clean, in the mornings, but often torn - at the knee, back pocket, crutch.

Tony is near six foot, has straight hair which usually flops forward onto his face. Lucy is plump and in her sister's words

built for comfort, not speed.

Lucy: Tony has always had a pot belly. He's not in the least worried about my weight. You're you, he says. I used to look in the mirror and say - you're not very pretty, are you? I tried makeup but I just couldn't take it.

Lucy is a shy, quietly spoken person, a constant smile toying round the corners of her eyes and lips.

The three children, particularly the eldest, are attractive. Kylie is stunning in her good looks. She has black wavy hair and an olive skin. Compliments are always being made, some of which worry Lucy.

Lucy: Its kinda nice to have people say how pretty they (the girls) are, mainly because when I was a kid no one said that to me ... and I'm sure pleased that at least the kids are getting the attention I didn't.

I'm worried about perverts grabbing little girls out in the park. Everyone always comments how pretty Kylie is. One woman said to me - you better watch out that some rich woman who can't have kids doesn't kidnap her. I told Tony and he said it can't happen ... too far fetched.

Kylie attends the local Catholic school. There was a big discussion about this for Tony is Catholic and Lucy Church of England. As a child she had been threatened:

If you don't behave, you'll be sent down to the convent.

Tony made the decision about the Catholic school, and Lucy

made the condition that they would not be hypocritical about this, so she insists that Tony takes the children to Mass at least once a fortnight. They often go as a family.

Lucy: Tony said he'd like the kids brought up Catholic, I think I would too. When I took Kylie down to school past Collingwood school ... I couldn't let her go there ... too many bad languages from little kids, kids saying get nicked - that sort of thing. Up there (Catholic school) you get a few, but if Sister catches them, they get smacked on the bum.

Religion's pretty important. The environment they come up in is much easier. I think there's a lot more restriction that we'd rather see them go through.

It's funny. Every time I've got a problem I go to Mass. I always pray for help ... and I'm always broke. We've had financial trouble and I'll sit down and pray that we get over it in some time ... and it always works that way. (For) Tony ... there's someone up there - there's some force, something that you don't know. He doesn't know who He is. I don't think he's as strong as I am on it. I believe in God.

Both Tony and Lucy have a delightful, wry sense of humour:

Lucy: Are you coming to the school concert?

Tony: In what capacity? Do they want me to sing?

Triptych: 2

Tony and his family

Jim and Betty Mathews have lived in the same house for over thirty years. They have recently redecorated, using heavily patterned papers throughout the small, poky house. In the lounge the paper is green, the carpet floral, and the vinyl lounge suite bright red. The toilet is down the garden: Jim and Betty thought of putting 'the loo' inside when they renovated, but decided it would be too expensive.

Mrs Mathews does not go out to work. Mr Mathews works as a commissionaire for a large insurance company, a job he was assigned when he returned from the Second World War. He was stationed in Singapore and Tobruk and when he watches the television show 'The Sullivans', it 'brings it all back'.

There are three 'children': Lesley, 34, married with two children. Lesley's husband is Lebanese and they don't visit very often. This annoys Mrs Mathews a great deal. Now, when Lesley is sick, Mrs Mathews won't help, because she believes Lesley doesn't pay her dues.

The younger daughter, Kerry, 24, is also married. Mrs Mathews, according to Tony and Lucy, was very upset, because she had to get married.

Lucy: She (Tony's mother) didn't think she would do anything like that. Tony and I had a go at her, saying they should have told her about the pill because she was engaged at the time. She was very sheltered - she does everything her mother wants her to do.

I was surprised that she wants to have another baby because her mother's had Shane (3) most of his life.

Lucy explained that Shane spent all his time at a creche or at his grandmother's:

I think he's confused ... from five o'clock in the morning he's up to go to creche, home at five o'clock, straight to bed. She's too tired to look after him.

She's going to work to pay the bills, but I'm not working, and we're sort of managing.

Betty Mathews is 'boss' in this household:

Lucy: Tony's father ... he's nice; a bit of a bum, but he's nice. He'll stick with anything she says. She's the real decision maker ... Tony's dad - he hands all his money over. He only gets his lunch money and bus fare into town each day.

The night I was there, Mrs Mathews was wearing a dress, cardigan, short grey socks with scuff slippers. She smoked constantly, talking through a cigarette which slunk from the edges of her lips. Jim Mathews sat unobtrusively behind the conversation, which was mainly between Tony and his mother. The television was on, and a film - *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* - was being screened.

Tony: It's one of the best cowdys I've seen.

Jim: What's that? - cowdy? And we gave you a good education.

The family are staunch Catholics, and Tony is the son. He was sent to one of the elite Catholic colleges in Melbourne for a 'good education'.

Tony: My parents were oldfashioned and they still are in a lot of their ideas ... but their idea was that you gave your boy a chance. A boy is a boy and a girl is a girl. You just treat a boy different to a girl ... (not) till they're over ten (do the differences really start to count).

(Mum and dad) are very conservative. They think because they sent me to college I should be better off than they are. That's the reason they gave me an education ... but then I look at it different.

They gave me an education to be an individual, to be able to think for myself. They probably gave me something they couldn't afford, and they had to justify the faith they put in me. That's probably half the battle.

The constant tension, or battle, between Tony and his

parents, is interpreted by Lucy:

You can understand why Tony is like he is. His mum and dad didn't accept him for what he was and therefore a lot of friction started way back when he was growing up ... mainly when he was starting to decide for himself. I don't think there's a breakthrough yet - they can't really accept the sort of things he does (like going to the pub each night).

I was reading his stars and it summed him up beautifully. He's like a bird, he likes to flutter around. If you clip his wings too much, that's when the trouble starts. His mother was always clipping - not sort of letting room to grow.

Tony: I think you gotta look at it this way. You could give a boy more responsibility - not responsibility but a little more latitude. He's heading into different problems than girls are ... and I think that's how people think. A woman's got to be kept. If you're gonna be honest, a guy has got more responsibility than a girl.

Jim and Betty Mathew have a number of dreams for their son. One concerns a business - donut buses on the pier, run by one of Betty's sisters and her husband. Tony has been offered work at weekends on the buses, on the understanding that he will one day inherit the business, for the couple who own it have no children. Lucy thinks he is wasting his time, however, for such promises made in the past have all fizzled. This is now causing friction between Mrs Mathew and her sister, though Tony and Lucy are more inclined to shrug it off.

Another dream is that Tony has a son. Mr Mathews wants the family name to continue (and it cannot unless the three girls retain it), but Mrs Mathews sees it in more basic terms. On one visit, Tony was told by his mother that

He hadn't proved himself a man because he hadn't a boy. His father had.

For Mrs Mathews, however, there is an ambivalence about more pregnancies, and an embarrassment about 'things sexual'.

Lucy talks of the time they were living there:

One of the things that upset Tony's mum is that Tony would walk in while I was having a shower or a bath. She was always knocking on the door. I think she didn't want to walk in on anything, but she would have been more embarrassed. I think I would have had to pick her up off the floor.

Lucy and Tony have not yet told his parents about the pregnancy.

Lucy: I won't be telling Tony's mother until the last minute, 'cause I've gotta go through what I went through last time, about being ashamed of myself for having babies ... She keeps saying she's scared we're going to have a baby, and we shouldn't ... but she should know by now - we're gonna have it whether she likes it or not.

She said at Kylie's party. You don't want to have another baby yet. You want to have a rest from it. When she found out (last time) she said to Tony: oh, you're a dirty old man.

Tony and his mother have few spoken arguments. However, when they were living there, Lucy says she always locked herself in the room or went for a little walk if one was brewing.

Lucy has never called Tony's mum anything, and always refers to her as Tony's mum. Lucy and Mrs Mathews have only had one fight, Lucy preferring in normal circumstances 'not to rock the boat' because she knows how fond Tony is of his parents.

The argument occurred when they were all living under the one roof. Tony had come home exhausted from work, and Lucy decided she couldn't stand hearing his mother attack him about money, yet again.

Lucy: I thought I might as well air my opinions and clear the air. At least we'd know where we stood with each other. Tony was on my side. He was more concerned with calming me down for the kid's sake (Lucy was pregnant). I just said I'm going. I can't stand it here any more, and he said - right, we'll all go. I was quite surprised. He didn't say a word afterwards.

Contact between Tony and Lucy and his parents is frequent. Lucy talks of a difference in her relationship with Mrs Mathews if Tony is not there.

Lucy: If I'm there by myself, we get on like really good friends ... even with his father (I get on), but they sort of leave him out.

Tony and Lucy and the three girls often visit for tea on Sunday, though Lucy finds this a strain at times.

If we growl at one of the girls, Tony's mum will pet her up. Under the table, Tony will say she shouldn't do that - 'cause that's not good for her. She does it with Shane (grandson). If his grandfather says something, he'll run to his grandmother, and she'll do something different.

Mrs Mathews often hands over packets of biscuits, boxes of soap powder .. specials from the shops that week; Lucy says it is her way of easing the money situation. The girls do not go to her to be babysat, if Tony and Lucy have an alternative.

Lucy: We left Mandy with Tony's mother when she was about two months old and apparently she cried all the time. As soon as we walked in she said - you can take your baby and keep it, so Mandy hasn't been there since.

I don't believe in putting kids onto grandparents that much. I like it to be a pleasure when they go.

And of the relationship with each of their families:

Tony: I'm close to my parents because they're sort of dependent on me.

Tony believes his parents 'live' through him: they want him to be a success, both in the business world and in terms of family tradition.

Lucy: Tony's more or less the same (with his family) as I am with mine - close. They're important to me, but not as important as my family are. Just getting on well with them is a big enough step for me. Her heart's in the right place - sort of. If things don't go the way she'd like them, she'll let you know.

Lucy and her family

Lucy is the eldest daughter in a family of four boys and two girls; she feels close to all her brothers and sisters, and especially close to Kate. Rosa and Les, their parents, separated fifteen or more years ago. Lucy doesn't know why, though two of her mothers' sisters suggested a 'few things'.

Lucy: Apparently Dad was a bit of a casanova ... running around on the sly, so whether that broke them up or whether he just wanted to take off. Mum worships the ground he walks on. If she had the chance she'd go back.

The couple were not married, and two of Lucy's brothers discovered this only recently when they applied for birth certificates. Lucy and Kate have known this for years and presumed the boys did likewise.

After Les went away, Rosa could not manage the six children so all the children moved to Nan's, Rosa's mother, though Rosa stayed in the part of Victoria where she had been living. Les neither sent maintenance, nor maintained contact.

Talking of that time, Lucy says:

Nan (was) the leader of the clan. The house was huge - four big bedrooms ... Nan made the rules - even with the uncles (mother's brothers) ... they used to fight a lot and she wouldn't be doing nothing, but the next morning they'd walk in with their tails between their legs.

Nan was strong enough. She's got set ways on how kids should be brought up. Its not really strict but just good guidance - a very hard strap. She was unfair a few times. I can remember when she hit Paul (brother) for no reason. That's when I stuck up for him. Said a few things I probably shouldn't have said. I was sort of protecting him.

There was heaps of love there - it was just like one big happy family. We never went without a meal but it was poor compared with what we are now: like we never had apples sitting on the table and we didn't have coffee for morning tea. We had water ... substantial enough plus they did a lot of fishing down at the creek. Five nights out of

ten we had pancakes and scones ... live on flour - and for meat - they even got a kangaroo one time - I don't know if they ate it or not.

With my brothers and sisters I had plenty of confidence. I was just starting school - I would've been about nine. Paul, Kate and Ray started school when I started. No one touched them at school ... Anybody teasing one of the boys at school I kicked that person up against the wall. I was their big sister when they needed me.

The family sticks together ... I took over the role of being leader, strangely enough 'cause even with my eldest brother I used to boss him around. The boys might just have us - my sister too - on a little pedestal - in their eyes we can do no wrong.

Rosa kept contact with the children, visiting whenever she could. Such trips were rare though, because she had linked up with a man called Bill Williams: they have since had seven children, giving a total of thirteen.

Lucy: Bill - he's the one who's always illtreating her. She comes out with black eyes. She was in hospital once. She's had the hard life. Ill-treated ... physically and numerous breakdowns - three attempted suicides that I know of although I think her suicides were just a way of getting attention. I wish she had cried out in another way.

Rosa lives out of Melbourne, in the country. When Lucy moved down to Melbourne she used to try and visit her mother each weekend ...

... even if Tony couldn't go I'd go by train and stay overnight. Bill Williams - he's just a big threat to me ... He's a huge man ... I back away when I see him.

We got off to a bad start. I told him off when I was only a kid for belting mum ... I remember once when he was belting mum in the kitchen ... He was really belting into her, and little Luther (their son) was only four - he rushed in to help his mother, to help mum, and Bill Williams just hit him back ... you know deliberately, not pushing him away but hitting - and like he's hit his head against the wall and cut his head open ... that was a bad night. I called him a murderer ... I'll never forget because I thought he was dead ... he was just motionless.

Mum went hysterical and I had to calm her down and

he just disappeared ... he was drunk ... its the only time he starts busting her up, although the last few times I've seen him he's just picked on her ... he drinks a lot.

Mum's an alcoholic - she says she's going to get help, but she won't go. Nan says she wasn't much of a drinker till she met up with Bill Williams.

I though it would offend Tony if he found out she was an alcoholic but he's not ... the last few times she's written to me for money ... like she wanted to get a few things for the kids ... I'm not silly ... I'd probably think she's getting a few bottles as well but I've sent it to her ... I've been the one to stop and think, but Tony has always said ... what is \$20 going to do?

Rosa has tried to leave Bill Williams several times ...

But she didn't have much success .. he always came round crying with some sob story and mum being the softie she is believed it. The last few times she's left him with the kids ... she's in a little trap because she can't do without the kids.

I was a bit shocked when I found out she was drinking all the time, then I just kept trying and trying to get her to give it up and when I saw I wasn't getting anywhere I just thought I had to be there when she needed me. I told her that too, the last time I saw her.

I've only got one mother ... I've got to sympathise with mum a lot - I hated what she was going through ... all the bad times, the tough times. Even though she wasn't with us she always sent us birthday cards or wrote letters ... to tell us she still loved us and every time she saw us she started crying and carrying on ...

Mum's come round and cried out for help ... I've actually tried to talk to her ... I just sit down and talk to her, like her mother. I do, I feel ... I'm stronger than what mum is, which is probably why ... if she does yell out to me I'm always here.

I still blame him (father) for all the trouble ... if he hadn't left she'd still be with him ... I know that, because she's mum ... she'll put up with anything, just to be needed. I feel nothing, nothing ... not a thing (about dad).

Lucy says a number of other relatives are there to give support to Rosa, particularly Aunty Stella.

She's very good at caring - you'd always like to have her around, for ever. Mum and Aunty Stella believe that our relatives come back to help (after they have died): they don't talk to them, but they can actually see them.

Out of Lucy's family, Ray is the one who identifies most strongly as an Aboriginal. Lucy wonders whether his recent search for his father or his involvement with the Aboriginal community have caused this. Ray is trying to get Lucy to think about where she wants to be buried, he believing in the fact that she should return to where the family comes from.

Lucy, if asked in a social context if she is Aboriginal, will reply 'yes'.

But if they say I'm Maori, I say yes. All I see myself as is 'little old me'.

She recalls an incident when she and Kate were still living in Swan Hill, a town with a strong Aboriginal identity.

Kate and I were in the pub after shopping ... this queer had got laughed at because he was getting too drunk, so he's gone home angry at everyone and about 10-15 minutes later he stood up with his dirty old bone pointer and everyone gave him a little chant. It was new to us, it was really funny too; we had to hold back our laughter, but to everyone else it was a big shock - they didn't know what was going on. I'm not as serious as most 'coories'¹ about tradition, but I still will respect. Oh its not a religion, it's just the tradition. I won't laugh at them. It's the same as going to church. A lot would laugh at me. If I laughed at a coorie, he'd be sort of violent - not violent but hostile. As to the reason that one blackfella doesn't understand another ... something like that, it's really sort of an abuse. We had to wait till they disappeared so we could have a really good laugh.

The coories are pretty jealous ... they didn't like Kate and me, because we'd go to beauty shops and get our hair done ... I just sort of steered clear of them if I could ... I wasn't out to destroy

¹ 'Coories' - derogatory word for Aboriginals.

their confidence in themselves ... actually when I got to know them and they got to know me they probably soon found that out.

Under the Aboriginal Education Scholarship scheme, Lucy and two of her brothers spent time in Melbourne living with WASP families in wealthy suburbs. Lucy says all three of them were intelligent, but lazy, and didn't know what to do with their lives.

Ray done fifth (form) and Derek done fifth (form), then just left, Ray went to work for a while ... he was trying to find out what he wanted in his life - he's still trying.

I don't know what half of them are doing (work). It's what they want to do that's important - they sort of switch a bit. It's their business if they haven't got a job.

If Ray looks for advice I'll give it to him. If he doesn't, I'll still give it to him. I told him not to settle down again with anyone permanent. He's not ready, even though he's 28 (his first marriage broke up).

If I had a house I'd have had their two children ... Lorraine (ex-wife) will hold on to them just to get at Ray. She doesn't look after them from all accounts.

Lucy believes there's a lot of jealousy about her 'hold' over her brothers, resentment by their wives.

I've never stopped caring for them ... with Tim, he's the youngest, if anything goes wrong I'm up there like a shot - ready to protect him no matter what. He's 20, living in a bungalow at the back of his fiancée's place. They've (in-laws) got big plans for him to get married. I don't know if he wants to be married - he's not that settled.

I said ... Paul was too young. They thought I was just being jealous, but he got a bit wild last year. I think boys need more time to settle down than girls do, particularly my brothers.

Lucy's confidence in herself and her sense of humour enable her to manipulate a situation.

Some (relatives) was using me to improve their position round the place. I was used as a stepladder till I finally stood up straight, and they all fell off.

Tony, Lucy, Kylie, Tina, Mandy

Within weeks of meeting Tony, Lucy got pregnant; Lucy initially thought Tony would not be interested in kids:

Imagine - a 24 year old man? When I was about three months I rung Tony, and said: 'I'm not doing it' (having an abortion). I'm keeping it and you can do what you want. He said 'that's good' - probably he was hoping I'd keep it.

It wasn't religion that stopped me. It was me, myself, I couldn't, you know. I thought it would be easy to do, but I just sat and thought, and thought, and thought.

When Lucy asked Tony for financial aid, his reaction had been to threaten to take her to court. Lucy had been really disappointed in him, but realised it was a 'knee jerk' reaction.

When Lucy returned to Nan's, and after Nan and the others found out about the pregnancy, Nan questioned Lucy about her relationship.

(Nan said) 'I hope you haven't given Tony a hard time, 'cause it takes two to tango'. She sort of blamed Tony for not being there, but I said 'don't worry Nan, we're still friends'.

Nan had always said - if you need to come home quick the back door's always open, and I found the back door quickly enough. I was happy, because I was at home. Nan doesn't believe in adoption. I think that was the first thing she said when she found out - 'you're not adopting it out'.

Tony, during those months, was in Melbourne and, in his words, hanging round with the same friends, football club, and after a brief sojourn at his parents' house, in his own flat.

Tony: I didn't really make a decision, about Lucy or the baby. I suppose our relationship wasn't all that strong, or would probably have been different if she had been around. The fact that she was miles away ...

Lucy had a twenty hour labour when she was having Kylie, and arranged for Nan to phone Tony immediately after the birth. Nan waited for four days because Kylie was bruised, and had a birthmark straight across her face. She didn't want to ring until she knew Kylie was all right.

Marg: When did you start thinking of the child as yours?

Tony: *When she had it. It's hard to explain ... The whole reaction wasn't there until ... I suppose it was different when I seen her, but I think the main change was when I knew she had it. Like she was having it - it wasn't a reality - it wasn't true ... but then, like she was born. I had a daughter. It was that different twist.*

When Kylie was fourteen months old, Lucy and Kylie arrived for a visit and stayed. They did not tell Tony's mother about Kylie.

Lucy: *They knew I was with him. They knew a woman was there because his shirts weren't going home to be washed. When he did take one of his washes home, a baby's singlet got caught up. He said it was a friend's who had been visiting with a baby.*

I always said to him - what will you do if your mother found out? He said - leave town. It could have been anything. From having a baby when you're not married and not telling her. When she did find out, she didn't do anything.

I called her up one night: I could only hear myself talking and his mother talking but Kylie had been talking like a magpie. His mother asked Tony if I had a baby with me, so he just said yes. She just goes - is it yours? Yes, and that's all.

Tony and Lucy had a reasonably smooth relationship in the next few months, though Lucy wasn't too sure how long she would be staying or if she was going to be part of a long-term relationship.

Lucy: *I told Tony when we moved in together. I'm more loyal than an old labrador.*

They thought of getting married when Tony's divorce came through (the marriage is now being investigated by the

Catholic Church for possible annulment). They mentioned this plan to Mrs Mathews.

Lucy: She wanted this and that. She was making too much fuss of it, I didn't want to do it. Then my brother said he'd like to be best man. I got sick of it, and said to Tony - if we do it, we've got to sneak in and do it by ourselves. I don't want a big fuss. He said it wouldn't worry him one way or the other.

Then Tony changed his job, plans were shelved, and Lucy got pregnant again.

Lucy: We used to have big fights. I remember I wouldn't clean up a lot. I always used to leave the dishes. He couldn't understand that I was going through a lot of changes. He hadn't been around for Kylie, so he had missed out on that.

Tony and Lucy had one very big fight, an argument about Rick, a special friend of Tony's. Rick is still a constant source of strain, for Lucy says when the two get together - 'heaven knows what they might do'. Towards the end of the fight ...

Lucy: I asked him for some money to get some milk for Kylie. He said I'm not giving you a cent. You're the one walking out on me. So as I'm going out the door, and by this time he was a bit full, I said I'm glad we didn't get married ... at least now we'll save the cost of a divorce. Then he sort of looked a bit shocked.

Tony and Lucy had another big fight when they were living in the flat about the television store. As Lucy recalls it, Tony told her to 'shape up or ship out'. That's the ultimatum I got at 12 o'clock one night. I went downstairs and cleaned up the place. I was sobbing, then I got a bit hysterical.

Serious arguments are now few and far between.

Lucy: Even when we're fighting, his dinner's in the oven.

After all we've been through I don't think we'll ever part. I know we've grown to mean too much to each other, plus we know each other's bad habits -

so why get used to someone else's bad habits?

... He's a pretty complicated man ... there's a lot of moods ... He likes to stay out late, to talk a lot, especially with his business and races ... and there's his impulsiveness, especially when it comes to money ... He can't plan anything and his silly little parking fines ... they used to worry me but I've grown to accept them ...

Lucy gets angry about the time he spends at the pub:

I tell him it's a long day at the flats - he says he understands, and that's worse, because that's all he does ... The rough times are about his drinking. I used to tease him about finding another floosy - he said no, you'd leave me if I did, and I said - you're right ... it's one thing I don't have to worry about.

I'm glad Tony's the sort I can talk to about things - without his coming down heavy on me. Just the fact that he listens, it's easier to let something out than have it bottled up inside ...

Lucy and Tony know themselves as people, and know each other. They have also worked out where each person is in the relationship.

Lucy: I've got my own independence in my own way. I can depend on Tony being the breadwinner but, me, myself, I see myself as independent of him. I don't rely on him to spark up a conversation for me from other people or go out and meet people. I'm quite capable of doing it myself.

I don't need to assert myself, but when I do I come out with flying colours. If Tony tells me a lie, I'm seething because I'm a straight person. I usually rant and rave about it because it just bounces off him and that makes it worse. I've hit him once. I just got that wild with him, he just said go away and I just walked out. He's never even struck me, if he did I wouldn't talk to him for starters.

We make most of the decisions together. Tony will have the final decision. We'll have a debate and he'll know my view but I don't want to have the final responsibility.

Tony: We try to sort things out, but I suppose I have more power. I think basically because that's the way we started off. Probably Lucy was disadvan-

taged. Since we started off things haven't really changed.

Marg: Do you feel in control of your world?

Tony: It's hard to say ... yeah, I'm in control but it's just like the captain and his ship - it's not always going straight.

Lucy: ... not always smooth sailing.

Tony: She sort of fitted in with my life more than I've fitted in with hers.

Later ...

Lucy: I have a little pet name ... I don't even know where he got it from ... he was always calling me Petal-Pie - there was a horse called Petal-something so he backed it and won. He doesn't use it in front of his mother ... it's between him and me.

Marg: How would you describe Tony as a person?

Lucy: Oh God, his head would swell if he heard this. He's kind, he's kind to me, he's kind to lots of people ... he's soft. If he knows a person can afford it he'll charge the right rate for cartage work. If he can see they're a good sort of battler he'll hardly charge anything. He's understanding. He's just a good man to have around. The strength. As long as he's around anything that we go through I can sort of bear. It's funny because he said to me the other night so long as I'm around .. We both boost each other's confidence should it start to fall.

The next morning (after that conversation):

Lucy: Tazz (nickname) couldn't sleep last night: his head was too big.

Tony: They were nice things you said about me!

Another morning Lucy came out of the bedroom chuckling and holding up a short nylon nightie:

Lucy: If you realised the rumpus this has caused in the bedroom the last two nights, the compliments. I've had it for years. If I'd known I would have worn this years ago. I'm going to keep on wearing it.

Marg: I waited 45 minutes before going to the toilet last night! (the toilet is next to their bedroom; thin walls).

Lucy: *Our sex life doesn't get interrupted by anyone staying here. It takes about 45 minutes to get warmed up, and I'm still deciding whether I want to or not.*

We don't feel obliged to do anything for each other in the bedroom. I don't feel obliged to do anything and he with me ... there has been occasions when he's felt like it and I haven't and if I don't want it he won't force the issue and the same with me ... if he's too tired and I do, I just roll over and start counting sheep. We sort of make a joke about it ... we don't make it too uncomfortable for each other.

To celebrate as a couple on special occasions, Lucy and Tony make a special effort:

Lucy: *We always manage to have a nice little dinner between the two of us. Probably big steaks or fried fish. Fish has a sentimental part for us because that was our first romantic dinner together.*

The last time I got flowers was on Mother's Day ... a huge bunch. I gave Tony a little gift on Father's Day.

Marg: When Tony comes home, you're different.

Lucy (serene): *I sort of look forward to his coming home at night. Even if it's three o'clock in the morning - as wild as I am, I'm still happy to see him.*

Then, with a typical chuckle, Lucy said:

Tony came in last night about 12.30 and tried to sneak into bed. I couldn't let him get away with it, so I said: it's harder sneaking into bed than bypassing a couch, ² isn't it?

² I slept on a couch in the living room.

Both Tony and Lucy care deeply about the children, and have 'thought through' ideas about bringing them up.

Lucy: There is such a thing as a paternal instinct. It never came out until Tina was born. He (Tony) was always flirting with Kylie - she was almost a model child - something new, you know ... but after Tina came he started being more of a father, instead of a little boy playing with a new-found toy.

Tony was present for Mandy's birth, though not for Tina. He has always hated the sight of blood. He once got a job as a hospital orderly, but lasted two days, because he fainted. Both for Tina and Mandy the labour was six hours.

Tony: It was unintentional that I see the birth. It got to the stage when I thought - what am I leaving for? It's not as if you're going to see something you don't want to see. I was upset by the pain - you sort of sympathise.

Lucy: I vaguely remember him being there. It just ... came on too quickly. I didn't have a chance to get adjusted, but I was waiting for the thump.

Tony: I saw it first - the most amazing thing I've ever seen.

Lucy: All the time he held her - he held her first. He couldn't stop grinning. He was a bit worried because she had white stuff all over her face.

The doctor was giving me stitches - when he went to put the stitches in, I just couldn't stop shaking. He said - 'you shouldn't feel a thing'. I don't think he put the anaesthetic in. Tony was getting really wild. He was going to have a go at him, but what could he do? He's a Jewish doctor.

I remember when Mandy was born. When she came out, she just kept looking everywhere. Tina was half-asleep, I never even seen Kylie - they took her away.

Lucy did not breastfeed either Tina or Mandy, making this decision on the basis that she had not breastfed Kylie. Lucy was also concerned that Tony would pet Mandy, having been there for her birth, but this has not proved to be so.

After Tony and Lucy had joined forces, it had been Tony who said

It's silly to have one child.

So there were two, three, soon to be four. Lucy feels a special closeness to Kylie because of the fourteen months they spent 'on their own'.

Lucy: Kylie, I think she's more clingy to me. We are still trying to unwind ourselves.

I was pretty worried about her not having a father. It stuck in the back of my mind because I pushed it there. She had plenty of uncles to sort of fill the father role.

He likes it when people notice the girls at a party ... or anywhere they just say: I love you daddy, or I love you mum.

Tony: The kids come to me when I'm home. I'd like to thing I did the role as a father pretty good, I think I'm just what the kids expect their father to be.

Both Tony and Lucy make a conscious effort to treat each child as an individual. Different treatment could come about if the 'expected child' is a boy. Both want a son, for reasons bound up with Tony:

Lucy: I just hope this one's a boy so I can get my tubes tied and not have second thoughts.

Tony: I'd love to have a boy. I'm sure we would be looking forward to a girl if we had three boys.

Lucy: Deep down, he'd like to do something, 'cause he knows his father would be happy (he'd like someone) for his father to talk to.³

Tony cuddles the children with great gusto, plays games, gives them piggyback rides. One time when Lucy and I were out Tony collected the children from Aunty Stella's where

³ The fourth child was another girl. Both Tony and Lucy said they were delighted.

they had been for the day: he put Mandy to bed that night with her shoes on.

Lucy: He's a useless man when it comes to putting on pyjamas - gets them all inside out and upside down.

Tony will change a wet nappy, but not a dirty one. He'd rather faint. He's just sort of the standby (parent). Like he's doing his job for seven days a week - you can't expect them to come home and look after the kids as well.

Everything I've done for the kids has been by instinct. I just do what's natural. Like when they've been sick I haven't rung anybody.

Being a mother means ... taking care of them and worrying about their temperatures and worrying when they're crying or distressed or if they're too hot ... how to cool them down.

Discipline is a shared responsibility:

Lucy: If the kids are really naughty I smack them. I notice if I shut them in their bedroom, they just bang on the door and make it even worse. I don't smack them across the face - only the bum and legs. They're not old enough to be smacked across the face. They've got to be sixteen - that's when I got my first smack across - slapping a child's face is a bit ... I don't know ... taking advantage of your height.

If I've had trouble during the day, I'd talk to Tony about it at night - make sure I've done the right thing or disciplined in the right way.

I've seen it where kids do take over and it's not a good sight ...

... If they're fighting I'll say: you shouldn't do that ... it's your sister - we are trying to teach them their best friends are their own family.

I'd like to be softer, but I can't. If I shout, and there's no need for it, I feel guilty. It doesn't happen very often; or if I've yelled at the wrong one, I feel small. I don't really worry about what other people think of my yelling.⁴

Talking of my presence: I haven't been holding back on yelling at the kids ... we haven't been holding back. If you didn't have kids and these were screaming I'd make a big effort to shut them up.

I did at first, but you'd go crazy if you're going to think about other people. I just think good luck to them.

When Lucy is sick she says she roars at the children: Tony asks the children to 'sort of help your mother because she's not well', and then Lucy says she sits down with the children just before they go to bed and explains why she has been roaring.

That's another fault I've got. I'm a stickler for them to say please and thank you, but I don't do it myself.

Kids are kids and you don't expect anything special from them - I'm just pleased that these girls are producing their best form when we go out. They're not really bad sort of kids. They're not perfect.

Marg: Do you disagree in front of the kids?

Tony: Very rarely.

Lucy: We shoot each other looks.

The girls 'don't know' about intercourse, yet.

I'm not going to tell them. They don't see me and Tony 'cause we always make a habit of doing it when they're not around or if they're not going to come in. We're not going to make an issue of it if they do walk in on us. We're sort of waiting for the right time which is when they start asking ... that's when we start getting our books out ...

Too many people treat it like a big taboo, which is probably what Tony's mum has done. When Tony's running round the house with no clothes on he has to run a little bit ... back view's not too bad but they're amazed by the front view.

Of the three children, Tina causes the most concern.

Tony: *Lucy tells me I treat Tina differently, but I don't. It's just ... you gotta treat them different because they've all got different understandings of things. I knew that Tina was going to have problems 'cause she's in the middle, and she could see Mandy getting away with things. I don't think I try to make up - I treat her differently ... I can see why she's a bit aggravating at times.*

Lucy: I'd like Tina to be a bit more obedient but I've got to realise that's Tina. She's more confident in herself than Kylie. We're sort of striking each other - she wants to do her thing, and I want her to do what I think she should be doing.

With Kylie and Mandy, I used to sit up if they were having teething problems, but Tina always seemed to cope with it. She's had too much independence from me and because of that I haven't taken time out to follow through on her problems. Like when she just hit her head, I cuddled her, whereas before I would have just yelled at her saying - you'll manage.

Marg: Did you see her as a threat?

Lucy: Only to my credibility. You know how I'm telling everyone I don't like disobedient kids. Tina's not disobedient but other people might have thought that - since I've accepted that, we've had a much better relationship. She's sometimes almost as strong as I am, so by accepting that, she's almost being my best friend. I know that I'm not being singled out, that she hasn't really lost any love for me for all the bad times I've given her - but if I should miss a goodnight kiss there's a big roaring from the bedroom to say I've forgotten.

That feels good to have that in the past tense because I'm not getting up in the morning wondering how I'm going to cope with the day with Tina. I get up in the morning and Tina comes in - it's a nice feeling to say good morning - before it was - oh no, I don't want to cope today. I only told Tony - he was quite understanding about it.

I remember saying - Tina - I don't like you at all.

How Lucy and Tina's relationship would have developed is uncertain: a dramatic change came about after a brief separation.

Lucy: Aunty Stella came down for a visit - on the spur of the moment she'd taken Tina. That was from the Monday to the Wednesday - and I missed her - that surprised me - it did a bit, because I've always found it peaceful and quiet not having to argue, but that time I used to look at her bed and every time I'd stop and think whether I'd really been the mother she'd wanted, especially after she'd seen me pet the other girls ... and I'd realised that must be affecting her as well, seeing she's not getting the same sort of attention.

It's just flowing so I don't have to make any effort - before the effort was shortlived, and it was only three or four days before I was back yelling at her again ... I felt more guilty than anything about that ...

Everything Tina did annoyed me - now nothing annoys me because I've got to accept that she's Tina - she's going to be active - she's probably going to interrupt when I speak ... it's like Tony said ... the only thing we can do is give her a bit more room ... sort of compromising with her, whereas before I was straight up and sending her to the room. At times, very rarely I got through to her and I felt powerful, terrible ... that I'd finally got her down one; she's going to be a strong-willed person so that's how I've got to accept it.

Kylie, the eldest, is the most fragile of the three children:

I'd like to take some of Tina's strength and give it to Kylie, but I'd like to take some of Kylie's charm and give it to Tina - they're two opposites.

Lucy said quietly, and proudly:

Aunty Stella said to Tina the other day - come to mummy - and she said - you're not my mummy.

Comments in response to specific questions:

About confidence

Lucy: We're giving it to our kids by trying to let them be independent without too much interference.

About culture

Lucy: It's up to our kids. I'm not going to give them any Aboriginal training. If they want to pursue it that's their decision. Probably if I can get the right sort of books, like The Dreamtime ... to train them on language would be impossible.

Marg: What are the main things you value with the kids? (translated by Lucy to 'What do I cherish with them the most?')

Lucy: Their ability to get on with life - get on with situations such as going to kinder, school ... of course their health is pretty important.

The kids come first - I place the importance on the kids. They come first in everything I do.

I don't really want to go to work and leave the kids. I think the important time in a child's life are his first five years. If I had to (but) only if there was no alternative. Who'd look after the kids? - that's the problem - because I'm not sure anyone can look after them as well as I can, plus I'd be worried about how they were being looked after.

Marg: Do you think you're succeeding as a mother?

Lucy: *Yes, definitely - that's not bigheaded or anything but I do think I am and I know what I want to do with the kids. I didn't have any doubts about whether I'd be a good parent or not because it just comes naturally. I'd babysat mum's kids when I was 12 or 13 - a born mother.*

Our kids are entitled to Aboriginal Education grants. I'd like to keep them with Catholic schools - possibly as they are older send them to girls' schools - don't want to expose them to the boy/girl thing too early.

About the future:

Tony: *I own them now. I mean to say, in ten years' time I won't. I might be a bastard of a father in eight years' time. I hope not.*

Lucy: *I think I will have trouble (letting go). I was saying that at 16 when a boy pops the question ... Tony says she's waiting till she's 24. He's always saying he's going to have the shotgun out.*

Lucy: *I still want to be young when they're growing up. When I'm about 34 they're going to be heading up to their teens. Tony said I'll be young enough to cope with it - there won't be that much of an age difference.*

While they're growing up, it gives me a feeling of being needed. I felt like that when I was with the boys. I was their big sister when they needed me. That's part of Tony too, being wanted, being depended upon.

Marg: What is the worst thing that could happen to your children from your point of view?

Lucy: *Getting killed. That's my biggest fear, more than anything. And it's a conscious fear - car accidents, even walking down the steps (from the flats). I try to get there before them, but Tina's that*

quick. While I'm locking the door, she's off.

'Overheard'

Sometimes, just listening is a fruitful way of 'capturing' family praxis.

Lucy: I don't care what youse are going to do, and what youse are not going to do ... youse are going to bed right now and I'm not even going to come and tuck you in.

Tony: Go to your mother to change your bum.

Lucy: Answer back like that and you'll get another smack ... you told your father you were going to be good today and you haven't ...

Tina - do you want your mouth washed out with soap? Cut out this swearing.

Tina told Mandy to shut up:

Tony: Smarten up your language, little girl.

Tony (to kids): I'm not going to work till you finish and I'm in a hurry ... I don't want no more of this mucking around.

Tony: I don't know why you kids have to wake up so bloody early on a Sunday morning when you can't wake up during the week.

Lucy: Come on you two girls ... I'm not in the mood to referee a fight over toothbrushes.

Kylie and Mandy were going to stay overnight at Aunty Stella's:

Lucy: Kylie ... you look after Mandy ... make sure she be's good.

Kylie: She always be's good at Aunty Stella's.

Lucy: You come out of that room again, Kylie, and you will not go to Aunty Stella's for a holiday.

Kylie (to Tina): If you don't stop growling at me I'm not coming home from school.

Triptych: 3

The smoothly working family system is much more difficult to study than one that is in difficulties.

Laing, 1976:73

When I first broached the subject of research with Lucy and Tony I said I was trying to do research with ordinary families. Lucy's instant response ...

We're not normal, we're not married.

She changed the word: likewise Lucy and Tony change the world, or their perception of it, to 'fit' their beliefs and their behaviour. There is a consistency, a relaxed 'knowingness' about their lifestyle, perhaps a predictability, which suits them as a family. Both Tony and Lucy feel secure, comfortable, relaxed about where they are as people, and in relation to one another, and their children. They operate very much in a rhythm of caring about each other as individuals, with lots of warmth, loyalty, particularity, strength. Their ground rules about who does what, who is responsible for this, for that ... and why, are 'they' rules, based on a biological division of labour, that is, on traditional 'family' roles.

Lucy: Everything I've done for the kids has been by instinct. I didn't have any doubts about whether I'd be a good parent or not because it just comes naturally. I'm a born mother.

Tony: I like to think I did the role of father pretty good. I think I'm just what the kids expect their father to be.

Tony: The man accepts the situation. It's very hard to find an Australian - he doesn't sit home and do the dishes while his wife goes out to work.

Yet the contradictions are there - blatant, obvious, and unrecognised. Talking of Tony's mother, Mrs Mathews, Lucy says:

She's the real decision maker ... Tony's dad - he hands over all his money.

And with Tina, Lucy has had difficulty in 'doing what comes naturally':

We're sort of striking each other ... I looked at her bed and every time I'd stop and think whether I'd really been the mother she'd wanted ...

Parenting, parentwork, parenthood

Lucy has been mothering other people and looking after their needs since she was a child. She defined this in a leadership sense when her five brothers and sisters were growing up:

There was heaps of love there ... The family sticks together ... I took over the role of being leader, strangely enough, 'cause even with my eldest brother I used to boss him around.

And Lucy felt confident in this situation: she tackled anyone in the school who dared 'touch' her brothers or sisters even though she had just started school at the age of nine.

Lucy has also been parent to her mother for a considerable time:

Mum's come round and cried out for help. I've actually tried to talk to her ... like her mother, I do ... I'm stronger than what mum is ...

I was a bit shocked when I found out she was drinking all the time ... I just thought I had to be there when she needed me.

Lucy's nurturing is focussed on the person: there is no judgment involved. Tony has benefited from this:

You can understand why Tony is like he is ... He's like a bird, he likes to flutter around. If you clip his wings too much, that's when the trouble starts.

Tony's love for Lucy and the children is apparent, and he is fiercely proud and protective of his three daughters.

Tony: I own them now. I mean to say, in ten years' time I won't. I might be a bastard of a father in eight years' time. I hope not.

Tony became involved with Kylie at a much later date than Lucy, and not only because of the physical distance separating Lucy and Tony. He says ...

It's hard to explain ... The whole reaction wasn't there ... I think the main change was when I knew she had it. Like she was having it - it wasn't a reality - it wasn't true ... but then ... she was born. I had a daughter. It was that different twist.

Yet for Lucy the reality was different: from the time she heard about the pregnancy, Lucy's life changed, significantly.

Those first fourteen months when Lucy and Kylie were basically still living with Nan in Swan Hill had their impact:

Lucy: Kylie, I think she's more clingy to me. We are still trying to unwind ourselves.

Parentwork

This is Lucy's domain. Tony neither believes in doing the work in the house - the humdrum washing, ironing, cleaning, feeding .. of the children except when Lucy is feeling sick, and then he will try and 'muddle through'. Lucy told of the time when Tony was saved by the entry of his mother: he had just started to change a dirty nappy when his mother, to his great relief, walked through the door. When Tony is at home and supposed to be watching the children ...

He lies in bed, or he sits there reading his paper ... reading his newspaper on Saturday mornings for his horses.

Lucy, with a giggle, relates the story of Tony visiting a

workmate one weekend, and both males being embarrassed at 'being caught', because his mate was vacuuming the floor.

... yet Tony's dad does everything like that.

Though Lucy does not want Tony to help more in the house she does get angry about his not coming home:

I tell him it's a long day at the flats - he says he understands, and that's worse, because that's all he does.

Parenthood

Both have set ideas about how a husband, a father, a wife, a mother should behave, and these ideas are based on a presumed biological division of labour.

Tony: Basically the male is the breadwinner ... and what you try to do when you're a father is bring in as much bread as possible. The man's always been the breadwinner, the builder of the house ... natural instincts have got a lot to do with it.

Lucy: There is such a thing as a paternal instinct. It never came out until Tina was born ... after Tina came he started being more of a father, instead of a little boy playing with a new-found toy.

Tony believes firmly that he has the power in his family, yet it is Lucy who decides that he shall be allowed to go to the pub on Friday nights.

Lucy: I let him go then he can do what he wants ... but he shall not drive home.

It was Lucy who 'took off' when she was first pregnant.

Lucy: Tony didn't give me any money for fares or anything. I was quite independent, by choice. I was on my own and that's how I wanted it.

Contradictions to these ideals are ignored when practised by members of both families. For example,

Tony's mother is the decision-maker and 'boss' in that marriage. Mr Mathews, according to Lucy, hands over all his money and is given only his lunch money and bus fare in return. But, says Mrs Mathews, he has proved himself a man: he has sired a son.

Kerry, Tony's youngest sister, hands over the care of her son to her mother, most days.

Neither of Lucy's parents 'fulfilled' their obligations: Les, Lucy's father, deserted his wife and six children, and then failed to pay maintenance. Rosa, Lucy's mother, was unable to care for these six children, and has had great difficulty in bringing up the other seven.

Tony is concerned about how he will behave towards 'admirers' of his daughters, but no mention was made of their situation - that Lucy got pregnant when she was seventeen and still at school.

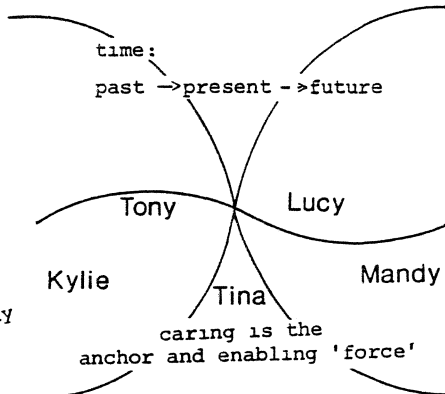
Total social fact

Values:
 family - including brothers &
 sisters - all important
 Catholic faith
 moral code
 God will support.

Significant Others:
 Aunt Stella

Nan
 Lucy's brothers and specially
 Kate - sister
 Jim and Betty Mathews
 Tony has one 'good mate' and
 a number of 'business mates'

Enabling Factors:
 acceptance of division of labour
 on biological grounds
 male - husband and father
 breadwinner
 female - wife and mother
 nurturer and housekeeper
 restricted use of space - flat
 and Tony's parents' home main
 'resting place'
 strong capacity and commitment to
 love and care
 adults for each other, themselves
 and their children
 acknowledgment of individuals
 strengths and weaknesses



Priorities:
 people count above all else
 survival - physical
 spiritual
 of 'selves' and as family unit
 paid work seen only as means
 to an end

(Non-Priorities)
 status
 physical appearance
 body
 dress
 public face
 'correct' language

Lucy: As long as he's around anything that we go through
 I can sort of bear.

Tony: I like to think I did the role of father pretty good.

*Four level analysis**Descriptive*

See preceding pages.

Normative

Lucy and Tony, like Suzanne and Lawrence, operate within a prescribed world of male and female roles, yet they quietly absorb the contradictions in their own lives and those around them. Lucy believes she is a good mother, and she confidently asserts she knows what a good mother should be, yet her acute sensitivity and perception of Tina as an individual causes her to question ...

I used to look at her bed and every time I'd stop and think whether I'd really been the mother she'd wanted ...

Lucy had enough strength and courage to deal with her feelings. In the past some days were really bad days:

Everything Tina did annoyed me - now nothing annoys me because I've got to accept she's Tina ... she's sometimes almost as strong as I am, so by accepting that, she's almost being my best friend.

One is reminded of Prather's words:

Tonight a little boy fell in my lap and looked up at me for affection. I felt tight and awkward. I was battling so hard about how I "should" feel that I didn't pause long enough to see how I did feel.

Prather, 1976
(pages not numbered)

Tony sees no disparity between being a good father and not knowing how to deal with practical details like putting on a child's pyjamas, or removing a child's shoes prior to putting them to bed. Nor in making comments such as

They (his parents) think because they sent me to college I should be better off than they are ... I'm close to my parents because they're sort of dependent on me ...

while still having his mother pay off debts incurred in business deals which went awry. Tony can live with such seeming contradictions in his 'should' world because he and Lucy primarily concentrate on living as Tony and Lucy: their 'shoulds' are so internalised that they are part of them. There is no tension between 'us' and 'they'.

Cognitive

Perhaps because of the unusual beginning to Lucy and Tony's relationship - their first meeting when Lucy was 17 and still at school; Tony recently emerged from a marriage; then a quick pregnancy and a geographical separation for some twenty months - Lucy and Tony had time to sift through their ideas about what they wanted for themselves and from each other. They had time to grow as independent people, and still retain that sense of themselves as people.

Lucy: I've got my own independence in my own way ... I don't need to assert myself but when I do I come out with flying colours. If Tony tells me a lie, I'm seething because I'm a straight person.

Tony: I'm in control but its just like the captain and his ship - it's not always smooth sailing.

They come together, therefore, as two individuals who 'fit' in exceedingly comfortably with one another.

It was Lucy who came and stayed. Six years later ...

Lucy: Do you want me to go away?

Tony: No.

Lucy: We'll sit around.

Tony: You have for six years ... I don't think anything was decided ...

Lucy: I just hung around and you didn't kick me out.

Lucy: Tony's number one in my life. I'd do anything for him - kids are number two ... then my family ...

Lucy: As long as he's around anything that we go through I can sort of bear.

It's funny because he said to me the other night so long as I'm around ... We boost each other's confidence should it start to fall.

So the relationship works between the two adults and together for all five. The Catholic Church to which they all turn endorses their behaviour, and Lucy gains more specific help, she says, when it is needed.

It's funny. Every time I've got a problem I go to Mass ... it always works ...

Explanatory

In Pouver's words this fourth level of analysis should be:

... the set of general, cross-culturally applicable concepts of the observer, which account for the logic of a given structural configuration.

Pouver, 1974:245

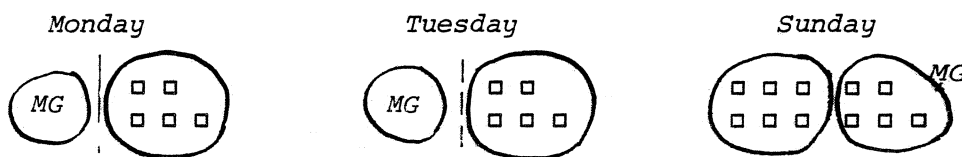
I am not using the notion of structural configurations, and in this particular instance 'the set of ... cross-culturally applicable concepts ...' have already been disclosed. There is little inconsistency between what happens on the ground, that is the descriptive level, and the explanatory. Tony and Lucy live-as-they-think; they live according to the norms which say .. an adult male should be .. an adult female should be .. Both live comfortably outside the legal institution of marriage, their relationship being defined in a mixture of we/they norms.

Eggs in the basket

That there is a 'comfortableness' and 'fit' about where they are as a family can be illustrated via this exercise. Lucy answered for both herself and Tony. Her answers were identical for what she considered they both put in their baskets, and what she considered they might want to put in; that is, she believes where they are now is where they want to be.

	<i>Self</i>	<i>Husband</i>	<i>Father</i>
<i>Investment of 'self' now</i>	(10)	(10)	(10)
<i>What Lucy considers they would like</i>	(10)	(10)	(10)
	<i>Self</i>	<i>Wife</i>	<i>Mother</i>
<i>Investment of 'self' now</i>	(4)	(13)	(13)
<i>What Lucy considers they would like</i>	(4)	(13)	(13)

We also played around with diagrams, trying to illustrate how I, as researcher, fitted into their family. The exercise was a leading one: I completed the first two. By Sunday, Lucy included me inside with them, Tony positioned me on the ring.



Research comment

The day before I was due to move in with Tony and Lucy I visited (after the initial contact I had visited three times). That day I arrived with some fruit and a bunch of flowers, and very quickly sensed a tension. About midway through the two plus hours' conversation, I asked what was wrong:

Lucy: It might be better if we could delay for a little while because the tension is getting too bad. We talked most of last night and then neither of us could sleep ... it doesn't solve anything but it helps. Tony's really getting quite het up - he's snapping at the kids, and at me, and he's frightened he will do it to you. He'd also like to be helpful and at present he's got this thing (work) on his mind.

I recall having another cup of tea and trying, tentatively, to ask if I would still be able to move in another time. Lucy said she thought so, and then I managed to get into the car, drove around one block, phone Don (husband) and burst into tears. I was already prepared at that stage, 'primed' to leave my family and burrow in with Tony and Lucy. I had to re-organise (see Part 1:4, p. 133). A week later I moved in.

From notes

My hangups again - I have worked my way up to expecting this to be a strain yet when I got here and got so warmly welcomed I felt relaxed.

Second day: Starting to feel 'complete' within four walls - cars pass, you see the lights, hear the noise - feel separate; instead of (being) in a block of flats now inside family's home.

Stop trying to put your time into their time.

Sixth night: I'm really chafing at the bit wanting to go home - nothing wrong here, it's just that I'm missing Don and the kids - feel I've gained in loving since I was here.

I phoned home each night from a public phone box out in the quadrangle - there was often a queue and one night the phone box was kicked. Each night Ana said stridently, Mum you come home.

One night Tony was late getting home. About 11.30 I said to Lucy:

I presume you'd like to go to bed.

Lucy: I can't go to bed. I'm your story.

Towards the end of the eight day period, I asked why they had agreed to participate:

Lucy: We more or less decided straight away to do the research. It was no big deal - if it's going to help ... don't get any skin off our nose - and she's been a model house guest - it's not too bad having someone here as long as I can get on well with them.

Marg: I don't feel as if I'm researching.

Lucy: You don't even look like one. I don't feel I could talk to a researcher but I feel I could talk to a friend.

Marg: Have you found it a strain my being here?

Lucy: No - I'm back to being more lazy than ever - just sitting around.

Tony: It's probably not important (you being here) ... you've got to act a little differently - it's a natural feeling - it's not you - it's probably anybody.

Tony: I have an ulterior motive for you being here.

Lucy: When I'm talking I forget about being nauseous.

Marg: What did you expect me to do?

Tony: We didn't know and we didn't care.

Back home:

Feelings of quiet joy, pleasure ... when Simon and I went shopping this afternoon I realised I was free to look in shops, wander around where I wanted ... first for eight days I've thought of we (my family) and they.

It's frightening: I am now back into brain power. It's like being reprieved. Almost as if to cope with the emotional wear and tear of being part of somebody else's life and offloading one's own I had to forfeit full brain power. Lucy is intelligent:

I am not talking down but it's such a total experience ... now I am free again, for a while ... it wasn't that I just needed time to sort out the caretaking aspects (of our own home/housework ..) but that I needed time to read, think, feel, explore ...

Ann, Shaun and Megan live with Ann's parents, Clive and Beth James, in Camberwell, a 'solid suburb' on the eastern side of Melbourne. ¹ Ann (33), Shaun (7) and Megan (3) moved there in May 1978, when Ann's marriage came apart. Colin, Ann's husband - 'my erstwhile husband' - is a lawyer. He gambled away his practice, their home, and Ann and the children moved out after a period of violence and considerable strain. Clive and Beth offered her a resting place, charged her \$35.00 a week full board for the three of them, and supported her. At the time Ann was doing emergency teaching so her income was spasmodic.

Ann: I dropped my bundle when we came here.

Beth: We took everything. We gave you shoulders and we shouldered the lot, because we needed to. You were nearer to a breakdown than I've ever seen anyone.

Ann talks wistfully of her old home about three kilometres away. This had three bedrooms plus a huge rumpus room upstairs which was the children's room.

I used to clean up once a fortnight.

Her parents' home is an older brick one in which Clive and Beth have lived for more than 25 years. Since Clive's retirement (1974) he has spent money, time and energy doing renovations, laid white carpet throughout the house, converted one bedroom into a television room, wallpapered, painted ... Ann's standards of housekeeping are high, but her mother's are even higher. The children have to remove their shoes before they walk on the carpet, are not allowed to make a mess, nor hang pictures or stick posters on the walls of their bedroom. Ann sleeps in a tiny verandah room.

¹ About half a mile from Lawrence and Suzanne Strahan: the two families do not know each other.

*Ann: It's a temporary home. It's not my home as such.
It's still my parents home.*

At the end of 1978 Ann had successfully applied to do a Postgraduate Diploma in Special Education and at the time of the research Ann was a full time student at Teachers' College, Megan was in child care there, and Shaun was attending the local state primary school. Clive and Beth were on a three month holiday in the U.S.A. visiting their eldest daughter, Rosalie, and her husband Tom, and their two children. Tom is in the U.S. Air Force.

Ann is tall, slim, attractive, with big brown eyes which she flashes in laughter and flirtation, but which can, equally quickly, fill with tears. She dresses in a feminine practical manner.

Ann: I feel good when I look good.

The children too are always neatly dressed:

Ann: I've instilled that into Shaun. Shaun does like to look nice. When he was little, if I wanted to get any particular clothes on him all I had to do was to tell him he looked smarter ... and they were on him like a shot.

Colin and Ann met through Martin, Ann's older brother. Colin and Martin were at law school together. Ann was initially just 'kid sister' but when she was about nineteen 'he started showing an interest.' Ann says now they should never have married.

Ann: An awful lot of (what went on) would have been habit - we mixed in the same circles - had the same friends - we knew each other. It was all too familiar.

They married in 1969. Midway through the marriage Colin bought a legal practice in one of Melbourne's outer suburbs. Ann sees the relationship as going down hill from that time.

though it took several years for it to disintegrate and some time before Ann would admit to anything being seriously wrong.

Rosalie's first marriage had also come apart. Martin and Bryan, the other two 'children' of the family, are both married.

Both girls went to the Presbyterian Ladies' College (PLC) in Melbourne, Ann then going on to train as a primary school teacher. She gained distinctions in maths, science and music and moved straight away into teaching secondary school. Ann stayed in the one school for six years, mostly teaching maths, but she also set up drama. Some of her keenest 'converts' are now well established in the stage/media world in Melbourne. Ann inherited her love of theatre from her mother, and both participated in amateur repertory for many years. Initially Ann thought she would like to make a career in the theatre but says she didn't have the courage. One year Ann was runner-up in the Best Actress award at a major Melbourne drama festival.

Another of Ann's keen interests is backgammon; she is especially good at it, often winning a prize at the weekly competition. She is competitive, and fiercely logical in her moves, whether in card games, word games, or argument about 'the world out there'. To 'switch off', Ann spends hours playing the piano, and one of her disappointments about staying at her parents' house is that there is no room for her organ, another special love.

Shaun has inherited his mother's mathematical ability; whenever children in the neighbourhood or at school have trouble untangling their Rubik cubes the catch-cry is 'give them to Shaun' and he has them 'rightway' in seconds. Shaun is the quieter of the two children, the more sensitive, the more thoughtful. Megan is bright, effervescent, and, like her mother, uses her big eyes to cajole, to communicate with anyone, everyone. The three - Ann, Shaun and Megan - enjoy a

specially close relationship; Ann is a 'complete parent', a loving parent, a loved parent. The relationship the two children have with their grandparents is also close.

All the family are Presbyterian, now Uniting Church. For several years, Clive, Beth and Ann had drifted away from regular attendance, but they have recently started attending again, although Ann says she and the children go

when nothing else is happening.

It was Shaun who rekindled their interest. He was out visiting with a family where they said grace. He first asked if they could say grace, then if he could 'go and see the house where God lives'.

Ann: On one Sunday when I went along with him, I walked in, sat down, and I had this beautiful warm feeling that I'm home ... All through the marriage bustup ... I got no comfort from religion and God. There were times when I fell on my knees on the kitchen floor ... tried to pray ... when I was hitting rock bottom ... I was always coming to a brick wall and getting nowhere.

Before, church was something (I) went to for social ... I belonged to the PFA (Presbyterian Fellowship Association) because I liked the boys who were going.

Ann has always liked male company and talks of being away with her parents on a Lodge weekend. After the Saturday evening dance she was told

*You have a complete aura of femininity about you,
Ann: there's not one man here who wouldn't want to take you to bed.*

Ann: I was just purring.

Since she and Colin parted, Ann has had a number of boyfriends, including Peter. Peter had been around for some months prior to the research period. He is tall, relaxed, fond of Ann and the children, though unsure of how to "handle" both Shaun and Megan. He has not had children of his own.

Before Ann's parents went to the U.S.A., Beth asked Peter to look after Ann for them. One of Beth's sisters had also asked Beth if Peter

... had all his bits and pieces - being in his thirties and not married.

Beth, according to Ann, thought this a huge joke and replied

I'm sure Ann would know by now.

Clive is less tolerant than Beth, both in terms of sexual matters - Ann said her father would be horrified if he knew Peter stayed till the early hours of the morning - and matters of financial ethics.

Some years ago, Clive received a serious knee injury at work. He suffers a lot of pain, and both he and Beth get severe headaches, in part reaction to the stress. Clive is still taking legal action about his knee, and Colin had been handling the case. Clive had lent Colin \$8,000; as yet there has been no tangible action, only a series of promises. Clive feels very bitter about this:

Clive: If he hadn't been my son-in-law, I'd have put him behind bars for what he did to me. I mean the lies he told me. He could have had me bankrupt. He just kept on, lie, lie, lie, lie for five years. I feel very bitter ... about any man doing that to me. I thought I was old enough not to be caught.

He was never part of the family; never seemed interested. Perhaps unable, unwilling to cope.

Clive has twice been Master in the Masonic Lodge. He holds dearly to the values of integrity, uprightness, fair play. He is a Justice of the Peace, was an honorary magistrate, and an elder in the church in the country town where he was second-in-charge of a large public works programme.

All the family vote Liberal, although Ann did decide to give the Democrats a vote in the last two elections. The

orientation is towards free enterprise, underpinned by hard work, value for a good day's work, and just reward including status and material benefits for one's efforts.

Ann describes herself as being middle class, and suggests one of the problems between Colin and herself was that he came from a 'housing commission' background, and a family where there was a lack of support, warmth and caring. With the James family, and Ann is very much a daughter of that family now, rather than being Ann Saunders, family is the important factor.

Whilst living back at her parents' home, Ann and the children operate within the rules that she grew up with: these include (my wording):

thou shalt honour and respect thy parents
 thou shalt love and be loved
 thou shalt realise that as husband and wife
 we come first, to each other
 thou shalt hide any conflict, and any disagreement shall be dealt with in the usual manner - by ignoring, procrastination, detour, failure to see or acknowledge ..
 if thou art in strife thou shalt receive support. ²

When Clive retired, Rosalie had sent from the States a picture containing these words:

There are two lasting gifts we can give our children: one is roots, the other is wings.

On the back she wrote:

² Ann's comment on reading these: 'Whew!' She agreed with the 'rules' but found reading them in this stark form disconcerting.

What more can I say? If Martin and Ann and Bryan were here they would echo the sentiment. Hence, in absentia, this is really from us all, to our parents. You gave us roots and a foundation that few people are lucky enough to experience, and through that the freedom to find our own peace and contentment. May you enjoy your retirement to the fullest and may your time alone together be all you dream. How you are loved.

Ann says she cries each time she reads this.

The strain of five people living in a home designed for gracious living, for Clive and Beth's retirement, is apparent, yet this strength of family caring and support enables everyone to survive.

Ann's relationship with each of the children is special: as a threesome they are a unit, strong, capable, cuddling, embroiled in each other yet open to outsiders too. One night both children were getting in the bath. Ann said to Shaun

Don't forget to wash your penis!

and then to me, with a grin,

He forgets to pull the foreskin back, and when he does, he gets a mighty big erection.

Shaun and Megan are very close to their grandparents, and this gives Ann time to sort out her relationship with Peter, to ease over the continuing pain of Colin and their breakup. The research caused Ann also to look at her relationship with her parents and with Peter. Of this time Ann said:

Ann: That was the month I grew up. It certainly precipitated my breaking up with Peter.

Triptych: 2

Ann and her family

Clive James was born in Western Australia, the eldest son in a family of four children. In the early 1930s he did an engineering degree at the University and then moved to Victoria in search of work. He had an accident, was admitted to hospital and met Beth when she was visiting her father in the same ward. They married in 1939. Rosalie was born 15 months later, then Martin, Ann and Bryan. Bryan teases his mother about the five year gap between him and Ann, claiming he must not have been wanted, but as Beth says,

*... now over six feet of Bryan wraps me up and says
'Aren't you glad you got me?'*

When Ann was about seven, Clive left his position with the Public Works as they wanted better schooling for the children than they felt was available in a country town. Neither parent wanted to break up the family by sending them to boarding school. Clive returned to an engineering appointment in the city. Later he managed his own company for various periods until retirement.

Beth is a secretary and worked for a Spastic Society for many years.

Talking of her growing up, Beth said ...

I don't ever remember my mother praising me for anything. I was the middle of three girls ... and I always felt I didn't have the ability of my older sister ... and that she was listened to. There was only one year and eight months between us. I felt I came under her shadow.

About her mother ...

She was a capable interesting mother. If we had people there my mother did the talking and I just sat and listened. Although my parents didn't have

the education, you'd never have known, and both my mother and father wanted us to have the education they didn't have.

Beth's father was a schoolteacher. 'We went everywhere because of his moves'. Her parents skimped and saved and sent all three girls as boarders to the Presbyterian Ladies' College. Ann, talking of her grandparents, Beth's parents, says:

With my grandfather ... it was his love and warmth I remember. With my grandmother it's her wisdom. I can remember saying to her that it upset me that I didn't much like Martin's wife. She said - you don't choose those whom your family marry. I guess I stopped kicking against it a bit when I stopped and listened.

Clive describes himself as the odd one out in his family because of his departure from Western Australia, though strong contact has been maintained with the family. The first trip home after he and Beth had married proved disastrous for Beth, who said she lacked confidence in herself. Her one source of pride was her strawberry blonde hair.

Beth: The first thing she (Clive's mother) said to me was 'I thought you were blonde'. She stripped me in that one sentence.

Confidence has been one of the main 'products' of this strong, strong marriage, and one of the main goals of Clive and Beth's parenting.

Clive: Everybody used to expect me to pass exams. I never got any praise.

Beth: Without my husband behind me I wouldn't have as much faith in myself. He's given me confidence in myself. He's given me support - all through our married life.

That's what makes our marriage. I don't ever stop to think. No matter what I did or what I do, or what I look like, I know what Clive thinks of me. I don't have to question it.

Their loyalty to each other is put before that to the children:

Ann: I remember mum saying at one stage to Bryan, if you're going to try and force me to choose between you and your father, then you will have to leave the house.

Clive: No doubt about it. Always. Never been anything else, has it dear?

Beth: It's been wonderful for me. It's made me, if anything, what I am.

Clive: It's made a big difference to me. You've all got to be (loyal) in this life. It's no good people running you down all the time. You've got to be boosted, people have got to be pleased with what you do. You've got to have that feeling.

Ann 'reads' her father differently; she does not know her father needs acknowledgment. Perhaps this is because she 'reads' him as a 'daughter', not as a 'wife'.

Ann: Dad can give. He will do things but he doesn't seem to feel the need to be appreciated.

Her feelings about her mother are different.

Ann: Mum's always boosted our confidence. Her own mother was a very efficient woman who never praised. She grew up with no confidence in herself or her own ability.

Beth: I was interested in anything they did and I was very ready to show appreciation and praise ... but I can remember when Rosalie got her Intermediate. The next day she told us of a fuss that had been made of a friend of hers. She said, 'you didn't say anything', and I looked at her in horror, because I hadn't. It was something I'd anticipated. It was a case of saying, well, good, you got it and that's that - what's next?

Clive and Beth assumed different areas of responsibility within the family when they were growing up:

Beth: Clive left the family to me. He made the decisions outside but I made them inside, but I didn't let him think I did. I did just a little manipulation around the back.

Ann: Dad didn't really come into our upbringing. That was mum's field, and he'd back her on everything. He was the power one. There was no division between them. They agreed entirely on whatever the other was doing for us.

That's how Ann sees it, yet Beth admits to feelings of uncertainty, for example ...

Beth: I always wondered if it was being quite fair sending the girls to a private school and the boys to a high school.

Clive: Well, Martin got to University, of course, and so did Bryan for twelve months but he missed out on his year and didn't go on with it.

Beth: I think that's how I talked myself round to it. The boys could have a university education instead. Just as well the girls didn't want one as well.

Power was a common theme in the discussions with Ann, and with Clive and Beth. It also figured prominently in the conversation we had one evening when Bryan, Ann's youngest brother, and his wife, Meredith, were present.

Ann: Mum controlled, because none of us ever wanted to hurt her. None of us ever wanted to do things that would upset or disappoint her. I don't think she consciously uses it. My mother never yelled. We always were, and always have been conscious of the fact if we ever displeased her.

You could just twist mum round your little finger, but if she ever felt she was losing a battle all she had to say was yes, ask your father, and we all just gave up the fight instantly.

I was in awe of Dad till I was about eighteen. He wasn't good with us as kids, he's much better with his grandchildren because he's relaxed.

Beth: I think our family's been a bit hectic at times - like the time they were all squabbling, nearly driving me mad, so I went in to them and I opened my mouth to tell them what I thought of them and then I just said 'shut up'. There was dead silence and for the rest of the day it was wonderful. The next day I heard one of them saying it. We had a council of war. I said all right, I promise I won't ever say it again if you won't either - so we stuck to that.

And of another occasion ...

Beth: I was sick of sorting out family problems, and being even-tempered about everything. There must have been a few upsets and I'd sorted everything out. Things were going all right, and then I thought, blow it. Why should I? I don't know if I was a bit out of sorts so I shut up and said nothing; let all the others talk and I just withdrew into myself. I can remember washing up. Martin came over and said what's up mum? and I said, nothing. He said, you're different. I said, I was perfectly all right. I just don't feel like talking, and we laughed, and I said I'm not allowed moods like the rest of the family.

So often the children would come to me and object to something that somebody else was doing, or something they wanted with Clive, and I'd say leave it with me, because I knew if they left it with me, and perhaps we let it slide, so often I would sidestep and wait, and it would lose its importance, and when everybody had cooled down a bit I could come in the back door.

But Ann's honesty forced her into disclosure:

Ann: I was the one with the temper. I didn't yell, it wasn't a yelling house. I usually went to the bedroom and closed the door and flung coathangers round the room. (I never normally swear although a few times, when the pressure from Colin has been too strong) ³ I've sworn and had incredible pleasure from it. Mum never swore at all, she wouldn't even say bloody.

Beth says, and Ann confirms, that as a child Ann was a 'terrible liar':

Beth: She would look you full in the face with those big eyes of hers and tell you a lie.

Ann: I can remember one time. There must have been a cake in the cupboard. I must have been about seven or eight. It disappeared and I was accused of doing it, and it was one time I had not taken it. Because of my lying it was presumed. I never did

³ Added by Ann when she read the triptych.

find out who took that cake. It was the one thing I could remember, 'cause years later I said to mum, you know I never did do it, and she couldn't even remember it!

Ann and Bryan used to have tremendous 'cat and dog fights'.

Beth: You used to have fights with everyone.

Ann: Well, if you couldn't manage to get on with me, that's your problem.

Marg: Why were you the 'problem child'?

Ann: I had a very peculiar family.

Rosalie, Martin and Ann grew up, according to Ann, in a household where the rule was 'thou shalt hide any conflict'.

However, Ann says

Bryan, five years younger, grew up in the school where you fought your parents. He was completely different to the three of us. I've never crossed a parent. I guess I was brought up in that school of respect for your parents.

I can remember one time my father slapping my face because I was hysterical. It was the only way to stop me. I remember storming out ... I ran away from home once by climbing a tree and watching them drive off up the driveway looking for me. Another time at nine o'clock in the night when I was eleven or twelve in my PLC school uniform I stalked off into the night ... all the way to Toorak Village (about five kilometres) and finally I got a chap from a milkbar to ring up mum and dad to come and get me.

I had a temper and a half. My reaction to that has always been to get off on my own.

I've always been vulnerable and therefore I put up a shield to prevent myself being hurt - right through from schooldays, I was as vulnerable as hell ... The vulnerability is still there. I'm vulnerable, if I care about the people.

Because I was so little, and I was a year younger chronologically than everybody else in my form, take another couple of years off for emotional development ... I felt inferior. I was treated as the little one. At one stage I had the nickname of 'mouse'. If I was teased I didn't know how to cope

with it. It took me a couple of years (at secondary school) and about four or five girls before I found a group ... I was happy with.

Family rules have reinforced this vulnerability: people have been aware, and/or told of areas of weakness, not by their parents, but by brothers and sisters, and at school. Praise has been forthcoming from Clive and Beth, but conversation has been edited to exclude discussion of negative things, the emphasis being placed on politeness.

Ann: Thou shalt not hurt feelings.

Bryan: Better not say anything than to say something bad.

Yet Bryan did 'say something bad' in later years: before he was married, he and his father were at loggerheads.

Bryan: ... going back. We had a headon. (I was) about nineteen. This is before I joined the Lodge. This is a stage where I said to my father, I'm adult. I'm going to state my case. I was going to argue my case, and dad wanted to keep me down there as a child.

When I joined the Lodge with dad, that was a diplomatic thing. Originally I knew he was itching for me to join. I also had a gap in my social area and it did fill it. I'm now very much involved with it to the extent where I will be Master next year. My father has realised though that he and I no longer have the same father/son relationship to the same extent. He's discovered that I can converse with his friends on the same level that he can. It's been an interesting exercise. Before I joined that I was very much his son.

Meredith, Bryan's wife, calls Clive and Beth by their Christian names for she worked with Beth at the Spastic Centre where she was teaching.

Marg (to Meredith): What are you to Clive and Beth?

Meredith: I don't know. I feel like a daughter, not quite a daughter, nearly a daughter ... see to me parents are fifty. Bryan and Ann's parents are mid-sixties so that they're a bit older than the parent group I'm used to. They're sort of between parents and grandparents.

I found it awesome, moving into such a strong family. I came into the family when I was very quiet ...

Bryan: Insecure.

Meredith: I think I established myself as a mouse in the family first.

Meredith talked of the first time she heard Ann say she couldn't cope with something. She said she was so surprised to hear one of the James family admit to being incompetent, and surprised to hear Ann say so. She continued,

The family image of competence and confidence is well polished.

The public presentation includes courtesy:

Ann: Mum and dad were very strict with us on courtesy. I can hear myself doing the same things with the kids. If we're going out somewhere, I'll be clueing them up beforehand on saying hello, and on who it is we're going to see.

Courtesy also prevents criticism:

Somewhere it's been instilled into me that you don't criticise your parents. Not to anybody and I never did. There have been odd times that I've felt quite badly done by and I've just kept it to myself and not said anything. It's all part of hurting feelings. It's a pretty powerful hold, I guess, more powerful than threats or anything like that - the emotional hold.⁴

Ann found that the research loosened this hold.

Ann had followed the family line of not talking out troubles, figuratively sweeping them under the carpet, until the time of the research. She used the time (or did I use

⁴ Suzanne Strahan, too, had said: *Defending your parents - it's part of love, isn't it?*

her?) to uncover what she felt about a host of relationships, including those with her parents, and her mother in particular. I went through hell the more she delved, wondering what I was doing in the name of research; whether I had any right, what responsibility I had ... to her, her parents ... The conversations with Beth and Clive took place after their return from the U.S.; they had not agreed to participate in the research, but did so, with some reservations, knowing that Ann had talked about herself and them.

Beth: When we first heard you were coming, I thought, Oh no ... but Ann kept saying, you can opt out, you don't have to, you can tell Margaret (not to come).

Clive: I didn't feel we had anything to hide anyway.

Later, Beth said she didn't think she had ever spoken so freely before, and neither she nor Clive felt threatened. Clive said he appreciated that I gave of myself, and this had helped them talk more freely. This is a family which does not generally like "analysis"; some of the discussion was painful, and as Ann talked and learned and changed and provoked conversations with her mother, tension mounted.

On several occasions I was asked to act as an arbiter by both Ann and Beth after such negotiations: both wanted me to listen to 'their story'.

Ann, Beth and Clive

On housework

When Ann and the children moved into the James seniors' home,

We organised responsibility for areas of house-keeping: I'd go to do the vacuuming or something and discover she'd already done it. If you left it half an hour later, suddenly it was 'Oh, never mind, I'll do it ...' It's very subtle. She said how well she and Rosalie had fitted in on housework (in the U.S.), but I pointed out over there Mum was doing the fitting in ...

We pride ourselves on how well we do fit in together (but) I'm aware that I'm disrupting their lifestyle. Mum has said things like she can't give dinner parties while the kids and I are here and I've tried to say you can, organise your night and the kids and I will be gone. She'll just say, Oh no, and I'm left feeling guilty.

By mum's standards, I'm an untidy slob.

On meals

Ann was acutely conscious of the subtlety of her mother's manipulation:

Shaun didn't want one of his vegetables. I just said to him - leave it on the side of your plate and just do it quietly, don't say anything about it. Mum came in and said very lovingly - if you make a fuss about it you hurt me, because I try very hard. I cooked the meal for you and have done the very best I can.

Ann's interpretation: 'Eat up or I'll feel hurt'.

On an accident with the carpet

One of Ann's dinner guests had spilt a cup of coffee on the carpet. Ann was upset, and her parents arrived home shortly after. In recalling the incident some weeks later ...

Beth: You call it the blue over the carpet.

Clive: Not a word was said.

Beth: No.

Ann (rather reluctantly): No, it was me.

Clive: It was your guilty conscience.

Ann: Yeah, probably.

Beth (in a beguiling yet indignant voice): We weren't even panicking like she was.

Ann: Because that's when I felt I was getting the silent treatment. I was thinking - Mum get out of the house and I can fix this, but I need you out of the house because I felt your disapproval.

Once Ann started talking about herself, her family, the words flowed:

I can see Dad's faults. They don't worry me. If one of them died and I had to live with the other one, I don't know which would be easier, because Dad can't adapt to change. He likes things to be the same way all the time. I had my lens steriliser in the wrong place, in the wrong plug, and he said something to Mum. I guess I'm fonder of him than Mum because his little idiosyncracies, or little faults, don't hurt me, the way Mum's do.

Mum is understanding. The exterior that comes out is very soft, very gentle, very understanding, but she has a very strong power that I don't think she'd even realise.

She's an expert in making you feel guilty ... I'm loathe even to say it from the point of view that it's disloyal, but she's an expert on that. Guilt is a very useless emotion, and it's an unfair way of disciplining - the sort of feeling 'if you do that you'll hurt me.'

When they were away (in the U.S. last time) I missed a month of letter writing. Fortunately I'd written when a letter arrived from Mum (she wrote): 'There had better be something somewhere or you'll have some quick talking. After writing that, I wonder if maybe you and the children are sick or you have been working flat out and my conscience fights me.' That is clever, not deliberately, 'cause I feel guilty because I was worrying her ... the same martyrdom bit.

Ann, still talking about her mother:

Yes (she says) I will give you the world, but you must be grateful ... The silent treatment, the closing off ... and you know that you have done wrong, and then the almost deliberate friendliness, but you know at the same time she is saying ... I'll be big enough and get over this ... and you feel worse.

Her friends all think mum and dad are wonderful for having me and the children in the house. That makes me feel rotten. I appreciate what they are doing, but I wish they wouldn't keep making me feel as though I should. I've never been able to take mum for granted, none of us have.

Bryan participated in some of the discussion when Ann was talking about her family: he overheard, for instance, the last remark.

Bryan: I'm fascinated. I'm getting insight into Ann's idea of the family. I'm not sure whether I agree with it. Some of it I definitely do. Marg asked me earlier about my relationship with my parents. I'm fighting hard to get that perspective. I've always known I don't agree with everything mum and dad say and do, but that's in my relationship ...

Ann (interrupting): Would you have automatically come out in defence of mum (before you heard my side)?

Bryan: Yes.

(Ann said later Bryan would not have been able to have this conversation if someone else hadn't been there, because of the family rules, ingrained, about not talking of weaknesses, nor criticism. Bryan also relayed some of the conversation back to Beth: Ann was not amused, nor was I. Before we started I had stressed the confidentiality of the conversation: Bryan, however, thought he could help by sharing some of Ann's concerns. Beth was upset and it took some easing over by Ann.)

Ann and her mother both have a sense of humour, and Ann says of Beth:

Mum has always been friend as well as family.

On sexual matters

Beth: I took her to a mother-daughter evening, and coming home I said 'was there anything else you wanted to know'?

Ann: She's always been able to cope far more than dad. She and I have had some hilarious mother-daughter conversations. Before I got married, she'd say 'Have I told you everything you need to know?' and then we'd go through what I needed to know.

On parenting

Beth genuinely believes Ann is a 'good mother'. Shaun and Megan are very 'easy' children and this helps.

Beth: Ann manages her children better than I've seen a mother manage her children. I thought I managed mine well when I was young. Certainly I had more than she did ... but I think I could learn from her and go back and do a better job. I think she's a wonderful mother.

Beth also feels a little 'inferior' to Ann:

Beth: I let Ann talk. I can't talk like Ann. I sit back and endure it. Its not fair. Ann can do her own talking and do somebody else's as well!

Beth, talking to Clive about Ann and an 'incident':

It was no good telling you because you'd be critical of Ann and I knew it would all blow over and there would be no worrying ...

Shortly after the marriage break-up, Ann went to church with her parents. Ann and Beth were talking to the minister, who offered Ann some counselling.

Ann: I first of all said no, I'm fine thanks, and then he started to talk a bit and he was getting too close for comfort, and I was near tears, and mum

saw this and suddenly changed the topic - steered it off, and gave me time to pull myself together again.

Ann appreciated this protection.

On one of the occasions when Ann decided she wanted to 'talk it out with her mother' the situation proved painful for everyone: Ann talked with me immediately after the conversation with her mother.

Ann: The talk tonight with Mum. I don't feel guilty. If I have hurt her feelings. I felt very sad at the way she took it ... that her mind was so closed ... I said to her ... if you have any problems and I can do anything about them please tell me, but if you have problems because of me and the kids, and I can't do anything about them, then please don't tell me.

I said I know you're not a saint, but I've been putting you up on a pedestal ... and all right, I've got to take you down from the pedestal. It's not that I don't love you, or like you any less, but I've got to see you as a person. We have to get off the mother/daughter relationship and into ... equal adults ... That's when she said 'Haven't I treated you as an adult?' Again it was the 'I hurt to think that you might think that of me.' She gets through every time.

A few days later, Clive, Beth, Ann and I were talking ...

Beth: I remember what you said the other night that I didn't like. (You said) that you've had me on a pedestal and I'd been a saint and I'd come down, and I don't think if you'd ever had anybody on a pedestal you should ever tell them, and still less should you tell them they've come off.

Ann: I had you on a pedestal and I wasn't able to see you as a person with any faults.

Clive: I said she hasn't any.

Beth: I didn't want to be told because I knew it wasn't true. You did it so badly ... you went on and on and on ... you wouldn't shut up.

The conversation was quickly changed onto less personal matters.

Ann, Colin, Shaun, Megan

Prior to their wedding in 1969, Ann and Colin were engaged for ten months. Ann says it was assumed during this period that when they got married they would have children, Ann having been clucky since she was sixteen or seventeen. Only a handful of Colin's relatives attended the wedding: his mother but not his father, nor his stepbrother nor his wife; an aunt, an uncle and two cousins were there.

Ann: A family is just not important to Colin.

Because Ann is so articulate, the following description of her relationship with Colin, the difficulties they had in getting pregnant, the birth of their three children .. and comments about their more recent history - these are in her words. Editing has been limited. I repeat: once Ann started talking the thoughts simply flowed. In some respects it resembled an exorcism.

The relationship had its tumultuous aspects from the early days.

We had a blue, early on. We had a meat loaf; he decided it wasn't spicy enough - said it was tasteless like the food my mother cooked. I just boiled straight up over the top. I think I threw three saucers at the wall beside him. I grabbed the car keys and ran outside .. drove all the way to Frankston (about 35 kilometres) and then driving back, think I stopped somewhere and cried myself to sleep in the car. I couldn't have gone to mum and dad. I mean, I couldn't tell them why the argument started. I couldn't go to my closest friend because I knew that Debbie would ring up and say she's here ... Colin apparently got panicky. He tried Deb, then rang up mum and dad. Mum said, 'She's probably cried herself to sleep somewhere ...'

Eventually I woke up and I'd calmed down. I came home. This was about 11.30 or 12. Mum and dad had been getting ready for bed and mum had been worried, and without any words dad had said, 'Okay, come on, we'll go and look for her.' They drove down to our place, no car there, and drove past another friend's place, and I wasn't there, and

they drove back past my place and the car was there so they didn't come in. They just drove home and mum could sleep knowing that I was okay.

Sexually it was on and off ... great highs and lows. I went completely cold in the last couple of years .. one thing that used to upset me .. if he cuddled it would have to turn into sex .. and I couldn't get through to him that there were times when I just wanted cuddling for cuddling's sake. Megan is not an affectionate baby ... she wasn't interested in cuddling and yet she loves cuddles now (because Ann has taught her and encouraged her to be so).

We used to have a special language - right at the beginning - we used to call my breasts heckle and jeckle ...

One of the problems with Col .. he was anything but smart. The only buying of clothes was instigated from me. He was much happier slopping around in a tracksuit of a weekend. It was usually falling off and showing half his backside, and it looked revolting with layers of fat over it.

Getting pregnant ...

I wanted a baby. I loved babies. If I'd been built to have them and if I'd had the right husband, I guess I would have liked a family of twelve. I would just have loved to have a really big family. I'd be very happy not working. I would still need theatre because that's an expression of me.

I had trouble conceiving. We had to go for tests. That was hilarious because we had to make love at eight o'clock in the morning and catch it all in a jar and had to be in the hospital with it by nine o'clock for testing ... and the only way you could treat that one was to laugh at it. He only got about a quarter of an inch in the bottom of the jar and when we got to the hospital he said to me - you take it in. I said no, it's your semen. He said he felt so embarrassed. He said other men were going in with this much in the jar .. and I was very thankful when the tests came back .. and he was in the clear because I didn't feel he could cope with it. I was ready to say to the doctor, don't tell Colin if he's the one at fault.

I couldn't get pregnant - I was referred to a specialist. He did a hysteroqram and the x-ray showed the fact that I've got a double uterus - I'm Rh negative as well.

Despite these difficulties, Ann did eventually get pregnant.

Shaun was two months premature because of (the double uterus) and I virtually didn't do a thing during pregnancy. Every time I tried to push a broom I'd go into contractions, from about four months on ...

Col wasn't there, because of Shaun being two months premature. He would never have attended the birth anyway. His feeling was that he had a weak stomach. And I probably wanted the babies more than he did. I think he would probably have been quite happy to go through without children. He was lousy with children until he had his own. He just didn't know how to relate to them, wasn't interested - they just didn't exist.

When making these comments there was a hopeless tone to Ann's speech - partly cynical, but more resigned. Then she got angry.

Birth ... Shaun

I didn't hold Shaun until he was 4½ weeks old. I held him briefly when he was first born and then we hired an electric breast pump. The first two weeks of it he was in a humidicrib and I was allowed to go into the prem ward to look at him - I wasn't allowed to touch him! They wouldn't allow me in if they were feeding him because he was being tubefed.

I didn't feel like a mother. I spent every single day of that five weeks in tears ... in and out of tears the whole time .. I felt so frustrated. I held him when he was 4½ weeks old only because I burst into tears in front of a nurse who was sympathetic and horrified to learn I hadn't held him. They had special little cubicles there where particularly when the baby's out of the humidicrib, the mother is allowed to hold it, and they hadn't bothered. All I'd ever been able to do was view him through a glass door ... I was furious. I didn't kick up a fuss in hospital - I was so emotionally upset I didn't know that I could.

... and so of course, my love was so overpowering by this stage anyway. We went to the Presbyterian Babies Home and I established the breastfeeding with him then. It's a marvellous place as an interim. You've got people there to help establish your confidence.

There was no gradual awakening of love with Shaun. It hit me like a sledgehammer. I can remember one night, just after I'd fed him, walking around the nursery. I suppose there were about eight of us there at the time, and looking at all of them and thinking that none of them looked as beautiful as my baby - the stupid proud mother bit.

Going home

I didn't go through adjustment problems with him - when I got home he was crying at night and at odd times during the day. I rang mum - I think it was the second day, and said 'I don't know what to do' and she said, 'have you established that it's not wind, he's not uncomfortable - he's not too hot or cold .. he's not hungry, a dirty nappy', and I said 'Yes, it's none of those', and she said, 'well just go out of the room - go into the lounge room. Close all the doors and play the organ full blast and don't hear him', and I did that, and he stopped crying within a day or two. It was the best advice I have ever received.

(He) was milk allergic. He was about four months old when I realised; I fed him till he was 8½ months old, or 10½ months old, but I had to feed him till I desensitised him.

I didn't know I was alive with Shaun. He really was incredibly good, a placid easygoing baby.

Miscarriage

I lost one in the middle, because of the double uterus ... 3½ months old. It was because the placenta had implanted low down in the uterus. I was put into hospital because it was suspected I was miscarrying. I cried when I started bleeding. When that started I knew the baby was gone. I'd been contracting and bleeding all through the night. I was on the pan. I got fed up with it so I pushed and pushed - the baby came straight out and I rang the buzzer. The nurse came. She pulled the pan out from under me and as I came back, the baby came with me because the placenta was still inside, and she tried to pull and couldn't. She had to ring for Dr S. He probably took half an hour to get there. In that time I lay with the baby between my legs - the nurse stayed with me. At one stage she said 'I'm glad it's you going through this and not me - I couldn't cope' .. but by that time the baby wasn't part of me. It was dead and I'd already got it out of my mind.

Mum and I both used to console ourselves (with) the fact that it had been a boy. It made it easier to accept because I did want a girl. Col hated that - he couldn't accept my reasoning.

Megan

I bled for two weeks when I was three months pregnant with her. I had to take to bed and not get out. Mum helped a bit. Shaun was very good - he was very independent - he was quite content to bring puzzles and sit on the bed beside me.

She turned into the breech/oblique position when I was 5½ months on - that was agonising. I think he (the doctor) tried to turn her back and couldn't. He tried for two or three consecutive months and said she'll have to be a caesarian. I queried, 'Couldn't we just try a natural birth?' He was going to give me a spinal anaesthetic so I could still be awake right through her birth, and then the anaesthetist, the only one he'd allow to do it, was himself in hospital so I had to be right out to it. I felt cheated, because I'd loved Shaun's birth and Megan's I didn't know a thing about.

I felt I'd missed something not being conscious during her birth.

When Megan was born she was three weeks prem. She was only two or three days in the humidicrib. I know they took me down there 36 hours after she was born, because they had to leave the drip on that long and they couldn't get it through the doors. Up till that time I was floating in and out of oblivion anyway because of the pethidine.

I was a bit distressed I didn't feel the instant bang love - I wanted it to grow. I was disappointed. I thought - I don't feel the same overwhelming love, whereas with Shaun I was so overwhelmed with love because I didn't get him until he was five weeks old and in that time it was building up. With Megan I was more run down because of the caesar, and it took time to grow, to build up. It just gradually grew until I realised I was feeling the same thing, the same love for her. My love for Shaun hadn't diminished any. It's just the feeling of wanting to explode with love. It's always there.

I can remember when I felt the bubble (of love). I was feeding her one time. She was more difficult to feed than Shaun. She wanted to drop the 10 p.m. feed and not the 2 a.m. and I had a battle of will on that one. Eventually I started trundling the basinette into the dining room and closing all the

doors between the dining room and bedrooms so I couldn't hear her cry, and then I'd lie awake at night trying to hear if she was crying.

When Megan was four months old, Ann noticed that Megan had two wrinkles in one thigh and one in the other. She took her to the doctor, then to the specialist, and Megan was found to have congenitally dislocated hips, and was put in a brace for six and a half months.

I can remember the feeling .. when she went into the brace for the first time: picking up this little solid triangular based bundle.

Early years

Once I had the kids that's where the influence of mum started coming out - the fact that she never did shout at us. I was proud of the fact that I never did shout at them.

I feel as though I've lost control if I shout. I know it's not the kids that are causing the shouting. It's my loss of control. If I whack them or shout at them the satisfaction's for me.

Col played with Shaun in the beginning ... he took a long time to warm to Megan ... she was just 'veg'. Col used to call Shaun a vegetable when he was little. Colin thinks that all babies are vegetables. Shaun was called 'kiddling', in fact for years I think Colin's secretary was convinced that was really his name - little kid, like a duckling. Megan was 'veg' for a long time. I objected to that one.

He was very good (with our children), as long as you didn't care whether they had filthy clothes, good on feeding them but not keeping things clean.

Neither of them have ever worried two hoots about where I am. They're not clinging vines. When I first went emergency teaching, Megan went through a bad stage, before I got myself a regular babysitter. It got to the stage where Megan was screaming her head off every time I left her and she'd be crying when I picked her up. (They) all assured me the minute the front door was closed the crisis stopped ... but I went through hell.

When Ann and Colin started having difficult patches in their relationship Ann said she coped by 'switching off' and going and playing the organ. Or she would go to the theatre - her escape. Colin was jealous of her theatre friends and objected to looking after the children if Ann was at the theatre.

We got a babysitter in. I kept saying to him - you don't have to stay home (when A. went to the theatre) but then he got the martyr complex as well. We had blues about that. (One time) he spent the night in a motel because he wanted to think it out. Probably if I hadn't rung him he wouldn't ever have come back, but I felt guilty about cutting him out with theatre.

Ann had left teaching in 1971 when she was pregnant with Shaun, then went back again in 1976 after Megan was born. During that time Colin bought the legal practice and from that time 'everything went downhill'. Colin started drinking heavily, gambling and swearing: the arguments got more serious.

There was always a certain amount of the ocker Australian in him. He was mixing far more with country people. I think the fact that the practice wasn't going too well. He changed. Whereas at one stage he would never swear in front of me and would never allow anybody else to, suddenly he was swearing and didn't care about it. He became sloppy in his speech. But probably the marriage had not been perfect for a long time.

There were times when I thought I couldn't stand this for the rest of my life, and then I'd think - what's the alternative. And I couldn't face that either, so I'd turn both thoughts off.

Colin was never interested in anything I had to say. He wasn't interested in my opinion. After a very short time in the marriage I stopped talking - to him.

We kept arguments out of hearing of the kids. Close off the kitchen door so the sound wouldn't carry up the stairs. One night Shaun came down. Something had disturbed him. I didn't enlighten him. Another time he came down and said our voices woke him, and he was upset about it. I took him back upstairs and said 'I'm sorry sweetheart, but this is something

daddy and I have got to sort out on our own.'

I've got a strong pride. It was pride that kept me putting up the front in front of all our friends for years.

I said to Colin - don't ever try to make me choose between my family and you because I know my family will always be there.

He was an alcoholic to the extent that starting on one glass he wouldn't stop till he was drunk. Every time he'd open a bottle of beer, my stomach would go into a knot, because every time he drank that was when his tongue was unleashed. He'd come out with a few stock statements:

'Don't be stupid all your life'

was one;

'We've lost friends because of you, because they find you boring'

was another. (He said) ... I'd let my mind go to sleep.

Ann was nearly in tears by this time: she mumbled ...

With Colin, nine years of having (him) knocking me down, knocking my intelligence, knocking everything about me ...

We stuck in the house for so long because neither of us would move out. Neither of us would leave the kids. If he'd had the money he would have fought me for custody.

During 1976 Ann became aware of financial problems with the practice, and learned that the mortgage repayments were getting behind. She went back emergency teaching to try and help. She talks, too, of the charade they started living.

We were going away for the weekend, to stay with friends down at the beach. I was teaching - raced round and packed for all of us including Colin and he arrived home boozed from work at 4.30 and started saying 'Aren't you ready yet? What the hell have you been doing?' I couldn't quite believe it. He ended up hitting me then. I fell to the floor. The kids were there, and I burst into tears on Shaun's shoulder, I think. They were both wrapping their arms around me. It was rather a grisly little scene, that one, and we went off for the weekend in

a very strained silence, but did our usual thing of putting up a front the minute we were there.

It takes a hell of a lot more courage to break a marriage than it does just to keep it going. I don't think you can go through any marriage break-up calmly, without tremendous pulling and tearing at each other.

When Ann returned teaching they made an arrangement with the bank about catching up with the mortgage repayments, then ...

I had a phone call from the bank manager saying would I hand over the keys of the house. We were being evicted.

When I finally got off the phone I couldn't understand it. I got onto Colin, and he denied it. Oh no, he'd been paying the money into the city branch. Then I got back to the bank manager and told him. He rang the city office and got back to me, and he said 'The two people your husband has supposed to be having dealings with - one is away on long service leave - the other one has been sick for the past month.' So I got onto Colin and I managed to worm out of him how behind we were and that was the point where I went quite cold inside and I said, 'Well, that's it. The marriage is over.'

My first thought was to get into a flat. I knew Mum and Dad would offer to have us here but I didn't want to ask. I went looking on the Saturday morning. I came back, very depressed. The price you have to pay for dingy holes. Dad phoned (they were away at the time) because Bryan had left a message; he said, 'move into our house'.

Then I got the bank to give us an extra thirty days in which to sell the house ourselves in the hope that we'd be able to realise the full amount and not have any shortfall. They agreed to do it because they realised I'd been led up the garden path.

Ann's parents returned from their holiday.

The next ten days were frantic. We wallpapered the kitchen. Mum washed every venetian blind in the place. I washed every single wall. Dad worked flat out outside ... Colin mowed the lawns ...

It was two months from the time we actually decided we were parting to the time of moving out, and during that time we were still sleeping in the same

bed because there was no other bed. And that was murderous. That's when I went through hell. Sex had ceased from that point, but it was really quite horrendous still sleeping in the same bed.

That was probably when a lot more violence - drunkenness and violence came out. That's when I got my black eyes and various bruises. When he knocked me round ... in my chest.

The marriage came to an abrupt end: Ann talks of a fight on the Friday night towards the end of the two month period. She says it was typical in its beginning.

He'd back me into a corner with his stabbing finger, and his solicitor's tactics of putting me in the stand. If I used a word that wasn't quite in the right context or not the perfect choice of word he'd immediately leap on that word and start twisting things around ... he wouldn't leave me alone or get away from me. I slapped his face - he probably swung straight back with the blade of his hand on the bridge of my nose. I went down on the kitchen floor that night. I came up scrambling .. because he was still standing over me and threatening ... the kitchen drawer was right behind me and I reached in there intending to get the steel to protect myself and came out with the carving knife.

It was just like there were two parts of me that night. One side was saying you fool, you'll do something you'll regret, and the other half was saying - I don't care what happens. Fortunately he saw the 'I don't care' side and he backed off, 'cause I held that knife in front of me and said don't you dare come near me.

It was only then I noticed I was pouring blood all down my jumper.

Ann went into the laundry to clean up and Col again approached her.

At that stage I picked up the laundry stick .. the wooden stick, and I cracked him a couple of times on the forearm to make him back off.

Later she went to her parents' place; Ann told her mother what had happened.

Mum disappeared into the kitchen and when she came back I realised she'd been in tears and she was scared stiff. She wasn't scared of what Col might do to me - she was scared of what I might do to him, because of the carving knife episode. She kept on saying, 'Do you have to go back? I feel we must get you out of there now. I can't, I don't want to run the risk of losing you.'

Ann went back that night and the three of them moved out the next day.

*Pondering about her relationship with Colin now
(15 months Later):*

The marriage has gone but I don't get the feeling I have failed. I can understand the reasons why Colin has done everything, for why he is like he is. I don't feel that it is his failure so much as a failure of circumstances.

Once I got over the initial upheaval at no stage have I regretted the marriage. It's part of my life, of my character moulding.

I still feel some responsibility for him. I'm scared of his charm arousing pity in me, it's done it before (and) led to me lending him money.

I don't like him. I haven't liked him for a long time. I loved him. He was strong. We met head on. We clashed. I was always able to get my own way but usually I had to work at it. And that was the thing about him that I guess attracted me to him. He's lost his strength. I've lost all respect for him. I've lost all trust and all faith in him. I will never be able to turn him off and not care what happened to him.

He was part of my life. He will always be part of that. But my feelings about him now are not as a husband. He's the children's father and that is my connection with him - emotional or otherwise.

About moving in to her parents' home

The first week we moved back here, I was as sick as could be. I had gastro, headaches, the works. I knew it was all psychological, but that didn't help get rid of it. I had chest pains. Every time we'd had a blue I'd tense up in the stomach and so once I started releasing the nerves all started screaming.

I was at such a low ebb I wasn't able to hide the hurt. I don't even know if you should hide the hurt. I could be doing exactly what Mum does. Probably Shaun doesn't want to hurt me.⁵

I'm far more strict here than I was (before). That's because of Mum and Dad. I feel I've got to put a tight rein on the kids.

On Shaun, Megan ... and herself ... now

I think the children are needing more of my time than I'm giving them ... and so I think I've probably got to cut back on seeing anybody else and devote more of my time to them.

... more time to Shaun, yet I've got to try and strike the happy balance. I don't believe my life should centre around them, because that wouldn't be fair on them and would make them clinging. I wouldn't end up giving them room to grow, and on the selfish side, they're not going to stay with me for ever.

I'm enjoying being my own person again, having my own identity, and if I want to do something not having to ask permission to do it. I can be very happy on my own. I find that I'm good company. People around me don't worry me because I can turn off in a crowd. I can just block them out. When I need my own privacy I just turn off. I'm a day-dreamer.

I think it's important to have your own privacy. Megan wants people around her. She's very much a people person. Shaun's more of a loner, he's very easy and amenable. He's not a leader. He'd more lead from behind than in front.

Ann, talking in response to 'questions' put by me:

On love

When you feel it first - when it just takes over, it's beautiful. You could literally eat the child because you love them - and that sounds ridiculous but you could. To be so much a part of one ..

⁵ As Ann had not/does not want/ed to hurt her parents.

It's an ecstasy feeling - that complete oneness with the kids ..

Like a bubble. In Adelaide (Ann had just been there for a weekend) I had the same feeling with Peter, the bubble feeling. With the kids there's no sexual side of it. There's not the groin feeling ... but, like orgasm ... that really sort of fierce intensity ...

My love for the two has changed. It's not with Shaun the fierce bubble - it's deepened. I love that little boy so much and I could sort of wrap him up. He's my strength and comfort - Megan's the joy and laughter, because they're so different. With Megan it's highs and lows - with Shaun there's not the great swings.

I can watch my kids do something that is particularly endearing. I can have tears, but you get so embarrassed because you think what are other people thinking, but you can't help it. You don't do the same looking at another child. You might see another child doing the same sort of thing and you think, 'My God - did I really think that was cute when mine did it?' But watching your own do it again you'd still think the same.

One thing I say to them. I will always love you. There may be times when you do things I don't like, maybe I like you a little less, but I will always love you.

Ann talked of a recent question put to her by Shaun: do I belong to you? She said she answered it in the following way.

You don't belong to anybody. You belong to yourself. I don't own you. You are not an object, a thing. If I want to move a thing, a book from that table to that table, I can do it and that is it, but if I want to move you from there to there, you have your will in the matter. I cannot make you do something if you really don't want to. If I want you to eat and you don't want to I can't make you. You are not my possession, and you never will be. No person can own another person.

Ann then went on to talk about Shaun:

I see him as a fairly serious boy. Pretty intelligent, a bit hypersensitive. He's also very deepthinking - he keeps within himself. Always eager to do the right thing. I think that might go hand in hand with hypersensitivity, and that

is inherited all down the line. Bryan's got it, my mother's got it, my grandfather, he was incredibly hypersensitive - feelings very easily hurt. I know at times I will read in feelings or reasons for what people say, and I dwell on it rather than come out with it.

On control

There are times when I don't think I'm succeeding (with the kids). It depends very much on whether I'm tired or not. If I'm tired I'm much shorter on patience, and I will lose my temper, and the kids are not the reason I'm losing my temper - it's me. I'll say 'keep clear'.

Usually when my control goes I let go, they get a whack on the backside. With Shaun there are odd lies that will come. By working on the positive when he has the courage to tell me the truth, I make it not nearly as bad when I know he's lying. I've got a big hangup about that. I was a king-size liar when I was a kid.

I don't like children who won't do things when they're told. I've tried to work on the principle I'll tell them once, I might tell them a second time, but if I have to tell them a third time, that's when the heavens fall. I can tell them quite calmly to take their noise to their bedroom and they'll go.

Shaun was so easy to discipline, to bring up...

I object to people who bring up their children by the book, because there is so much instinct in it .. doing what comes naturally just so often happens to be right.

Ann, Shaun, Megan - Colin

There's no way I'd separate them (the children). When it actually came to the crunch the bravado went and Col admitted that the kids needed a mother more than a father at this stage. Colin hasn't got a clue about looking after kids.

I assure the kids of Colin's love for them and the fact that their love for him is right ... but whether that's because subconsciously I don't want them to love him anyway.

Shaun and I had a confrontation when we were up at Yarra Junction (on holiday). He said 'I don't want

to live with you any more. I want to live with daddy.' It hurt, because at the time I was hypersensitive. I said, 'Would you really like to live with daddy on your own?' He said, 'Oh no, with you.' That was what he was getting at. He's wanting to go back in time. I said, 'Well you can't have it both ways.' He said, 'In that case I can't make up my mind.' We talked about it and I pointed out to him why they were living with me and not daddy ... because he couldn't provide for them.

It's (money) a very sore point. Here I am blithely going on believing that he's going to pay me so much a week from now on. I've got to wake myself up ... I'm not going to get any assistance from him. They're his children, and it is an onus, a responsibility. If he doesn't start payment I'm going to take him to court. He's just shirking all responsibility and everything.

I didn't push it for seven or eight months because I know he was financially down. I'm bending over backwards to take the kids to him every week, driving them to him, driving them back. Even when they stay overnight I supply them with breakfast. He's earning money and losing it on the races!

The kids were going to give Colin a birthday present - Shaun was going to put in half from his money box and I would put in the half for Megan, but that was the weekend he was supposed to be taking them - he ended up not seeing them at all, and so I've forgotten about it. He didn't bother doing anything to help the kids remember my birthday.

Before we lived here Shaun was getting pocket money but he forgets to remind me and I forget to give it to him. We had insurance policies for the kids. The money went down the drain because he didn't keep up the payments.

Shaun hasn't been to football for the last two weekends because he hasn't got any boots. Col said he'd buy them.

Daddy has come less and less into their conversation, because he hasn't seen them for almost a month ... he is slipping out of their conversation and out of their lives ... that's why I said to him he needed to see them once a fortnight for the whole weekend ... I said to him - if you want to remain part of their lives and not just come in and out occasionally you're going to have to make it on a regular commitment for a decent length of time.

There's no reason why he can't take them for an entire weekend. Alright he has to organise his social life, but at the moment if he wants to go out on a stag night he can just go. He doesn't

have to pick up the kids or arrange for a baby-sitter. He just says - I can't take them that night.

He can take some responsibility. He'd get to see more of the kids than just seeing them on a Sunday afternoon. It would be better for the kids, once he's in a flat.

I don't want him to support them .. I want him to contribute because he's their father.

Colin through this period would make arrangements to see the children, and then ring to change these or simply not turn up. During the research time he arrived on Sunday morning to collect the children: Ann blasted him for being late and for not checking to see that the Planetarium where he'd promised to take the children was open.

She asked, after they'd gone, 'How could he disappoint the children again?'

Megan monopolised her dad in those few minutes of greeting and departure. Shaun was quieter, but showed obvious pleasure and love in every movement. He followed his father with his eyes.

The children do feel ambivalent. Bryan and Meredith were planning a trip to America later that year to stay with Aunty Rosalie. When Shaun heard about this, he said:

Shaun: I wish daddy was still living with us because if he was we'd be able to fly to America.

Ann: I didn't know what to say to Shaun without knocking his dad.

I think it would be much easier if Col went right out of the picture. It'd be easier for the kids and for me - but - the rights of a father. I couldn't do that to him, not because of the kids' rights. As a father. And the fact that I know he loves the kids.

Marg: If Col had chosen to have the kids and got custody do you think the kids would have grown away from you?

Ann (swallowing): .. I can't even (think about it) ... that is my nightmare.

With Ann's permission I spoke with Felicity, a medical student who babysat regularly for the children.

Felicity: Every night he (Shaun) has to go and get a tissue. In fact I've put him to bed without it, and he'll get up and get it. (Ann said later it was a security thing).

You can feel him get tense when you mention daddy. I'm a bit worried about Megan. She started crying and then she went to the toilet crying. Whenever I went near, it went up ten decibels and it woke Shaun. He kept saying, it's okay, she'll be all right, just leave her alone, and then Megan asked Shaun for a jellybean. He said offer Megan one. I'd already done that and she had paid no attention, so I did it again ... she said, 'Oh, yes'.

Rituals eased her discomfort.

*Thinking ahead ...**On education*

I'm deliberately bringing both of mine up to be touching. Since they have been little I've stroked them on the back and at the same time said, 'Isn't it nice'.

Shaun's booked into Scotch College (elite boys' school) and I haven't booked Megan into PLC, but I will.

I want Shaun to be well educated because he's got the ability - he's got the natural love of learning. As long as he's using himself productively, providing he's happily making the most of himself in the particular sphere he chooses ...

On independence/security

I've always believed in encouraging independence. Shaun, very shortly after he started school, said he'd walk to school from now on. He's right. I've given him, apparently, responsibility more than a lot of my friends have done with their kids.

I think they're secure. I'm trying like fury to give them security in themselves - that they can follow their own conscience - that they don't have to follow the mob - that they have enough confidence ...

I'm not going to lose my children in order to force them the way I want them to go.

On sexual matters

I'd be very disappointed if Shaun became a homosexual, but that's his life.

(Feed-in from me about decisions if Shaun got a girl pregnant ... at school)

It would be stupid to get married at that age. If she wanted to keep the baby - if she wanted to be aborted - if she wanted to adopt it out - I think the decision would rest with the girl. It is her decision while it is still a part of her body.

I was hesitating within myself. It's her life .. her education could be mucked up, if she continues

with the pregnancy. If she then decided to go ahead and have the baby, I can't imagine it happening but - say Shaun decided he wanted to keep it .. well then .. think he comes in on the responsibility. I think the 'ours' becomes 'ours' once she's decided she's having the baby, and once she has had it.

I rather think that Megan's going to have to be on contraception. I couldn't very well say to Megan that you don't do that before you're married (referring to the fact of Peter staying overnight).

If Megan came home pregnant, if she wanted it, she'd have it - or if she didn't want it, I'd organise an abortion.

Marg: If the kids in thirteen or fourteen years time got hooked into drugs ...

It would tear me apart. I don't know how I'd react. It's the same as being told at birth you've got a handicapped child. You'd go through all the stages.

Marg: If something happened to you ...

That's one of my nightmares, because I can see Col would immediately want them and mum and dad would lose them completely. He would pull them right away. I haven't got a will. Mum and dad are getting too old to start again rearing a family. If Rosalie was in Australia I'd ask them, but otherwise Bryan and Meredith.

Marg: What would be the worst thing that could happen to the children from your point of view ...?

To lose them. I just could not imagine living without them. If they died - all right, then you'd have to get on with your life and pick up the threads, but supposing Col got them. That to me would be the worst torture I could imagine. Not because he had them, but because they were alive and they weren't with me. When they're leaving home that will be different.

I've often thought that if I marry again and I was to have more children - that would sort of drive Megan and Shaun into a little unit. I don't really want to have any more children myself because it's just too damn painful, uncomfortable, the whole bit - okay if I could get pregnant easily.

I am a sharing person. I need somebody else there to share the highs and lows. I couldn't stand just being a wife and mother. I've never thought of the role of being a permanent breadwinner. I don't want to work till I'm 65.

(Slowly, suffering as she talked): At the moment it is incredibly important to me to be in control of my own destiny. I gave the control .. away for too long with disastrous results. I'm loving the fact that I've got money in the bank .. that if I want to go and buy something I know that from one day to the next the money will still be there.

I've got over the stage of being scared every time the postman came to the door .. of feeling creditors close around me. I can think about the future, but I can't plan for it and I can't commit myself.

It's hard for the kids when you're separated .. in many ways they've made it easier. I wouldn't be without them .. because of them I don't regret the marriage.

I want to get married again .. I have no doubt I will get married but I'm not going to leap into marriage.⁶

Shaun and Megan and I are a unit. We are a package deal. We are, they are, part of me.

I'm glad they're (her parents) coming back.. from the point of view of the kids .. and I need somebody else around .. somebody else taking responsibility, somebody else helping. Last month's been exhausting ... I'm needing to turn off now and then ...

I visited the family after Beth and Clive returned from the States:

Shaun: I'm having a happy time since gran and poppa are home.

Ann: He's been going up ... always a double kiss and a cuddle goodnight. They've come back appreciating Megan and Shaun a little more (in comparison with grandchildren in the US).

Shaun adores both mum and dad. He wraps himself around them. If someone else reprimands your child you tend to let the hackles rise .. when I've heard dad having a go at either it's never worried me because I've known it's been deserved.

⁶ Ann remarried in 1982 after a whirlwind courtship - see postscript.

They are sure of their welcome here and very sure of their love.

Beth did appear to be appreciating Ann and Shaun and Megan's good points:

Megan's no bother with Shaun. She doesn't go off and I know where she is. When I'm responsible for somebody else's children I've got to know just where they are.

Beth (talking of Ann): She's their security, but they've also been a help, an anchor to help keep her sanity through all this.

Megan can be protective of her mother:

Megan (to her grandmother): I don't like you. You made my mummy cry.

and provoking:

Megan: I'm not your friend.

Ann: Fair enough then.

Megan: I want a cuddle.

Ann: Okay, a quiet one.

Triptych: 3

... even dear old Hardy told me to write more about those sisters. As if there was any more to say!

Katherine Mansfield, in
Alpers, 1980:330

Because Ann is so articulate there seems little more to say. Her words describe and 'explain' relationships with her parents, her children, with her 'erstwhile husband'. Too, the James family, Clive as the head, Beth as the supporting loyal wife and their four children, seem more to fit the stereotype of a 'traditional middle class family' than any other in the research. Yet Ann is separated, Rosalie divorced and remarried ... and there has been violence, now single parenthood, not aspects of 'normality' included in the myth. That the family survive is beyond question: that there is a strength of caring, support - both emotional and pragmatic - that there is love is apparent to all the senses. One has only to be in the home, and feel the atmosphere of contentment, of quiet dignity; listen to the music, or to Beth's gentle invitation to a meal, or coffee; to smell the freshly picked flowers, to taste the delicious dinners served by Beth and/or Ann, including the six course dinners or lunches served to guests; ⁷ to see the photographs of family, the prints, the furnishings and the neatly dressed people .. this is 'middle class WASP Australia', an example of people being and believing 'family is the backbone of society'.

Bryan: I feel the stable family has to be built on a stable male/female relationship.

Ann: Family's very important to me .. always has been. Families are very important but not yet all-consuming.

Courtesy is a must; deference - to Beth and Clive and older people, status people - is also a baseline code of behaviour.

⁷ Both Beth and Ann keep details of their menus so the same dishes are not served again to their guests.

Opinions of others count, for example Beth's devastation when she met her mother-in-law for the first time:

She stripped me in that one sentence.

Ann talks about keeping up a 'public face' about the relationship with Col and herself. Swearing is a no-no ...

Ann: Mum never swore. She wouldn't even say bloody ...

Ann: At one stage he (Col) wouldn't swear in front of me and would never allow anybody else to swear in front of me ..

Attention is given to little details: of table setting, furniture arrangement, of dress, speech and manners. Beth is the artist in this direction, and Ann has chosen to follow her example.

The day Ann and the children moved into Clive and Beth's home everything was made ready, including the cutting of the wedding photo on the fireplace in the lounge; that is Colin was 'excommunicated' by scissors. Ann appreciated the gesture. Manning Clark, the Australian historian, writes of an intensity in relationship with his parents:

They were the great source of my inspiration: they were the ones who had a never-ending faith ... I believe we are all children until our parents die. Then we are deprived of our opportunity to speak to the only people in the world who know what we are talking about.

Manning Clark, 1980:246

That comment would have meaning for this family.

Parenting, parentwork, parenthood

Ann loves her children dearly, and knows that she was loved both as a child and now as an adult by her parents, sister, two brothers and the wider family. Contrast that with Colin's experience. According to Ann he was brought up

in a family where sharing was unusual. Only a few of his relatives chose to attend their wedding, and his father elected to stay away. Perhaps because of this he has had difficulties in relating to Ann, his children, and her family.

Clive: He was never part of the family; never seemed interested. Perhaps unwilling, unable to cope.

Meredith, Bryan's wife, said she too found it awesome moving into such a strong family, but Ann still says ..

A family is just not important to Colin.

Colin and Ann stand in a very different relationship to their children: Ann has custody and a close relationship with each child. Colin has access. He makes arrangements to see the children, and then phones to cancel, or arrives with a changed set of plans. He promises gifts which never eventuate. Prior to the breaking up of the marriage Ann claims Colin wanted custody, but now he barely maintains contact with the children.

Ann and her family had/have an expectation of loyalty, deference, of 'right-minded', 'like-minded' behaviour.

Clive: If he hand't been my son-in-law, I'd have put him behind bars for what he did to me.

Caring there is, a bounteous supply, but also an unspoken set of rules:

Ann: Thou shalt not hurt feelings.

Bryan: Better not say anything than to say something bad.

Ann says to her children:

I will always love you. There may be times when you do things I don't like ... but I will always love you.

She is perceptive enough to realise that at times, however,

loving isn't enough.

*I don't even know if you should hide the hurt.
I could be doing exactly what mum does.
Probably Shaun doesn't want to hurt me.*

Parentwork

Colin, suggests Ann, would help out with the children when they were altogether, though his expertise was limited. Now, when the children go to stay overnight, Ann provides their breakfast. Clearly parentwork is seen as her responsibility. When Ann and Shaun and Megan moved to the James household Ann and her mother, not father, tried to sort out arrangements for the housework so that neither would be getting in the other's way. From time to time these arrangements come 'unstuck', usually, asserts Ann, because her mother is being 'superefficient'. The outdoor work is Clive's responsibility: rarely does the inside work bother him except if things are not done as he wants, or something has been shifted.

*Ann: ... It's not my home as such. It's still my
parents' home.*

Parenthood

Clive and Beth are shining examples of 'mature' people who have a strongly defined sense of what is right and proper; this affects their dress, language, style of entertainment and community involvement, their parenting, relationship with friends, neighbours, tradespeople, and the 'outside world' in general. Theirs is a middle class lifestyle and their lives are based on an assumed biological division of labour.

Ann inherited this. Part of her sense of outrage with Colin is that he did not, does not, perform according to the rules. Even his dress was not up to scratch:

*One of the problems with Col - he was anything
but smart.*

Colin also lacked the ability (capacity?) to move into Ann's family:

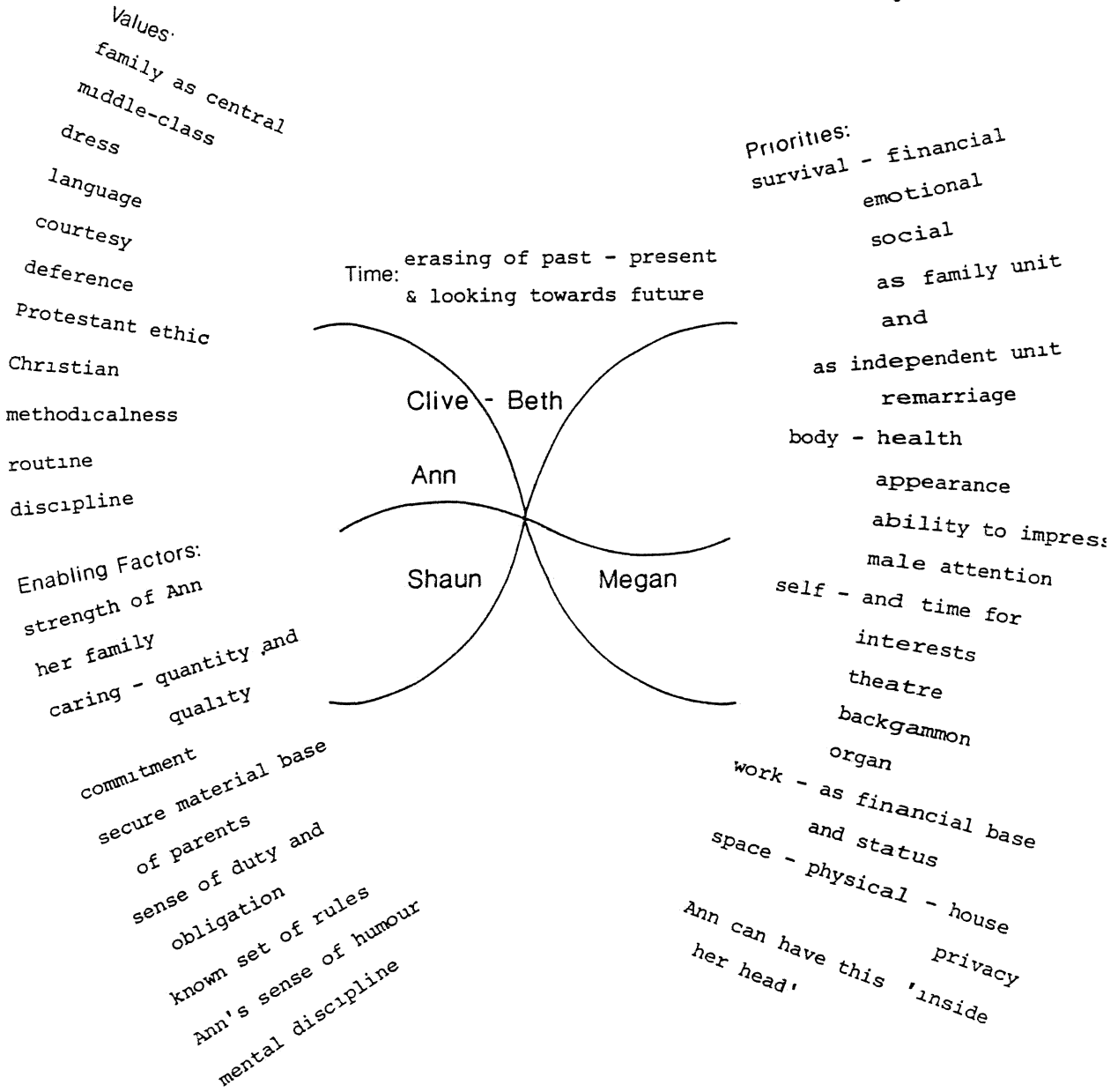
Ann: Don't ever make me try to choose between my family and you because I know my family will always be there.

Colin did not know how to perform according to Ann's expectations:

Sexually it was on and off ... one thing that used to upset me ... if he cuddled it would have to turn to sex ... and I couldn't get through to him that there were times when I just wanted cuddling for cuddling's sake.

Being a father is also defined in a strict way. Clive showed his rejection, his lack of tolerance and understanding, when between marriages Rosalie lived for a short while on the continent with someone, and Clive refused (was unable?) to answer questions about Rosalie's state of wellbeing. He refused even to say her name to friends.

Total social fact



Ann: My love for Shaun - it's just the feeling of wanting to explode with love.

Beth: Ann manages her children better than I've ever seen a mother manage her children ... I think she's a wonderful mother.

*Four levels of analysis**Descriptive*

As detailed. But what is included in the triptychs is already a translation. I only see and hear .. what I do: reality is far, far more complex. Analysis therefore is 'being done' on perceived data.

Normative

The James family have an underlying 'should'/should-not code of behaviour and this has been discussed at length already (see pp. 245, 246, 251). Those inside the family know the rules: those joining the family are expected to learn, and Colin did not.

The rules can be seen in operation at all three 'levels'.

Parenting

Beth: ... (Clive's) given me confidence in myself .. I don't ever stop to think. No matter what I did or what I do, or what I look like, I know what Clive thinks of me.

Ann: Mum's always boosted our confidence. Her own mother was a very efficient woman who never praised.

Parentwork

Ann: Shaun does like to look nice. When he was little, if I wanted him to get any particular clothes on him all I had to do was to tell him he looked smarter.

Mum and Dad were very strict with us on courtesy. I can hear myself doing the same thing with the kids.

Parenthood

Meredith: I feel like a daughter, not quite a daughter, nearly a daughter.

Bryan: This is a case where I said to my father, I'm adult. I'm going to state my case. I was going to argue ... and dad wanted to keep me down there as a child.

Sanctioning is via subtle manipulation, via quietly spoken cajoling, silence - and the sense of guilt produced whenever one teeters near the boundary.

Cognitive

Ann takes pride in her mental gymnastics ability and tries to logically argue her way through situations, and ... mostly she manages this, whether it be employment interviews, discussions over babysitting, argument with her parents.

Ann's experience with her three pregnancies was painful, yet she dealt in 'typical Ann-fashion' by thinking herself out of the dark spots:

... by that time the baby wasn't part of me. It was dead and I'd already got it out of my mind.

She refutes this comment with the next ...

Mum and I used to console ourselves ...

When Ann is feeling vulnerable - for example, before a job interview - she relies on 'techniques'. Ann practises self-hypnosis which she was taught by an acupuncturist she attended to help her stop smoking, or she allows herself to 'hit bottom', knowing she can then start climbing out of the trough again.

In the relationship with Colin, Ann says she could not 'think' her way through, and pride stopped her from recognising or dealing with their difficulties. Ann could not divorce herself by thinking from the emotional embroilment - her marriage, her relationship with Colin as the children's father: her dependence on Colin in an economic sense, for housing, status .. had there not been a financial crisis Colin and Ann may have muddled along for a further period.

Explanatory

O'Neill says of research

We are engaged in an exercise that will involve us in mentioning what might never need to have been said ...

O'Neill, 1975:6

This family was 'working' when the research took place but the uncovering which this involved acted as a catalyst for a number of changes. Power - enabling and constraining,⁸ is the structuring principle in the family. Power is channelled in well-defined ways - parent, child - male, female - yet the research led to an evaluation of these. One of the most constraining aspects of the James family praxis was the rule - adhered to by all - that thou shalt not criticise, one is duty-bound to subscribe to the rules which percolate from 'on high' - via Clive as father. Both Ann, and Bryan before her, challenged this.

When Ann moved from her marital home back to her parents she was able neither emotionally, nor physically (for health reasons) to use the time to question her values. The physical space she found herself in also did not lead to such a search, but the research did. One particular occasion provoked Ann into action.

After the evening interview with Bryan, Ann was very upset and angry: she called Bryan smug, arrogant ... and unfair. What had emerged during the evening was that Bryan, rightly or wrongly, considered he had re-negotiated his relationship with his parents, especially with his father, to the extent that he was no longer in a father/son relationship, but more on the same level, at least in conversation. Ann

⁸ This is different again from the controlling use of power in the Strahan family.

recognised with a thud that night the extent of her dependence on her parents; that was one important aspect/learning. She also acknowledged, then and later, the power of her mother - the manipulation, the emotional hold, the subtlety, and found this new knowing very painful to cope with. She spent hours trying to work through her ambivalent feelings - her strong love and her intense dislike of her mother's power.

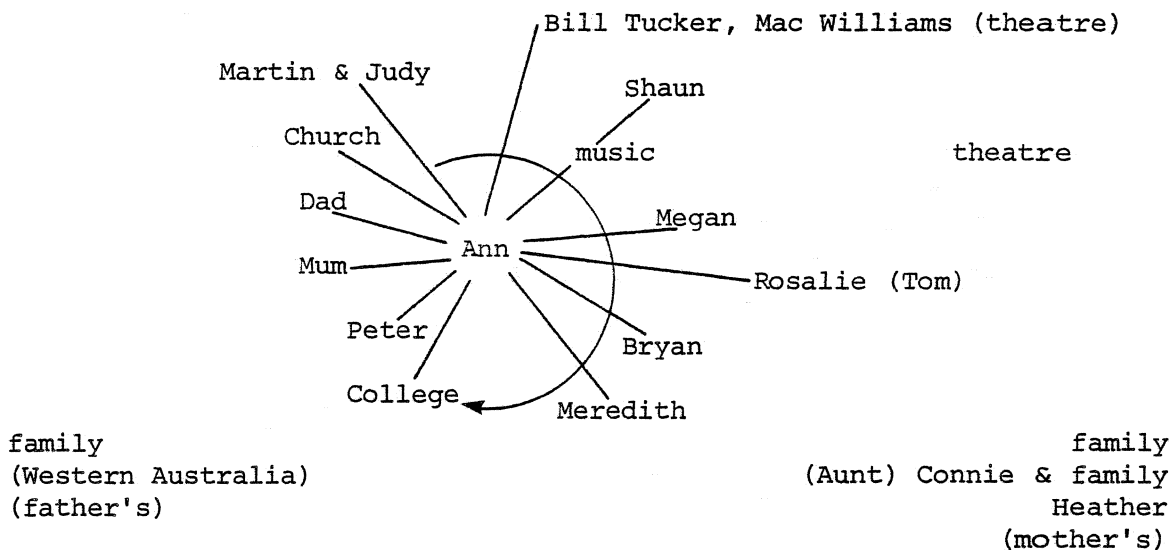
When Ann decided to do something, she chose to talk with her mother. I gather it was distressing (I heard from both Ann and Beth). Later Ann said ...

Mum and I have changed considerably through all of this. We've come to a complete understanding of how the other one feels.

An optimistic comment from Ann, and in part, a sweeping under the carpet of unsolved tensions, a pattern of behaviour learnt in childhood.

Models

Ann chose to draw a model of people and 'things' important to her.



Ann and Beth also completed the eggs in the basket exercise. Ann also completed a set for Colin (30 eggs).

	<i>Self</i>	<i>Husband</i>	<i>Father</i>
Colin	(15)	(5)	(10)
Ann	(15)	(2)	(13)
	<i>Self</i>	<i>Wife</i>	<i>Mother</i>

When asked if she would make any changes, Ann said she would eliminate the two in the wife basket.

Beth (40 eggs):

<i>Self</i>	<i>Wife</i>	<i>Mother</i>	<i>Grandmother</i>
(5)	(20)	(10)	(5)

Beth explained that if she gave input to Ann then that was beneficial for the children also. I think Beth considered she had little option given the living circumstances of the family.

Ann completed baskets for her father:

<i>Self</i>	<i>Husband</i>	<i>Father</i>	<i>Grandfather</i>
(13)	(13)	(7)	(7)

Research comment

At times the experience of living so close to Ann as she uncovered her thoughts, feelings, needs .. was traumatic. I noted this in an earlier part of the triptych (p. 261). Research does not necessarily affect only the researcher and researched: rather than include any comments I have chosen to include (unedited), as an appendix, those of Jenny R. who transcribed the tapes (see Appendix B).

Also, as an Appendix (C), is a letter Ann wrote after she had read the completed transcript. Such 'data' is usually not solicited, nor shared. I consider it to be a vital part of the research process if only to show the need for awareness of people involved in the research.

Other comments taken from the notes:

Before:

Very aware of ambivalence/ambiguities about going into another family especially when Ana is sick - trying to dispossess our family .. have to get out of own family to get inside ... this demands an intensity of involvement.

During (Marg to Ann and Peter):

I'm going home to get another couple of tapes because I want you two to talk about something while I'm away, because there's a change going on. It's (research) based on an assumption that your relationship, whatever it be, can bear the kind of talking that's going on. It's going to be precipitated into talking about things ... that's why I was saying I was biting back those questions ... we've gone too far for me not to say that, but I want you to say no???

Towards end ...

Whether it's just my sensitivity or over-sensitivity but Peter and Ann don't seem so close, don't seem as relaxed ... almost as if Ann is pulling out. (When I checked later, Ann was unaware of this, but agreed post research period.) Ann pointed out that

what this week has done is to point out some of the differences which she's known were there but had got hidden or glossed over between her and Peter.

We talked about my feeling responsible in that - she said - 'no, you're not responsible .. in fact this week's been good: I've learnt something.'

Shaun said he was sick of me being around ... he said he knew I was studying families .. I explained we only had a little way to go.

One of the problems of 'doing' a single parent family - you can't observe because you're bound up with the conversation .. life goes on but you're part of it. You just can't be a fly on the wall as much as in a two parent family.

Postscript

Ann and the two children moved into a rented house some eight months after the research period. Ann was unable to get a teaching job when she finished her Diploma; the period of searching and getting knocked back time and time again, was a trying one. Eventually with much encouragement from her parents, her sister in America, and friends she widened her job scope and became part of a team in a legal office. Within three months she had reorganised the office personnel and financial handling, and became office manager.

Early in 1982 she met Doug Forrest, a quietly spoken, mature, 'solid' person in his mid forties. They married in June 1982. Doug and the children are very comfortable with each other, very loving, accepting.

Doug works as a training manager for a big multinational company. In September 1982 he was sent on a month's study leave to England. Ann joined him there at the conclusion; they spent time touring Britain, then flew to the U.S. to spend a week with Rosalie, Tom and their two children. Shaun and Megan stayed with family and friends during that time.

The one area of considerable strain concerns the 'ex-spouses' and in Doug's case, his two adult children, neither of whom will make contact with Doug. Both Ann and Doug are hoping this will ease soon.

Colin, on the other hand, has continued breaking appointments and promises to the children. Increasingly Shaun has got fed up. Colin has given away his job with the Public Service, choosing to spend his life gambling. Maintenance is non-existent, contact irregular. The children have chosen to be called Shaun and Megan Forrest.

Diana, 37, and Rachel, 7, live in a two bedroomed ground floor flat in a scruffy part of inner Melbourne. Lots of their friends live nearby, including one of Diana's brothers, Sam, his wife Lynne, and their two year old son Jon. Both Diana and Rachel identify with the suburb: they enjoy living there and want to buy a house nearby, when and if they get the money. Diana has been thinking of moving, again. She and Rachel have moved three times around Melbourne in the past eighteen months, but friends and Sam and Lynne now want her to stay in the same vicinity.

I feel safe in this flat ... because I've got sticks in all the windows and they can't get in.

Diana does not own a car, but borrows Sam's if she needs one. Both from an economic point of view and an ideological one she prefers to use public transport - at some risk. When she is returning home at night

... the tramstop's just down there and I get ready .. I stand in the doorway and as soon as the tram stops I jump off it and I start running, so that I'm running while the tram's still there.

Diana is of medium height, slim, with bushy ginger hair. She wears glasses, and these highlight her expressive eyes, eyes sparkling in laughter, wit, anger at injustice. Rachel is small, wiry, verbal and independent. Both have a sense of containment, a space around them which is comfortable, though one doesn't penetrate it, even in a hug. Diana chose to have a child when she was thirty: neither has contact with Allan, Rachel's father. ¹

The flat was always seen as a temporary place: there are no curtain rails, the bathroom handbasin needs fixing,

¹ See end of triptych, p. 343.

the toilet seat too, and the place is always untidy - newspapers strewn on the floor of the lounge, cartons of books stacked against any wall, Rachel's bike gets squeezed into the space between things in the narrow hall. Dishes are left from one meal to the next, ants, and Muzz, the cat, share the leftovers in the kitchen.

I would rather spend the afternoon playing the piano than vacuuming through the bloody house. Ten minutes after I've done it Rachel will come through and drop biscuit crumbs. What's the point of that - I could have learnt a new song in that time.

Diana borrows a vacuum cleaner from Sam about once a month or when it's needed. Alongside the piano in the lounge is a huge photograph of Rachel, taken by Tony, an ex-lover. Next to it, and in the bedroom too, shelves are stacked tightly with books: university texts on history, English literature; works by Drabble, Friedan, Millet and Oakley and three books by Angela Davis. Paperbacks are everywhere.

Rachel's room is a goldmine: roller skates, toys, bags, comics, strewn on the floor. There is a huge toybox stacked on top of the wardrobe - posters of a folk festival, and one for Medibank are tacked on the walls. Books are everywhere.

Diana: I started buying books for Rachel when I got pregnant.

Clothes are scattered through the house: Diana bought a silk blouse at the market one day and this was thrust on top of other clothes at the end of her bed: next day it too was covered in Muzz' hairs. Diana loves clothes - 'arty' clothes, Indian clothes .. she haunts opportunity shops, markets ..

Diana and Rachel eat mostly vegetarian meals: they consider them more healthy, and economical. Friends, family are welcome to the flat, as long as they accept Diana 'as she is'.

When Rachel was three, she rode pillion with Diana on an anti-uranium bike ride to Canberra: the trip took two weeks.

Diana is very involved with the Labor Party, Women against Rape, the anti-smoking lobby, and she and Rachel have just written to the local Council about a broken swing in the park. That was Rachel's suggestion.

Diana works as a welfare coordinator for the Council for the Single Mother and her Child (CSMC). She initially accepted the position to help out over the Christmas holidays, 1978-1979, then was asked to apply for the coordinator's job early in the year. She works twenty hours a week, and though she lacks confidence in her ability to manage, she enjoys it.

I still don't think I do a very good job - I mean, honestly I don't, yet people continuously say - you're fine. Janet, one of the other staff, said: I hate your day off - I sort of feel there's nothing solid to hold onto.

Diana, along with other staff/people involved feel as though they are constantly walking a tightrope - trying to cater for individual needs, and yet be involved in social action and policy formulation.

I'm just as much in the dilemma as everyone else about sacrificing individuals for the cause, but it catches me.

Rachel attends the local state school. After school, on the days Diana is working, Rachel walks home with her friend Melanie Shaw to her house. Melanie's parents, Mat and Sally, are Family Day Care givers, Sally being the coordinator for the area. Rachel loves going to this family, and sometimes stays overnight. Diana often stays for a coffee when she is collecting Rachel: she says Mat gives her all sorts of advice about her love affairs. Both families lean on each other, and provide a listening post, care.

When Diana was asked to help out at the CSMC she had just finished an Arts degree. She wanted to go to university when she was sixteen, but her father said he didn't want her to become a 'bluestocking'.

I thought what he meant when he said it to me - it meant someone with glasses and dark stockings and peter pan collars and ugly and studios and men didn't like her - and I thought, whoops - best not to get into that.

So she went nursing, in order to get away from 'warring' parents. Initially she applied for a hospital fourteen miles away from the country town where they lived, but was advised by her grandmother to train at a Catholic hospital in Melbourne.

I was very timid, didn't like it and came 'unstuck' in my first year. I had a sort of nervous breakdown. When I got into midwifery I hid in the pan-room .. then delivered my first baby - it dropped into my hands.

After training, Diana spent a year in the Children's Ward in the same hospital, then 'went walkabout': drove with a friend to Darwin via Alice Springs - worked there for a few months and returned via the Gold Coast. She arrived back in Melbourne broke, worked for another two years, then moved to Sydney.

I decided when I was about twenty six that I would have a baby when I was thirty. I got pregnant once. That was to a guy I picked up in a pub. I met this fellow, Chuck Longman; he was a great big tall black-haired Englishman. He was a folk singer and I was drinking with him. We went back to his place for dinner and a fuck after dinner.

A few weeks later, Diana suspected she was pregnant.

I worked in a laboratory and I took a specimen in. We were always bringing in pregnancy tests for friends. About lunchtime I got pains and bleeding. In the afternoon (I was told) the pregnancy test was positive. I wasn't ready for it then - I didn't want to be pregnant.

Diana knew she was having a miscarriage. She left work, travelled home in a crowded bus, and went to the doctor's. She was promptly put into hospital.

... in a ward with three single mothers who had just had babies.

Four years later Diana got pregnant again.

I probably knew the night I got pregnant the second time - I have met other women who said they knew when they got pregnant ... I cried that night.

It was a very difficult pregnancy for Diana, and a harrowing time with her parents. Diana had a number of serious health problems, some potentially dangerous, yet after their initial response to the news of their daughter's pregnancy, and one visit to the hospital, they both cut Diana, and then Rachel, refusing to have anything to do with either of them.

When Rachel was three months old, Diana and Rachel moved to Melbourne. Over the next two or three years Diana nursed at a geriatric hospital, at other times did housework, ironing, mending to supplement her pension. For most of this period, Diana and Rachel shared flats or lived with various members of their large family.

These were the 'glowing days of the Whitlam era', when money was available for education. Along with the cheque from Social Security, Diana would occasionally get a letter urging people to think seriously about retraining. Diana decided to take up this offer. Armed with a friend for mutual support, she did all the interviews and tests, and was accepted to do HSC.

I thought ... great. They were going to pay our fares, for our books, and give us \$5.00 a week. I took English - two Englishes - got 96 for English Expression and 85 for Literature: also British History and Classical Civilisation.

Towards the end of the year, further forms were sent to Diana inviting her, on the basis of her marks, to study at University.

It's like you pay your ticket to get on the merry-go-round and you don't get off.

Diana applied and was accepted to do an Arts/Law course at

the University of Melbourne. She went along to do an initial test for law and decided it was a 'load of elitist bullshit'.

I regret that I didn't do it years ago. If I'd started when I was twenty-five or something, but at my age I don't really feel inclined to start setting up a law practice. I told Mum and Dad that recently, and Dad said, 'You silly bugger. You could have had this whole practice here already set up for you. You could have come in and been the junior partner.' It never entered my head (that Dad would think that way).

I did the degree for my own satisfaction - I had to pretend, going into the department, that I had all these ambitions and goals, but what I was really doing it for, was because I'd always wanted to go to Uni and I hadn't had the opportunity before.

Triptych: 2

Diana and her family

The first time I can remember is when I was two. It was a very hot night - it was getting close to Christmas and I couldn't sleep, and my mother and father couldn't sleep either. They were lying on the floor in the lounge. I came out. I was playing nurse. I always played nurse with a nappie round my head. I was bathing their heads with a wet face washer and of course they were lapping it up. .. My father took me out into the night and gave me a swing .. I've never forgotten it ...

Jim and Nancy McAlpine live in one of the larger country towns in Victoria. Jim is a lawyer, and he bought the practice many years ago with financial aid from his father.

Diana: His father's a farmer/grazier - very wealthy - nine children. He'd helped Dad's older brother buy into a practice in Y... So he said he'd buy this practice. He (Dad) fought tooth and nail against the Catholic prejudice. Dad actually asked whether there was any anti-Catholic feeling in the town and was told 'no' by the bastard that sold him the practice. Mum said she went into the office to see him one day. He hadn't had a client in three weeks and his desk was empty. He built his practice and reputation amongst a lot of anti-Catholic prejudice. He has been on the Council for over twenty five years, and Shire President for nine.

Nancy McAlpine has always been 'sickly'. In recent years she has had a number of heart attacks, and suffers from high blood pressure. When she was fourteen she had rheumatic fever and was told by the doctor she would never be able to lead a normal family life. Nancy had other ideas.

Her father was a bank manager: early in his career they moved to a new town.

Mum's mother was very young and innocent. She wasn't used to being the lady. She didn't know how to cope with it all. The ladies in the town came to call and she just opened the door and said - No, I'm not ready for visitors.

Nor was she ready to let Nancy marry. Jim was taken to the house one night by a friend who thought Nancy's younger sister might be interested.

Dad talked to Mum till the early hours of the morning, then he kissed her goodnight. Came to dinner the following Sunday. Came up after dinner and said 'How do you think you'll like marrying a solicitor?'

She wanted to (marry) and her parents wouldn't agree. They wanted her to finish her nursing and (Dad) to finish his law degree, so they eloped .. June 23, 1941. He promised her - a grand piano, a Packard Clipper and a mink coat.

She got a Thurmer piano which was a family heirloom and a Model T Ford and she didn't get a coat.

She knew they didn't have any money. She knew she wouldn't ever have to work. She said she was an intellectual snob. She knew she would marry a Catholic, so she just found a Catholic who was acceptable and made it her business to fall in love with him.

Diana was born in 1942, Roger 23 months later, then over the years eight more children. Jim and Nancy only wanted four.

But they were Catholic - and see they couldn't do anything about it. I remember the time when she got pregnant with one of the later ones .. eight or something. Dad came home and said to Mum, 'You poor little bugger.' There was nothing they could do short of stopping fucking.

Then Diana went on to talk of her family and her position in it. Her mood changed from quiet remembering to anger, then switched to delight, pleasure, back again to remorse, sadness .. Always I was aware of Diana's sensitivity: I became increasingly drawn to Diana's obvious tolerance, her honesty, empathy, understanding, and admiring of her intense caring.

I had a lot of responsibility for the other kids. Roger was different - shy, scared, quiet, little.

Mum's deaf - Mum became progressively deaf as the years went by, so she wouldn't hear the babies often - Dad chose not to hear I think. I used to have to do a lot of stuff like getting the babies

bathed in the morning - stuff like that before I went to school and making sure everyone had had their breakfast - they'd still be in bed - Mum and Dad.

I was forced to grow up. I got very resentful later on and angry because I thought Mum should be like other proper mothers that were cleaning the house spick and span. That's what I resented, I was made to be the mother - I did that from round the age of six or seven.

Dad played with the kids and he nursed them. I can never remember seeing him give a baby a bottle or feeding a baby. He didn't change nappies.

I had my own bed all my life but from as early as I can remember you could sleep with someone else if you wanted to, and I can remember ... I would have been seven or eight and I was sharing a bed with Malcolm. Often if babies cried in the night, we'd just get up and grab it and put it in bed with us - well - it shut the baby up and it was nice to snuggle up to a baby and from then on anybody might get up who heard the baby - give it a bottle and take it in bed with you.

With a wry grin, and a twinkle, Diana continued:

People often used to say: Diana must be a wonderful help to you Nancy. I don't know how you'd manage and Mum would say - yes, she's a good girl and I wouldn't be able to manage without her - and that was in front of me.

Both parents are alcoholics:

From round six or seven I was being sent up to the bloody wine shop to get the sweet sherry. Oh I used to hate it. I'd have to walk all the way up to the shop and it was right up the other side of town, up the hill, 'a bottle of sweet sherry, please, and book it up.'

No one ever said a word to me about (Mum's) drinking. No one ever said anything. I used to be embarrassed to take friends home, you know, smeared. I mean I took friends home one day and she was lying on the kitchen floor. Karen (sister) brought this really uppercrust sort of girlfriend home and Mum was lying on the kitchen floor. Karen came in and she woke up and said, 'Hello, I was having a little rest.' Karen can laugh now but she hated her then.

Things like that were bound to bring you down a peg or two. I never had a proper uniform. For years I had the wrong clothes. We thought the doctor's family was uppercrust. We never considered ourselves as it, but other kids did, funnily enough. I (think) this was because we had so many children and an alcoholic mother. If we hadn't had so many kids with the backsides out of their pants and little babies toddling up to the convent with no nappies on ...

Dad always drinks beer - he's never hit the high spots with his drinking. He doesn't come home till about eight - finishes work at six. He never used to get home till a lot later and he'd be drunk - roaring drunk, and we were scared shitless.

He's very much a creature of habit. He comes home every night and dinner's ready, and he sits down in his special chair in the lounge - always used to have a bath on Sundays at seven o'clock and then go to bed and listen to the Goons.

The nuns used to help Mum. She's hopeless; I mean she's stupid and she talks rubbish. She embarrasses you, and she rings people up. When I left home she was doing it. If you tell her something it will be all over the world the next day - it's like telling the six o'clock news - and she really doesn't help in a lot of cases - she's tactless and indiscreet and it's quite a problem to tell her anything.

She sometimes picked up a few of the kids and pissed off - she'd come round in the middle of the night - it was terrible - we'd be lying there and hearing all this dreadful row. She'd come out and say to all of us, 'I'm leaving, are you coming with me?' and all the big kids would say no because she was drunk - she smelt awful. And she'd take the car - I don't know where she went - she'd go to Melbourne - I think she had to go for her sanity - she had to go away sometimes. Sometimes she went on her own, and sometimes to Chelsea - Mum's mother had a house down there. She'd get the key and live down by the beach for a week and then she'd ring up and say she was coming home, and it would all be lovey-dovey - he'd be dying for her to come back. Meanwhile we'd be eating fish and chips every day and pies and having a great old time with Dad - he was as mellow as could be when she was away. They just needed to be away from each other - apart.

My mother's been a slave to my father; he treats her like an idiot. Dad's very arrogant and pig-headed, very emotional, very soft and sentimental (about) family feelings. I'm sure they love each other, in some sort of way - but it's not the sort of love I'd want - it's a very selfish love.

Then she paused as if to reconsider:

I think they love each other. They have very tender moments - like he took her overseas for two or two and a half months this year. They travelled around Europe and he did that because he wanted to do it for her. He was desperate when she was in hospital recently. He thought she was going to die, but that was tied up with his selfishness because he loses his slave if he loses Mum. She was very frightened of dying on that trip. She was also very frustrated when she got home from hospital - Dad wouldn't let her lift an arm.

He used to bash her up regularly. I used to go and yell at him to stop hitting her. I know that she contributed to it - I don't mean that she should have been hit. He could hit her half to death Saturday night and go off to Mass Sunday morning. He never touched us - he hit me with a teatowel - once.

I don't think he's touched her for a while now - like when I was nursing it was the worst time.

Mum's got very good women friends up there who love and care very much about her and they try to stop her from drinking. They won't offer her whisky and stuff in their house - they will offer her a beer because they realise ...

I believe that now she's drinking because she's scared stiff of dying. She's given me a lot of indications that that's troubling her since she was sick. Last time when I was home she was really hitting the drink. She was dreadful. When we got there she was pissed - she was drinking a bottle of whisky a day, and that's a lot ... She eased off the drinking about ten years ago; she started drinking again when she had these heart attacks. He (Dad's) nearly out of his mind.

Diana found it quite difficult looking at her father:

Dad showed a lot of sensitivity sometimes about the children (yet) they are not people in their own right ... and that's really been Dad's attitude to his children right the way through. I mean. I'm 37 and I still relate to him like a child. I don't see him changing - he doesn't really understand things, like you make your bed and lie in it.

Dad gets very angry and he has on occasions not spoken to somebody for months or even years. He didn't speak to Lola (sister) for five months and nobody was allowed to mention her (Lola wouldn't get their first baby christened). It was like she was dead.

Then they got the baby baptised - they gave in.

I've only ever had one real talk with Dad about something, last August Karen and I - we started to talk about Mum. It just poured out of him - all his feelings about Mum. He was needing support and we were giving it to him, but it was very difficult, because you feel uncomfortable with him being vulnerable, and you being strong.

And then, as if to 'balance' out the picture ...

Dad's been a very good man. He's done a lot of very good things for people - like helping migrants to get them settled - and buying houses and getting jobs for them. He's done a lot of things for nothing. He got the OBE for community service.

Of all the brothers and sisters, Diana feels closest to Karen.

Not when we were living at home because she was a sulky little puss .. I left home when she was nine or ten but when she left school, and was coming down to Teachers' College, she lived with me. I always had some of my family living or staying with me. We (girlfriend) and I had my younger brother Barry living with us - he'd just left school and he and his friend were living with us because Mum wanted me to keep an eye on him till he found his feet.

Karen was with me two years, then she got pregnant and got married, but we'd already established a pretty close friendship by then. When I came down here (from Sydney) with Rachel I was quite shocked at the way she was living. She was watching serials on TV, and reading Women's Weekly stories. She was not going to bed till well after midnight and her husband went about nine o'clock. He really worshipped her. She left him. Later, I looked after her kids ...

She's very much more attractive than me. Perhaps it's because she's attractive, but I never had thousands of fellas flocking round my place - she's always had boyfriends queue up. She's quite sharp and straight in her home - you do what she wants. She holds working bees and the whole bloody countryside come round and they all work for her. All she does is feed them all day - she's a fabulous cook. She leads a charmed life in some ways.

Roger. He's a bit funny - bit of a recluse - very unlike the rest of us. He's a very lonely man - he's had a couple of nervous breakdowns.

Christine has to have a man to go with. She can't see herself as an individual and so she went off with this guy. She knocked off once. He came down and chased her. I hear that she's going to marry him and from Jane (another sister) that she's not. I'm supposed to be going up there (Queensland) on holiday, so I hope to God I can get to the bottom of it and perhaps get her away from him. The little boy from her marriage lives with his father.

Then there's Shirley. She's 26 - she tried to kill herself this year because her life is so intolerable with her husband and his family. Like a concentration camp. She's not even allowed to go and visit my mother (they live about 80 kilometres away). She has to sneak up there and not tell her husband, and that's becoming more difficult. The little girl's five and she can talk about it. I've been up there - sort of as a duty - I like to see her but no-one likes to see him. Shirley told us - Karen and me - (that) she tried to kill herself. It shocked me. I thought I was pretty unshockable but that really shocked me. We felt terribly guilty because she said she felt as though she didn't have anybody to turn to when the chips were down. It's made a difference to how we behave.

She was very badly treated in hospital - like they treated her like shit. Shock treatment ... This bloody psychiatrist is busy telling her what's wrong with her. There's nothing wrong with her. He's a bloody mental nincompoop.

The doctor says the reason she doesn't like having sex is because of her very strict upbringing and because she was raped when she was thirteen, but as she said to me, 'I can't understand that, Diana, because I used to like sex before we were married. I don't like it any more - I just put up with it.'

I've found out things since then. He (husband) made her have sex on the motorbike. He bought this great new super-duper motorbike and he made her fuck him on the motorbike. Okay - if you or I want to fuck our men on our motorbike that's fine, if everyone's happy about fucking, but for Shirley it was weird and strange. Anyway, Karen and I started writing letters (to her). She still gets very depressed.

I asked Diana to explain her involvement with her family.

Sometimes I think it may be purely obligation - that you've been told it's your family and you've got to stick by them, but I don't really believe that ... because it's not obligation that makes me cry when Shirley tells me she's tried to commit

suicide ... you don't cry for obligation. And it's certainly not obligation that made me traipse up and down to St Vincent's every night washing Roger's clothes and taking flowers in to him to try and cheer him up - and talking to nursing staff on his behalf so that they can handle him better, because I understand him a bit more than they do.

We all think Roger is off his head, but if Roger rings up and says he's broken his leg there will be half a dozen of us out there in ten minutes to fix him up. We'll all be grumbling about it - bloody bastard - only rings up when there's something wrong - but we'll go.

I think you notice it when there's only one or two in a family and there's not so much rough and tumble. They're not made to share very much because there's enough to go around.

I mean we didn't have enough beds and we shared beds and we had a lot of sex play together and experimenting. The boys were fucking when they were about thirteen, or so they told me, but I wasn't interested. We were Catholics, you know ... We knew that that was wrong!

What is it? Is it shared experience? Is it sort of what we had when we were children together .. because we grew up fighting and tumbling around the same house together and experiencing the same parental thing?

Again a pause, as Diana 'went back' in years:

I was always strong within the family - outside I was shy and quite diffident.²

² Compare Lucy Mathews: 'With my brothers and sisters I had plenty of confidence.'

Diana and Rachel

Diana turned thirty in 1972; she wanted to have a child.

... I didn't run round looking for a perfect physical specimen. Allan was around at the time and I thought he would be all right. I didn't really know him very well. I learnt as much about him as I could when I found I was pregnant, because I wanted to have it to hand over to Rachel. Initially he said he would buy things for the baby like a bassinette, but he didn't do that. I was angry at that.

I thought I knew. I had the test done at the earliest possible time, a week over when the period was due. The tests were positive.

It was just too much to believe. I got up, went out the front door of the clinic where I was working, and ran into the street and screamed in a loud, loud voice.

I was sick as a dog. I was nauseated all the time, the whole time. I had a nasty taste in my mouth for four months at least. I got pregnant in January. I'd had one miscarriage and thought it would be stupid to tell them (parents) too soon and lose it.

I waited until May. I wrote a letter - I got a birthday card from home. They never fucking remember my birthday which is May 6. I thought I'll write back and thank them and tell them I'm pregnant at the same time, so I used the card as a way of introducing it by saying it had made me realise they thought about me even when I wasn't there and how much they cared about me and I hoped they cared enough about me to be happy about my news and that it wasn't easy for me to tell them I was pregnant and that I intended keeping the child.

They were really angry - because I'd made a fool of them. How were they going to be able to walk down the street and face all the people, and Dad's brothers. They both wrote a letter. Mum's was terrible - it was vicious - really nasty shit - and I burnt it straight away. I decided Dad's was different. He was trying to persuade me to have the baby adopted, if there was no possibility of marriage.

I'd already told Dad the man was divorced and not going to be sticking around. It surprised me he would be willing for me to marry a divorcee. His reasons (for adoption) were genuine. He believed that illegitimate children just didn't get the same sort of start in life.

I wrote back and thanked him for his lovely letter and understanding but said - I'm sorry - this is perhaps the first major thing we've disagreed upon, but I'm afraid this is the most important thing that has ever happened to me and I can't change my mind just to keep you happy. I have to keep this child - she's mine. You're asking me to give her away.

I think I had one more letter from Dad. It wasn't as nice as the first one ... He didn't want me to come home if I was determined to go ahead with it.

I was living under a lot of tension. Mum and Dad were passing through Sydney en route to Queensland. I was dreading that because I felt like a slut and I didn't want to face Dad, my father, with a big stomach.

I had these painless contractions when I was five and a half months. I rang the doctor, took a day off work, but went back to work the next day. I needed the money. I stayed in bed all the weekend, and the contractions continued. Maybe I psyched myself into hospital. Three days before he and Mum arrived, I landed in there.

Diana was admitted to the hospital on the Sunday evening. Her blood pressure, she said, was something like 310. When she was admitted the nurse kept on taking her blood pressure.

It's amazing how you blot out things from your consciousness. It never occurred to me that she wasn't believing what she was reading.

Diana was given

*this whopping great bloody injection of valium ..
I woke up on Friday.*

While she was 'out' her parents arrived: her father was refused permission to see her, but he was very angry, performed, and was allowed in. Diana did not know they had been to see her until the Friday.

Six and a half weeks later Diana's kidneys began to fail. Other complications developed, and they performed a caesarian at 33½ weeks. Rachel was 2 pounds 10 ounces at birth, and 'came out fighting'. Diana was asked by one of the medical

profession if she was sure of her dates.

I said yes, a single woman's always sure of her dates.

Diana left the hospital well ahead of Rachel. Diana said she was sick, anaemic and very scared.

I'd been hospitalised. I'd got so used to being there and having my meals prepared, and my clothes washed. I don't think people realise what it feels like ... all these strange sensations with my body. I wasn't sure what they meant ... I was extremely anaemic ... I was so weak. I just lay for about a week and did nothing. I was so scared, frightened, because there was this little baby and I thought - please God don't let her get too big too soon because I can't possibly look after her.

Diana had not been allowed to touch Rachel:

I resent that so much. I'm so angry about it. I couldn't breastfeed her. I tried to express milk. Rachel couldn't tolerate what they were giving her. I just squirted it into the shower. Nobody really supported me. If I'd known of Nursing Mothers ... I was too sick and under the weather to even think of alternatives. It wasn't important that she got my milk, I mean they had a bank full of breast milk.

It was six and a half weeks before I touched Rachel. It was disgusting, I accepted what they did and dished out to me - until they said I could hold her.

(I felt) particularly vulnerable in the hospital situation. It's turned me into a very sympathetic, understanding midwife, but I haven't done much of it since. In fact it puts one off working in hospitals completely, because I can't bear to be a part of that sort of institution. It doesn't see people as people.

Diana left hospital, but Rachel stayed on: Diana couldn't even go to the hospital very often.

I wanted to be closer to Rachel. I couldn't afford the bus fares (to get to and fro). I was getting \$26.00 a week and my rent was \$16.00 and I had to feed myself and the bus fares were about \$1.00 so I couldn't go. There is probably something available, but nobody told me. The social worker didn't

tell me anything.

When I was a midwife I remember mothers used to come into hospital to have their second, third babies. I could never understand why these mothers were so blasé about this beautiful brand new exquisite baby - because I love babies, and they were all bursting to know how the little kid at home was getting on ... I thought - they've had that kid for two or three years and it must be a pain in the neck to them by now. I could never understand. I didn't know until Rachel. She would have been home a few months before I really felt the bubble burst. Because I hadn't touched her I hadn't got to know her, I didn't know her instincts.

Then Diana became very quiet: her eyes glistened as she talked.

I can remember when she was very young sitting there and tears flowing ... just looking at her, and realising that I actually had her, and that we were together - it was less than six months - I didn't have her till she was three months. She was just a baby - she could have been any baby, and I'd nursed lots of babies. I think the first time I felt anything about her was when she smiled at me for the first time.

The main support Diana was getting at this time was from her family in Melbourne. One brother wrote and asked if Diana and Rachel would like to live with him and his family: Diana accepted, then asked another brother to drive through to collect them.

Diana had her first period the night they left Sydney. She flooded everywhere.

I nearly died of fright: I thought I was going to bleed to death.

Sam, who was driving, had called to see their parents on the way through to Sydney. He had warned his parents he would take Diana and Rachel in on the way home. It was a disastrous move.

Dad didn't come home till nearly 9.00 p.m. and he was very drunk. He picked a fight with me very

quickly. He was being very provocative. This was the first time I'd ever stood up to him about anything in my whole life. I'd always done what I should do. I'd never done anything wrong. I was thirty. It was a matter of life and death to me. Rachel was in the cot asleep. He was going on about my morals.

Diana, as she recalls, said:

I'm sorry that we disagree about this, but as far as I'm concerned it's between me and my God and God knows what's going on and He's forgiven me and I don't know what makes you so damn special that you can't forgive me.

Diana said her father told her he believed she was right but still couldn't accept it. She interpreted that as meaning she wasn't welcome: she threatened to leave that night but it was a heat wave. Temperatures were very high and the drive to Melbourne would have taken another six hours.

I was crying - Mum was crying, and saying 'Diana, you can't kill that little baby'. It would have killed her to drag her out, but I still offered to go that night.

I don't want to be anywhere that I'm not welcome ..

The argument continued; Diana saying to her father:

I don't know how you can do this. You haven't even seen the little baby in there, that beautiful little baby, and he said, 'I'm not going to'. That really cut me to the quick that he couldn't, wouldn't even look at her.

Dad went out. We all bawled. We got up in the morning. I went in and said goodbye. He must have felt really bad, but he's a pigheaded man and he won't back down easily. He's never apologised to my mother in his life.

The following March, months later, Diana and Rachel were living in Melbourne with Karen and her two children. Jim and Nancy McAlpine called one evening to ask directions from Karen. Diana opened the door.

He came in and I had Rachel there. It was like with the pregnancy. I didn't want him to see her because I was ashamed. We made a few attempts at conversation. As he went out the door he gave me \$20.00 and said, you buy your daughter a frock. It was his first attempt to do something.

I thought - bugger it. He's got to apologise or come round first. I bought Rachel a bed with that money because I wanted it to be something I would remember it by, and keep.

I still didn't go up there (her parents' home) and I would have gone on forever, but I got this relayed message saying anyone who wanted to was welcome at home for Christmas.

It was bloody awful in that twelve months. That was the first year and I was adjusting to being a mother and it's not bloody easy even when you plan it. It's all hypothetical, but when you actually get a baby it's very frightening and it's also a tremendous adjustment.

I didn't even think I could send photos. I sent Mum a secret photo. There's no photos of Rachel on their mantelpiece because I have never got round to it. There's photos of all our kids and grandchildren and aunts ...

The first time I went up there I never took Rachel anywhere, and didn't talk to anybody. The next time I went up I thought - bugger it. So I put her in the pram, wheeled her down the main street - said hello to everyone - this is my daughter - and all the people were dying to see her.

It took me a couple of years to be able to talk naturally about Rachel - I used to try and avoid mentioning her in front of Dad.

Now Diana and Rachel keep in touch with Diana's parents (grandparents). Diana says, with a little laugh, that Rachel is the only grandchild whose photograph is not hanging in the lounge, and that is because of the early years.

Diana and Rachel ... now ...

(Conversation in progress the night I arrived. Rachel calling Diana a bitch. Rachel wanted to go to the park with her friends.)

Diana: I know, it's disappointing, isn't it?

Rachel: You're dumb, dumb, dumb. I'm going straight to the park without asking you.

Diana: You are going to bed. It's no use going on. I know you want to go to the park. I really know.

Rachel: If you were a little girl, and I was you, I wouldn't let you go anywhere. I wouldn't let you go to school.

Rachel stayed inside. Later:

Rachel: Where are you going tomorrow night?

Diana: I'm going to have dinner with Tony (ex-lover).

Rachel: Why can't I come? I haven't seen him for ages.

Diana: I feel like seeing him alone. I know it's hard.

Rachel talking about family: Diana present.

Marg: What are the nice things about Mum?

Rachel: She's nice to me and lets me stay up till eight o'clock and she lets me have fish and chips and dim sims and spring rolls and potato cakes and she hardly ever smacks me - only when I'm very naughty. And she lets me go outside to play at night-time. Most kids don't do that.

Diana: What are the nasty things about me?

Rachel: Smacking. And being angry at me. That means yelling at me. Don't know what else.

Marg: Do you want to hear Mummy saying nice things about you?

Rachel: I know one thing that Mummy likes to do to me. Touch my bottom.

Diana: She's got a lovely bum.

Marg: That's one of the special things between you and Mum, is it?

Rachel: Yes.

Diana: I like the way she gets up quietly on the weekends and lets me have a sleep-in, and I especially like the way she's very patient with me when I'm cross and tired. She's pretty sensitive to how I feel. If I explain things to her, she understands, and she's very patient and tries very hard to cooperate. I like sitting in bed at night and reading her a story when it's all nice and quiet and there's just the two of us. We're very close - we feel close, don't we, then? Do you like that time too?

Rachel: I'd forgotten about that. I like best of everything, sleeping with Mum. Because I just love sleeping with Mum. I'd rather sleep with Mum than with Muzz (cat).

Diana: Sometimes Rachel thinks she'd like to have Melanie's Mum and Dad (Family Daycare people) instead of me when she's feeling angry with me, don't you?

Rachel: Yeah. But I'd rather have you. Mum's the 'special-est' in the whole family. Muzz is special too, but she's not so special.

Marg: Who else is in your family?

Rachel: Just Muzz and me and Mum. Not you of course. You're just a lady staying with us.

Diana: What do you think a family means?

Rachel: I think it means all the people living in one house is a family. I think that out of the whole whole family Nan and Grandy Mac are the best. Because Grandy Mac gives me dollars and Nan - she's just very kind to me.

Marg: When you get older do you want to have kids?

Rachel: I don't know. I don't really want to have them so my vagina will hurt.

Later:

Diana: I was interested in Rachel's comments about her grandparents. I was just thinking of all the shit that went on when she was born and how she was rejected by them. I was just sort of wondering if any of that had filtered through.

Rachel did not specifically talk about her father, Allan, to me, nor did I question. Allan has returned to his birthplace, Canada, and Diana does not know where he is. Diana wrote to his mother when Rachel was born and his mother wrote a few times. Diana also sent photographs; his mother sent photos too, and these are very important to Rachel. ³

Diana: Rachel is always interested to talk about him. 'Is my Dad a nice man? Do you think he would still look the same?' It's no problem for me - occasionally there are little hassles 'cause I wonder whether she's suffering, but she seems to be all right. I really think if a child isn't too scared to show their feelings then they're pretty secure.

She's also talked a lot about fathers lately. She tried to railroad me into marriage with Bruce (boyfriend). It was quite embarrassing, because she'd say things like, 'Are you going to marry Mum?' and 'Are you sleeping here?' You need a very understanding boyfriend when there's a kid. She said perhaps Bruce might take us one day to the beach. 'It would be just the three of us, like a little family, going down to the beach.'

I've always been quite honest with her about what my relationship is with each person ... like when she was little, I didn't have any regular boyfriends until she was 3½ or 4 and I felt at 3½ she was old enough. She knew about sex. She sort of knew the mechanics of it, and how babies come ... she knew I was sleeping with this man and she knew that we were having intercourse.

When she's asked the questions I've always told her. She's asked where babies come from, and she's not too impressed with the method of delivery. She has a tendency to forget, but she knows. Like the sperm are in the semen and they fertilise the egg, and the egg and sperm go together - she finds that all quite commonplace.

Marg: And sexual intercourse?

Diana: I just hope she'll see it as a natural, healthy, enjoyable experience. I don't know how you guarantee it in this sick society because there are so many sick people around - like on the one hand, I'm trying to teach her to be free; on the other hand, I have to warn her against people who might take her and rape her in the back lane - that's

³ See postscript, p. 343.

the difficult thing. I don't think I have ever specified what people will do to her. I have just made it clear it is very unwise to have anything to do with strangers when she's out in the street. Never even to accept lifts or lollies or money or anything from people and if she's ever worried about anybody to go into the nearest front gate and pretend that she lives there; or if she's near a shop - preferably a shop.

It's later on when I think it will be more of a worry - when she is old enough to be independent. You can't smother them. Just have to hope.

Diana was raped when in her twenties - by a doctor with whom she worked at the hospital - he was giving her a lift home after nightshift; a person also exposed himself.

I know so many women who have been introduced to sex as an unpleasant experience - as a child or as a young woman. People have been frightened by perverts running round exposing themselves. That's fairly trivial to us; at seventeen it was frightening. If you're only five or six, it can be very frightening, and I don't think you can prepare children by being open about nakedness.

Bringing up Rachel ...

I had very definite ideas on how to bring up children before I had one. I haven't changed the ideals but I've become more realistic about them. I don't believe I've fulfilled them as well as I wanted to.

I want for Rachel to be strong and independent and therefore able to do what she wants. I try to respect Rachel as a single individual. I think most people tend to see their children as possessions and extensions of themselves. I don't. I see Rachel as a separate identity - very much independent.

That causes me a lot of problems and conflict because sometimes I feel very guilty when I can't fulfil her needs as she sees them. Like if I want to go and visit a friend of mine and she doesn't want to go I feel guilty if I make her come with me.

As a child I expect her to get angry and show her frustrations about having to do things she doesn't want to do, but I expect, also, in giving each other a little leeway, that she will gradually learn. I don't think people should not feel angry, and I'm not frightened by anger.

I'm frightened when someone starts belting me over the head with a cricket bat. Occasionally Rachel lifts her arm to hit me. She hits other people more than she attempts to hit me. I guess because we've got a no-hitting arrangement. I don't know why she hits other people. We don't believe in physical violence but I sometimes don't control it.

Kids' feelings are really real to them at the moment that they're saying something. It doesn't worry me when Rachel says 'I hate you.' Two hours later she won't be saying that. I'm more concerned that she's feeling angry - really - honestly.

We do have arguments. She does have to realise that I'll be making decisions that may not really suit her. She knows that, whenever possible, I try to arrange things convenient for both of us but there are times when we have to compromise.

I've never been a person who's paranoid about language, and she knows that. If I want Rachel not to use words like bitch and bastard then I've got to stop using them myself, and I'm not prepared to, because they're not important enough. We've talked about language and she knows that there are some people who don't like it. She has got enough 'nous' to know where it's okay. Once she slipped up and said shit in front of my father.

Diana's recognition of Rachel as being independent and yet complementary can be shown in a pragmatic way ... in the handling of money.

I don't save, because I haven't enough. If I wanted to not ever go to the movies or not take Rachel to concerts and not do anything, and not buy her ice-cream, I could save a little bit of money but it would be such a small amount it would be bloody ridiculous to suffer that much for the sake of having \$50.00 in the bank, and Social Security charge you on the interest anyway.

Diana then wrote out her budget.

Income per week \$122.00

Outgoings:

Rent	\$42.00
Food	20.00
Fares	2.00
Child care	2.75
Loan on fridge	8.00
Loan, paying off fees to University of Melbourne	2.50
Phone	3.00
Electricity	4.00
Insurance (\$1,000 for Diana, \$5,000 for Rachel)	1.00
Myers account (I use that to buy birthday and Christ- mas presents)	3.00
Lunches	1.00
Pocket money for Rachel (includes banking)	1.15
	\$90.40

Extras - paying off dentist's bill, clothes, entertainment ...

When Rachel was three I started with a little pocket money. As she shows a need for a particular purpose I introduce it and increase her weekly income. She gets 90 cents in her hand and 25 cents goes into her bank account. When she was three that was for buying junk food because I had to compromise. I didn't agree with junk food but every other kid was getting it. I said: 'It's going to rot your teeth, it's going to make you sick and you won't eat proper food. What do you think we should do about it?' So we came up with this decision that we'd have one day a week which would be crap food day and then every time we went into a newsagent or she was wanting to buy bits and pieces - pencils and stupid little trashy things - I thought: I'm not going to buy those for her but if I increase her income so she can buy them for herself she's learning, so I gave her another 20 cents a week and she saved up in the first year \$5.50 and then she went and bought herself a battery operated dog when she was four.

The next thing that happened was she wanted to buy presents, so I increased the spending part of her money.

I'm aiming perhaps by the age of twelve - but I don't know how she'll be as she goes on - but at some stage I plan that she will get half the income that comes into the family. I am planning

by that time she'll be equally responsible for paying half the rent, half the electricity bills, half the phone bills; it will be her responsibility to make sure she's budgeting enough. I'm not going to hand it over and hope for the best - she will have learnt enough about it by that time, so I will know I can rely on her. I mean she will probably make mistakes and I'll have to cover her.

Our money situation is so pathetic. Rachel hasn't even a pair of shoes. She's suddenly grown out of them. I noticed the bulges at the weekend. That's never happened before, but I've never been so poor that I don't know where the money's coming from to buy them.

Responsibility for housework ...

I believe in gradually introducing kids to doing things for themselves and I don't think it hurts them at all. To get up and get their own breakfast. I'm trying to bring up Rachel starting from a little baby with virtually no responsibility, to gradually introduce new things, and by the time she's leaving me - when she wants to go, I hope she'll be a responsible person who looks after herself.

Like she must put her own dirty clothes in the basket and tidy up her bedroom. I'm a very slack person as far as housework so there's no way I can get after her and say 'you haven't done any work in the house'. One job which is hers is keeping the handbasin clean and the toilet. She mightn't do it for a month - it's green at the moment - there's a big green ring around the handbasin, but it's not worrying me - and the other job that's hers is the dusting which hasn't been done for ages but I haven't vacuumed the floor for a month and the kitchen floor's filthy.

Diana uses the ovulation/temperature (Billings) method of contraception.

It's perfectly safe if you know what you're doing. When Tony and I go out he relies on me to be honest about whether it's safe or not. I did want another child, but I didn't want another child on my own without the involvement. I think that was something I could do once but couldn't do twice ... but I wouldn't want necessarily to live with Tony. I would love to have his child. It changed from wanting a child to becoming very much a desire to have his child. It's really strong, like an unfinished symphony. I feel

it's something that's going to nag at me for the rest of my life.

I reckon I could get along without men if I didn't want sex because I'm great on my own. I need sex, but I don't like that just on it's own, so that means I keep going out looking for them and then it finishes and I feel really desperate for a while because I'm back at the beginning again. I've got to go out and play all those games again.

I don't see that I'll ever get married. I don't have much desire to, but on the other hand I do have a need for male companionship. I wouldn't go into marriage the way a lot of people do without thinking. I would have to have a talk about things like money and education and bringing up children. I'd prefer to live with someone but I'd like the living-with to be a committed type of living-with, not something you just drifted into.

I lived with a man for a year (Tony) - 1977 - but I never really felt, and neither did he I know, and he wasn't a Catholic, that there was a firm commitment. We were there for as long as we felt like being together. He's 25 and I'm 37. We were still together for another eighteen months. That's been very painful losing that. When we first met we wanted to stay in bed all day and we did. We fucked about ten times and it was marvellous. I still see him occasionally, and we still go to bed now and again. He's in love with someone else.

Single parenting ...

Quite a large number of single parents don't really see themselves as being single for ever and so they're on the lookout for somebody, so there tends to be this passing parade of relationships - the mother having to devote the time and energy to establishing each new relationship.

You start off as a single parent with a baby differently from starting off with another adult. There's a commitment of two people, and then the children come along as a part of that unit.

There's a certain amount of loneliness and (you) do miss the sharing .. the little things like when the child first sits up, or starts walking. You ring up friends or family and say 'Rachel's just started walking', and they say, 'That's great, that's terrific', but you know that doesn't mean a thing to them.

I think single mothers are just like other human beings in not thinking too much about having kids. They just drift, but they have the advantage in some respects at least when they do have the child and come to grips with bringing it up they don't have to argue or hassle over how they're going to do it. I mean, they don't have anyone to share the responsibility with either.

Fathering ...

I don't think fathering's got much of a background really - there's not much fathering been done in the last couple of hundred years. There's a few fathers doing a bit of mothering. They're learning, but they're pretty few and far between - even the good ones. It comes out in situations like Dad will look after the kids for Mum while Mum goes out.

Mothering is the real nurturing. I don't think fathering exists. It's caring and warmth, love and security ... I think smothering can happen when the mother hasn't got any other satisfaction - when life is passing her by - if she lets them edge out of the nest, then she'll have no other reason for being around.

About religion ...

Diana says none of her brothers and sisters could be described as practising Catholics.

I think I'm too scared to completely throw it off. I reckon I might want the priest there when I'm dying, but then I might get struck down dead in the street tomorrow, and I don't run round neurotically scared. I think Sam's safely got rid of it all - he did quite a lot younger than I did. I think the boys have quite happily got rid of it. Roger might be a bit scared because he's not so intellectual. He just got sick of going to Mass. He stopped going when he first ate meat on a Friday and didn't get struck down dead. He realised there was a lot of bullshit, so he stopped.

Her Catholic upbringing and education affect Diana in a number of key areas, one being education.

I really want the best of everything for Rachel and it's very difficult to make a decision about

whether that means a private school or the ordinary state school. I see advantages in both ideas, or whether it means an ordinary Catholic school, whether it means a big school or a small school, 'cause a big school might have better facilities but small schools have a more intimate atmosphere.

I guess in the long run I've accepted a compromise because I've sent her to the state school, as it happens to be the school she was zoned for, but if it hadn't been to my liking, I would have taken her out of there.

The main criterion is that she's happy there. That's very important. Like she's going camping with the school. Parents are encouraged to be involved. The whole language programme is based on language experience. I don't know a lot about teaching methods, but I understand that's one of the accepted ways of teaching reading. When they have a parents night, they get a bit disappointed because it's always the same parents who turn up - I go every time. I think the teachers see her as a bit of a character.

Diana, too, is a 'bit of a character': an effervescent sense of humour, a keen wit, and a directness which can be disarming. She describes herself as a tense person ..

People continually tell me I'm doing a fantastic job, but I never really feel as if I am.

I give the impression of not being tense, but I am. I have a lot of little physical habits that I do that people don't notice. I pick bits of skin off my fingers and toes and I constantly wiggle my toes. The tension helps to precipitate the blood pressure.

I think I'm a very warm person, very loving. I need a lot of affection and I'm prepared to give it when I see that I'm going to sort of receive it in return. I'm pretty tolerant of people's idiosyncracies but that doesn't mean I tolerate all sorts of people. I don't suffer fools gladly. There are some people who get under my skin - stupid people. I used to be much more tolerant with these people than I am now.

I'm very patient with people in pain or suffering. I am a good nurse when I'm nursing. I know that I'm phenomenal at delivering babies and I know that because all the time people told me how good I was and they asked me to demonstrate to students. When you get that feedback it helps - when people tell you you do a good job.

Friends ...

Many of the people at CSMC where Diana works are her friends - people whom she will telephone early Saturday afternoon and go visit, and talk through to the early hours of the morning.

I've always been a person who likes to talk a lot with friends. Perhaps I talk too much and don't listen enough. I have to consciously think now let so and so talk to me for a while. I've got some male friends like that I feel I can talk to freely and openly. It's of a similar kind but perhaps not as intense. I think I value my women friends, maybe I don't value their friendship more but I pursue them more intensely.

Marg: A crazy question: if you had three wishes what would they be?

Diana: *I'd buy a house in (this suburb). I would have access to a house in the country that I could go to whenever I felt like getting out of the city, and I would have sufficient money to take Rachel to Canada - specifically because she wants to go there and meet her grandparents and her father. The main thing is to buy a house - security is the main thing. Knowing I can stay in for as long as I want to, and that goes for Rachel too. I want her to feel that she'd be able to stay here and we're able to be here, and nobody can throw us out, but I also want the freedom. Like if I want to hang a bloody nail in the roof I want to be able to, and not have to ask permission and know they won't let me - and if I want to paint the walls purple and yellow stripes, and give Rachel some place she can paint pictures on her wall ...*

When I was a kid I was always painting my room. I painted it about four times, different colours. My bedroom was flame pink from head to foot - the ceiling, window frames - and the floor was bright emerald green. I want that sort of thing for Rachel. I'm going to paint my house so it looks nice for me and Rachel.

Marg: What's the worst thing that could happen to Rachel?

Diana: Death.

Marg: If you could change your family, would you?

Diana: *Nup. I would prefer that Mum and Dad didn't drink and bash each other up. There's a lot of love and acceptance.*

Marg: Do you like you?

Diana: Yeah.

Marg: Do you like Rachel?

Diana: Yeah.

Marg: Do you like what you're doing together?

Diana: Yeah. *I wouldn't want to be anyone else in the whole world.*

Marg: How long have you liked you?

Diana: *I've definitely liked myself since I had Rachel. I suppose it was a sense of achievement and fulfillment .. having a child .. and really being lucky to have this opportunity to do all those things that I believe in. Being just myself.*

Marg: Are you as committed to Rachel as you are to you?

Diana: Yeah - *I think so.*

Triptych: 3

... you've been told it's your family and you've got to stick by them, but I don't really believe that because it's not obligation that makes me cry ... you don't cry for obligation.

Nancy and Jim McAlpine gave life to ten children: that they care, that they accepted responsibility ... to feed, clothe, educate; that they are 'committed' to those ten 'children' and to each other is beyond doubt; yet Diana, from six or seven years onward, was responsible for much of the parenting, and especially parentwork, in the family. The nuns at the nearby convent helped; so too did friends; and Nancy's mother (Diana used to spend her holidays with her). The children supported each other, especially the older ones helping the younger ones. Yet Nancy flouted convention - not only with her drinking but when, as a result of that,

... she sometimes picked up a few of the kids and pissed off ... I'm leaving ... are you coming with me?

Her commitment to her children, to her husband, may have been questioned by those operating within a conventional set of rules, yet when Diana was asked if she would change her family, she replied

Nup. I would prefer that Mum and Dad didn't drink and bash each other up. There's a lot of love and acceptance.

Diana is strong.

Adrienne Rich was writing about her 'children': Mrs McAlpine could, perhaps, echo her words:

Something told me that if they had survived my angers, my self-reproaches, and still trusted my love and each other's, they were strong.

Rich, 1977:32

To be sent at seven to buy the sherry:

*I used to hate it. I'd have to walk all the way ...
'a bottle of sweet sherry, please, and book it up.'*

... to bring friends home from school and find one's mother lying drunk on the kitchen floor ... and then to be rejected when she dared to have a child out of wedlock:

They were really angry - because I'd made a fool of them. How were they going to be able to walk down the street and face all the people ... Mum's (letter) was terrible - it was vicious ...

This must have been harrowing, and it was. I believe Diana's family show the strength, the glue-ing together of experience which forms family praxis: human embroilment beyond matters of personal likes and dislikes, rules, norms, habit.

Parenting, parentwork, parenthood

Diana cares for Rachel in a 'total' way. She wanted a child when she turned thirty, set out to get pregnant, did so, and then spent the eight months of the pregnancy and the subsequent twelve months bereft of any support, emotional or financial, from her parents. It was a time when Diana both needed, and could have anticipated, some nurturing from her maturing parents.

As a child Diana carried a lot of responsibility for her brothers and sisters. It was Diana who started taking babies into her bed at night when they cried; who fed them, prepared them for school in the mornings .. and who, as the eldest, invited them to stay with her when they left the security of their parent's home and ventured into the 'big city'. Diana, and the remaining nine children, knew they were loved by their parents. Their material needs were well catered for, their education provided and promoted. All were given rules to live by; a sense of belonging, a 'family' environment. But it was a context - social, spiritual, material .. into which Diana and the children had to fit: both parents were consumed by their own needs and sense of what was right/wrong.

Rachel, however, reaps the benefit of Diana as Diana - a mature, warm, insightful, caring person who is pragmatic, involved and committed to people, most of all to Rachel.

I want for Rachel to be strong and independent and therefore able to do what she wants. I try to respect Rachel as a single individual ... I see Rachel as a separate identity.

In contrast, Diana says of her father ...

Dad showed a lot of sensitivity sometimes about the children (yet) they are not people in their own right ... I still relate to him as a child.

And Mrs McAlpine would 'up and off' for days at a time.

I think she had to go for her sanity - she had to go away sometimes.

Parentwork

Jim McAlpine ...

... comes home every night and dinner's ready, and he sits down in his special chair in the lounge - always used to have a bath on Sundays at 7.00 p.m. and listen to the Goons.

In that family, parentwork was Nancy McAlpine's responsibility,

Dad played with the kids and he nursed them. I can never remember seeing him give a baby a bottle or feeding a baby. He didn't change nappies.

When Mrs McAlpine did not do it, or was unable to, Diana, and eventually the others, took over.

I was forced to grow up. I got very resentful ... and angry because I thought Mum should be like other proper mothers that were cleaning the house spick and span ... I was made to be the mother ...

With Diana and Rachel, the housework is shared, though Diana is mainly responsible. Diana hopes this will change and Rachel will increase her share of the work.

I believe in gradually introducing kids to doing things for themselves ... I'm trying to bring up Rachel starting from a little baby with ... no responsibility, to gradually introduce new things, and by the time she's leaving me ... I hope she'll be a responsible person who looks after herself.

Standards are set by Diana - and she does not concern herself with other people's expectations. Nor will she set double standards for herself and Rachel.

I would rather spend the afternoon playing the piano than vacuuming through the bloody house.

Parenthood

Diana has flouted the conventions of parenthood in her parents' eyes: she chose to have a child out of wedlock. Yet they flouted the conventions and practices of parenting, and might well have been said to be 'irresponsible' in the demands they put on their children. For example - in asking Diana to go and buy sherry; in the expectation of sibling cooperation and mutual help; in the violence which was a 'normal' aspect of their behaviour ..

He used to bash her up regularly .. He could have hit her half to death on Saturday night and go off to Mass on Sunday morning.

In this family, the moral code was/is strongly Catholic. That Diana remains within the ideology of a male hierarchy, a Catholic male hierarchy, probably indicates both her years of Catholic education, belief ... and the strength of Jim McAlpine.

There are shades of sixteenth and seventeenth century religious teaching still in this code:

This ... taught parents (read fathers) that they were spiritual guardians, that they were responsible before God for the souls, and indeed the bodies too, of their children.

Aries, 1962:412
(brackets added)

Anderson calls this prayer-book family morality, morality designed to fit the needs of society, and not individuals. Jim, being patriarch, could bend the moral code, but his children could not, should not (Anderson, 1979:58).⁴ That he is a caring, autocratic father is unquestioned: whilst eventually Jim acknowledged Diana's decision to have and keep a

⁴ See Holt, 1975:59-60, for discussion of double standards.

child, Diana found his continuing opposition tragic. She also found it difficult to become the 'parent' to her father, that is when she and Karen found themselves in the 'unusual' supporting role:

... it was very difficult, because you feel uncomfortable with him being vulnerable and you being strong.

Actions are seen to need forgiveness - both from God the heavenly father and God-in-the-form-of-earthly-father.

This was the first time I'd ever stood up to him about anything in my whole life. I'd always done what I should do. I'd never done anything wrong. As far as I'm concerned it's between me and my God and God knows what's going on and he's forgiven me and I don't know what makes you so damn special that you can't forgive me.

... I felt like a slut ...

Later -

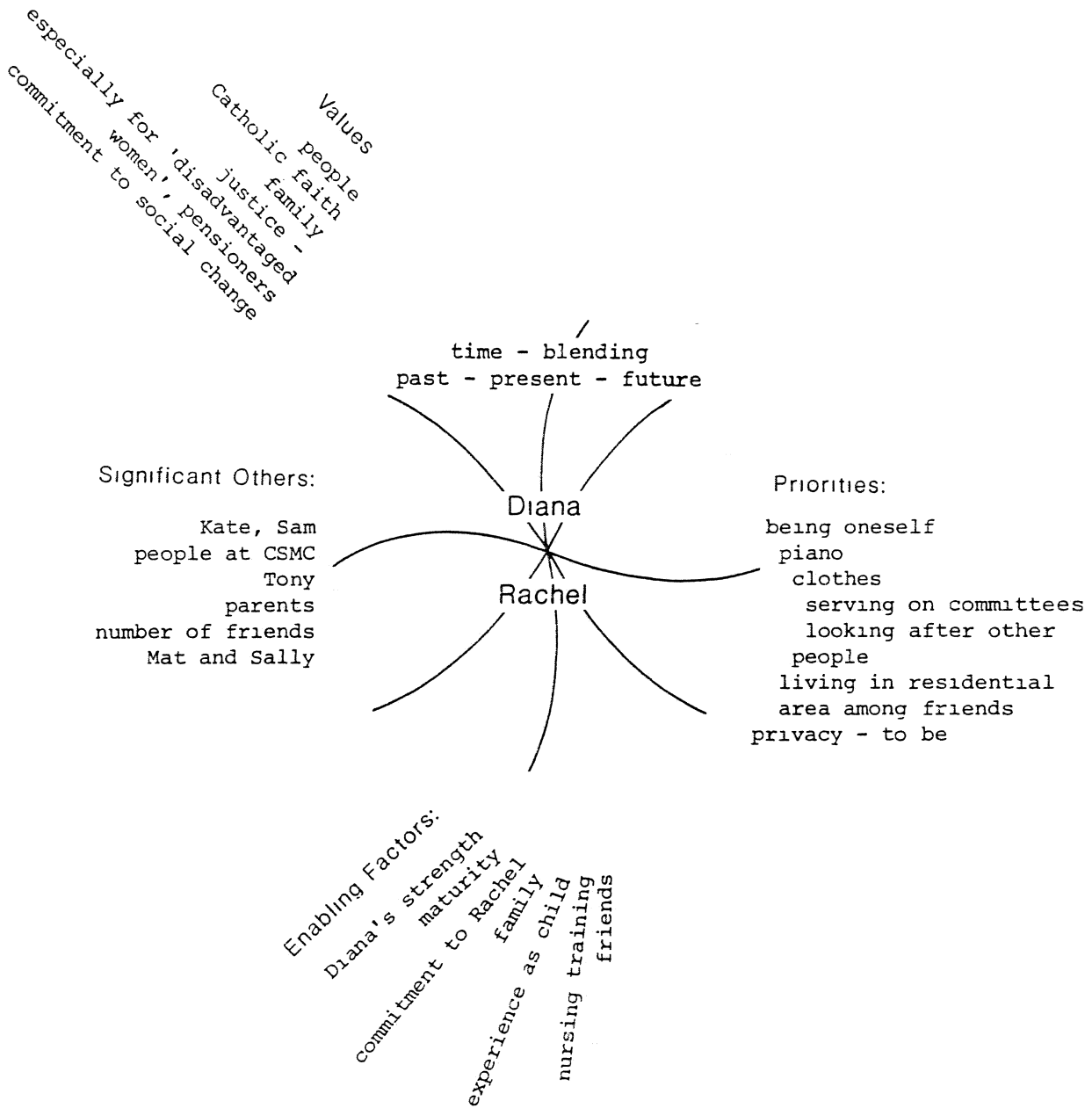
I didn't want him to see me because I was ashamed.

The authority is still there. Diana said Rachel

... once ... slipped up and said shit in front of my father.

Male authority, endorsed, sanctified, legitimated via the church and the professional/public mana, that is Jim being lawyer and Shire President, and abdication in part by Nancy, such is the heritage that Diana, et al., have. Each has done according to his or her chosen way of life, yet the stories as told by Diana about her brothers and sisters suggest this 'parenting thing' has affected many of them in a painful, somewhat negative way.

Total social fact



Diana: I want for Rachel to be strong and independent and therefore able to do what she wants

*Four levels of analysis**Descriptive*

One major input for Diana is the time context in which she lived. In the 1960s in Australia there was a strong anti-uranium, anti-Vietnam movement. Diana, in her twenties, held these passionate convictions, and shared in the soul-searching. Diana has lost none of that verve, and an important aspect of Rachel and her relationship, that is parenting praxis, is this protest, this energy, this exposure to knowing the injustices and awareness of people in need (during the research time we went to two picnics, one organised by the local branch of the Labor Party, the other the annual CSMC picnic). It was Rachel who wanted action taken on the broken swing in the neighbourhood park. Rachel is present at many meetings of such groups as the local community child-care group, which Diana helped form, CSMC. She hears the debate and the agonising; is asked for her opinion by Diana, treated as a contributing person rather than 'simply a child', or seen as too young to understand.

Normative

Diana has tried to dispense with as many 'they' rules as she can and live according to a normative code she and Rachel can update as they grow. However, Diana carries within her the experience of her childhood, and she is in constant contact with members of her family which serves to reinforce some of the should/should nots of their early years. Jim and Nancy McAlpine lived rigidly within the religious code of Catholicism.

I remember the time when she got pregnant with one of the later ones ... Dad came home and said to Mum, 'You poor little bugger'. There was nothing they could do short of stopping fucking.

Yet the beatings Jim McAlpine gave his wife could also be dealt with, by confession and going to Mass. Nancy McAlpine perhaps dealt with the contradictions in the only way she

knew how - by drinking, and disappearing: she knew the right thing to do.

... women are traditionally trained to place others' needs first, to feel these needs as their own ... their sphere, their satisfaction, to be in making it possible for others to use their abilities.

Olsen, 1980:17

Still Diana clings to Catholicism:

I think I'm too scared to completely throw it off ...

though others in the family have opted out.

Diana was sorely hurt over her parents' behaviour, and carried the guilt of having a child out of wedlock round with her for years. I suspect there is still some discomfort, or an identification with the 'norm-breakers', reinforced by her selection of work environment and friends. It may also have added to Diana's rather shaky sense of self-confidence, or her oscillation between being strong - especially within the family, or when espousing and working for 'causes' - and feeling fragile in other contexts.

Whilst still needing and wanting her parents' approbation, Diana was independent enough to remain out of contact with them. It was the intervention of one of her brothers that eased Diana and Rachel 'back into the fold'.

I thought - bugger it. He's got to apologise or come round first ... I still didn't go up there (parents' place) and I would have gone on forever ...

Cognitive

Diana uses her intelligence and considerable energy to organise her life. She downvalues traditional housekeeping which frees up time to spend doing things she wants to do, and tries to arrange activities, visits, meetings, which 'fit' with Rachel's needs. If they don't, Diana tries to work out

a compromise. Diana had wanted to go to university when she was sixteen so she had some awareness at that early age of her intellectual capabilities; she was timid, though, and listened to her father scare her about the possibility of her becoming a 'bluestocking'. In her first year of nursing, Diana had a 'sort of nervous breakdown' and only some fifteen years or so later did Diana manage to join her strengths - intellectual, emotional, social .. into one 'whole'. Her acceptance of herself is still not complete. She talks of working at the CSMC:

You tend to work twice as hard as you really need to because you don't have a boss who's saying whip, whip, whip ... so you've got to be reasonable to yourself and you never quite feel that you're doing enough.

For a person such as Diana, and others there who lack confidence in themselves, this is a considerable dilemma. They lack

... conviction as to the importance of what one has to say, one's right to say it. And the will, the measureless store of belief in oneself to be able to come to, cleave to, find the form for one's own life comprehensions.

Olsen, 1980:27

Friends, people who can give reassurance, become very important. Talking of one particular friend at CSMC, Diana says:

Her faith in me has enabled me to feel that I am doing okay and I can go further.

Explanatory

Diana has worked hard at establishing a lifestyle for Rachel and herself that allows for her inheritance of Catholicism, the rigid mores of shoulds/should nots (Diana cannot use an artificial form of contraception), and yet encourages them to live flexibly, and work to their own time schedule and pace.

That Diana and Rachel are surviving, celebrating in each other's company, is a measure of Diana's commitment.

I've definitely liked myself since I had Rachel. I suppose it was a sense of achievement and fulfilment ... really being lucky to do all those things that I believe in ... being just myself.

Power is therefore both constraining, and enabling, and the constant straddling of contradictions - my expectations *vis a vis* theirs .. my wants as against her wants .. produces the particular shape and form of Diana and Rachel's praxis.

Diana does not believe being a mother 'comes naturally':

I do believe there are some mothers who either can't care for the child either from their intellectual or physical incapacity, or emotional, or who simply aren't willing or ready at that particular time, or able ...

In her relationship with Rachel, Diana is consciously trying to share power - for decisions, responsibility, support, but she doesn't renege on acceptance of her control, of her being the adult.

You are going to bed ... it's no use going on.

Eggs in the basket

Diana completed the 'eggs in the basket' exercise for herself and Rachel. The second lot of figures (*) are what she would like to do.

	<i>Self</i>	<i>Mother</i>	<i>Friends</i>
<i>Diana</i>	(10)	(14)	(6)
	(* 8)	(12)	(10)
<i>Rachel</i>	(10)	(12)	(8)
	<i>Self</i>	<i>Daughter</i>	<i>School</i>

Research comments

One week after meeting Diana - I met with her and a friend to talk about parenting - I asked 'How would you feel about my coming to stay here for a week or ten days?'

Diana: That would be fine. Don't know where you'd sleep.

(I did so on a mattress on the middle of the lounge floor.)

I'd see that it could even help me because you'd see things with Rachel ... how I interact that I might not even be aware of. Rachel will put on an act you realise ... she's a great putter-on of acts. There's the sick nice child act ... and there's the little monster act ... and that's more like the real person. I mean, Geez ... sometimes she's really lovely. Sometimes she's just fabulous.

Notes

First day: Had all sorts of feelings about coming here ... concerned about leaving Don and the kids.

Second day: Have off-loaded in my own mind 'my family'. Feel distant from them: Don and the kids ... and me. Looking forward to seeing them tonight from point of view as if they were good friends ... i.e. the transition over - to getting inside Diana's world is happening.

Talked with Diana: said I felt closer because she is much stronger - and we meet together as equals.

Don and the kids arrived - all looking scraggly. I grieved inside. Diana took off in the VW (mine).. Mike upset about leaving me .. I wept inside. Responded so totally to Don's arm, touch.

Third day: Woken by Rachel - phone call from Diana saying she got drunk and hadn't wanted to drive the car home. She's going to have a shower, a cup of tea and drive home. She doesn't think she will be home before Rachel goes to school.

Rachel got herself dressed. We walked down to the shop for croissants for breakfast and a roll for lunch. Yesterday's sweetcorn had dead ants right through it. Came home, ate breakfast and then I walked Rachel to school.

The cat and I seem to have worked out some form of truce: we stay away from each other (I have never

liked cats).

9.30 - Diana phoned - she's still at Tony's. Had been feeling overwhelmed by alcohol.

Feeling very depressed after this morning's scenario. Realise what I'm putting down to tiredness could be ... culture shock. Was a strain seeing Don and the kids last night - will we never learn?

Phoned Diana some weeks later ... did I know I'd left three tapes behind? She'd been playing them and found them really interesting. Could she have copies please? I offered the transcripts.

18 February 1983: Visited Diana and Rachel in their home. Diana read the complete triptych. Her comment:

I don't remember saying all these things - but I might well have done. It's okay.

Because money was running low I transcribed these tapes by hand and paid someone to type them.

Postscript

Diana wrote a letter in a newsletter about Rachel and the possibility of Rachel making contact with her father. Then there was a second letter.

ORIGINS

The sequel to the letter I wrote for the last newsletter is that Rachel and I have made contact with her father. Rachel received a birthday parcel (on time) and this was followed by a beautiful letter to me and one for her, with photographs, etc.

After all these years on our own it is difficult to incorporate another person into our little family, but I do feel relieved. At times it has been difficult to support Rachel's belief in her father when he has made no contact with us. I sometimes felt humiliated. Now I am able to see and understand from his letter that Rachel's father was simply a young and carefree man who couldn't cope, and being a man, was able to opt out. Now that a few years have elapsed, he has grown older and wiser, as I have, and he feels differently. Maybe many of our children's fathers would feel differently after a period of time.

The most important thing that has emerged, to my mind, is the feeling of peace that has come over Rachel. She was so excited to receive evidence of a real father and is anxious to meet him. I feel that the effort to avoid making judgments about him and passing them on to her has been well worth while. I strongly believe that we as single mothers should take care not to manipulate our children's lives because of our personal feelings of hurt and rejection, but allow our children to come to terms with reality and to make their own decisions.

Diana McAlpine

Diana's permission was given to use this letter.

I wrote to Diana on 30 June 1982, asking for information to include in the research as an 'update' on their situation. Her reply ...

Rachel's Dad is married to a German woman and they are having their first baby in December - a brother or sister for Rachel. His wife is lovely from what we've heard and totally unthreatened or bothered by the situation. They were hoping to come here next year but baby may change their plans. He has written to me asking me to find out the fares to Canada for Rachel and me and so he may decide to send for us. Wouldn't that be exciting?

In April Rachel and I moved into our own little house - a three bedroomed weatherboard with enough backyard for a few chooks, a duck, our two cats and a dog. We are really happy in our chaotic house.

During 1980 we both wrote to Rachel's grandparents (Canada) and Rachel was amazed to receive a phone call from her grandmother soon afterward. Since then we have kept up a steady correspondence .. there is talk of a visit either way. It's almost like a fairy story.

Diana also changed her job after a big argument amongst the staff and committee members of CSMC. She also worked with five other pensioners to fight for supporting parent benefits in Victoria - they won that battle.

Diana added, when she read the triptych:

Later she campaigned with another group of single parents to obtain State Government concessions for people on supporting parent benefits. Six of them took their complaint to the Equal Opportunity Board and have achieved partial success with the introduction of travel concessions. The other concessions are still pending by the Board.

Rob, Jenny and Lisa live in a cottage on a farm belonging to Jenny's family in Gippsland, Victoria. It is a beautiful part of the country - rolling hills and wide vistas, and only a few kilometres from the sea. The nearest town is about 25 minutes' drive away. Rob and Jenny have lived there for only seven months: prior to that they rented a flat in Coburg, an inner suburb of Melbourne.

Both are 24; Lisa is two, and Jenny is pregnant, much to their delight. Rob and Jenny are both about 5 feet 7 inches in height; Rob is fair, wiry and strong - he looks like an 'outdoors man'; Jenny is friendly, attractive, casual about her physical appearance and dress. She says of her growing years ...

I was always the big fat slob ...

Lisa is a cherub, with tight golden curls and fair skin; she talks non-stop, clearly, inquisitively.

The cottage, which they have rent free, is a small farm-hand's cottage. Basically it has four rooms, two bedrooms plus living area, and a small kitchen, but a room has recently been built on. Part of this is divided off into a third bedroom and the remaining area serves as a dining area and indoor play space. Jenny says if it was theirs they would alter it: it gets very hot in the summer and Rob's parents have recently installed an airconditioning unit¹ for them because of the inadequate ventilation. The toilet and wash-house are built on. Water is from tanks, so they are dependent on the rain or paying for cartage.

Jenny's parents, Len and Barb Van den Berg, both 54, and her brother, Michael (27), live in a modern three bedroom

¹ The family business is an air-conditioning business.

house on one of the hills visible from the cottage ... a three-quarters of an hour walk through the gully, or a five minute drive away. The two houses, plus the vehicles, Mike's car, and the 'ute'² belonging to Rob and Jenny, are all connected by CB radio. Jenny uses this to contact her parents most days: Len and Barb use it to pass on phone messages or news about the farm.

Rob, Michael and Len work the farm; both Len and Michael think Rob has learnt very quickly, and Jenny thinks it would be hard for him to move back to city life, though initially it had been Jenny who was more excited about the move.

Rob has always been a 'loner' and chosen to 'beat to his own drum'. He was expelled from the state secondary school he attended because he caused an explosion in a science laboratory. He was accepted into a catering course at the William Angliss College in Melbourne but completed only the first year of study. Likewise he started training for hotel management but pulled out before the course was ended.

Immediately prior to moving to the farm, Rob worked as a landscape gardener, a job he enjoyed because it was outside work, and he could be his own boss.

Jenny had a broken pattern of education, including several years at boarding school, then attending the same school but boarding with a family, then a final year doing correspondence and the main chores round the farm. When she left school she worked in a bank for a year, then an aunt suggested she applied to train as a children's nurse, knowing how fond Jenny was of children. Jenny had always wanted to be a nurse, but thought her grades weren't good enough. The first interview was a disaster, and Jenny was advised to do nurse-aiding. Her father had accompanied her to the interview, and given support. Afterwards he said to Jenny

² Utility vehicle.

You concentrate on getting that certificate and then we'll rub it in her (Matron's) face.

She was accepted at one of the big Melbourne hospitals.

Jenny says of this time

While I was training, I felt I was me, I went down to Melbourne - country girl let loose in the great big town ... You've got to grow up in that situation because you've got to cope with that many different things.

Jenny has always valued friends - male and female. Talking about her closest friend, Liz, Jenny says:

... Liz and I have that bond that you can never take away from us - no matter how far we drift apart. We were both very naive, innocent little girls from fairly sheltered backgrounds (when they went nursing), and we grew up together, both being innocent trusting souls.

Jenny bought an aboriginal head sculpture in her first year of nursing: this she has had in every flat or house since, including the rooms Liz and she were kicked out of:

... we were asked by the others on the floor to leave. We were making too much noise.

Boyfriends lasted two or three weeks. Most of her boy friends were Michael's friends. One was named Steve:

I can never think of Steve purely as a friend because I went out with him and find the sexual things still there. Rob hates him - I've told Rob about him.

Steve was the one who used to run round the car three times before he got in at the drive-in, and he used to take cold showers - I threatened to walk home one night - he came on very hard and strong and I got terribly upset and he kept on trying and trying and trying. Oh gee he was funny - I used to laugh and he'd get terribly upset - it got to the stage where I wouldn't even kiss him because he got turned on. I said, 'It's up to you - do you want to run round the car twice or three times?' I set my standards. I don't care what they do. Mum would have got a surprise to know that I was a virgin until I was twenty.

Jenny had one sexual experience which she said was awful.
Then she met Rob at a party:

I'd turned up late. I'd just finished with a relationship, I didn't want to have any other. We met ... Rob said, 'I'll take you home.' (I said) You'll have to sleep on the floor. He came to the bedroom and we made love and it was terrific, and that was really the start of the relationship.

Jenny was at that time flatting with two other nurses. Rob moved in after a few months, but they didn't tell their parents.

We found it was easier to cope with (their not knowing) until we had our own place. (Mum) did ask me one day and I nearly lied to her because I felt it would hurt her.

We never shared money until we got married ... I used to buy the groceries and he used to buy the meat, but if we were going somewhere Rob used to nearly always pay and I'd give him - or find some other way to pay him back - or I'd give him some money before we went out. He always liked to pay - he always handled the money.

He still does. He draws \$50.00 a week from the farm kitty, and receives \$90.00 per week from working Thursday nights at the stockyards, and the occasional Friday. (He sleeps in the ute these nights.) Jenny has to ask for housekeeping, and justify the amount she spends.

We often fight about money. I hate having to justify every cent I spend, seeing Rob doesn't have to justify it back - he has to justify it to himself. It seems to me that I'm always asking for money - and if I ask for something he cuts me down \$10.00.

I check the things. I see how much I need, and I ask him. I usually get what I ask for food. If I have extra it comes home. Sometimes I put a couple of dollars away for a rainy day - but I never deny that I've put it away - if he asks. I don't tell him - like if I had \$20.00 over I'd put it back in the bank (joint cheque account), but if I've got \$2 or \$3 over I've just left it in my purse sometimes or put it away to save for singlets for Lisa .. or pants - it's usually for her.

Rob, talking of doing the accounts:

It's not we who does it; it's me who does it.

Rob is fiercely independent. When he is at the stock-yards he expects Jenny to do the milking for their family. One time some new cows had been bought - they were likely to kick, and Jenny's mother and brother did not want Jenny taking the risk when she was pregnant. Jenny was reluctant to go on this occasion, but said

I think Rob wants someone from our family to show that we're really trying.

Normally Jenny likes to milk:

It makes me feel as though I'm doing something for once.³

The day starts about 7 a.m. for Rob, about 7.30 for Jenny and Lisa. Rob is outside most of the day and Jenny potters round home, goes to see her mother, or visits friends in the neighbourhood. She says about her housekeeping standards ...

Clean enough to be healthy. Dirty enough to be happy.

Food is basic: cornflakes or eggs and bacon for breakfast; sandwiches for lunch; and chops, mixed grills, roast, plus vegetables, for tea. Preparation is kept to a minimum.

There is a relaxed atmosphere in the home, for Jenny sees herself as being there to attend to Rob's needs, and Lisa's demands. Only when this equilibrium is disturbed does tension emerge, and this happened on a number of occasions in the eight day period.

³ Compare Suzanne Strahan: '*... when I go to the shop I feel as if I'm more useful than just as a mother.*'

Family rituals are well established: each night all three have a game of hide and seek, and Lisa always gets a piggyback to bed from either Jenny or Rob. At such times there are lots of giggles and shouts, squeals of laughter, and afterwards Rob and Jenny sink back on the couch, he with his feet on her lap, to watch television.

One incident served to illuminate the relationship between Jenny and Rob. Midway through the research, Jenny decided she wanted to visit her aunt, who lives about 35 kilometres away. The four of us (Jenny, Lisa, Ana⁴ and myself) left about 12.30, Jenny having declined an invitation to her aunt's for lunch: Jenny, too, is fiercely independent on such matters. We had a swim in the pool at the house, talked, laughed and left about 5.30 p.m. I started to worry about Rob's reaction to our lateness, but Jenny said 'not to worry'.

On the way home she stopped and bought a pizza for tea, explaining as she did so that it was Rob's favourite meal. When we arrived home Jenny received a blast, full force, from Rob and in front of me. He made several points. Jenny was not to waste money on a pizza, waste petrol going all that way, be so late, because if she couldn't get home in time to cook something for tea, she was not to bother going out - and he would have preferred something cooked at home anyway!

Jenny invited Ana, aged 3, to stay for the eight days of the research. Her presence proved both a blessing (she played with Lisa most of the time) and a trial; for example, Jenny found it hard to teach Lisa suddenly that she had to share - at times saying, when refereeing a squabble,

I'm sorry, I've got to put Lisa first.

I found it hard not to have any space of my own, not even bedroom space at midnight. Ana was there when I spent an

⁴ Ana is my daughter.

incredibly rich, sad, evening with Jenny's parents and Michael, her brother. She is therefore part of the social context, part of the people base of the created data, from which this triptych is constructed.

Triptych: 2

Rob and his family

Betty and Jim Montgomery live in Melbourne. They have four sons: Keith, 28, Rob, 24, and the other two are younger. Three of them, including Rob, left home when they were 15. Betty, according to Jenny, always wanted a daughter, and 'she held it against the boys'. Now, with daughters-in-law, she is said to be a little happier.

Betty is the boss ..

His mother's the lady with the pants. She's more the boss in the home. I don't think they've ever loved their mother like we love our mothers. They respect her.

I did not meet Rob's family, nor did I, could I, ask Rob to talk about them. He closed off any openings, making just one comment about his feelings for his brother's children:

They don't mean a thing. They're just kids.

Rob receives \$25.00 a year from the shares he owns in the family airconditioning company, and he will eventually inherit part ownership of that. In February 1979, one of Rob's father's brothers wanted to sell his share in the company, and this was causing considerable strain for the whole family. Rob was trying to decide whether to attend the meeting about this. Jenny believes the company to be successful for she said her in-laws go overseas for business, and for holidays, each year.

Jenny and her mother-in-law have had several rows ...

She's roared at me so many times.

One of the first concerned Rob's twenty-first birthday: Rob and Jenny had been going together for two years, but Jenny wasn't to be invited to the party, put on by Rob's mother.

Jenny started arranging a separate party for Rob, and eventually the two women compromised. Jenny says ...

The only reason I like the lady is for Lisa's sake.

Jenny calls Betty and Jim, Mum and Dad, but this was a struggle on her part.

I would have called them Mr and Mrs M. until (but) Sue, my sister-in-law, had been asked to call them Mum and Dad and Rob's mother asked me to call them Mum and Dad if I didn't mind. They're really nothing like my Mum and Dad. There's a vast difference, and when I call them Mum and Dad I think of myself as saying to myself - Rob's Mum and Dad. They're not my Mum and Dad - but when I say Mum and Dad to my parents, it means something.

Rob calls (my parents) Barb and Len. They asked him to. It took a long time for me to get used to him calling my parents Barb and Len. That suits me fine. I don't agree with him calling them Mum and Dad. It's not because they're my Mum and Dad and not his. It's because Mum and Dad doesn't mean anything to him and Barb and Len does. 'Mum' and 'Dad' are just a word.

Communication between Rob and his family is still awkward. Rob will not commit himself to arrangements in the future, and this makes any planning difficult. This includes family occasions.

This happened this Christmas. I wanted to go because it's the first time his family have ever had a family Christmas, all the children and grandchildren together. We always have a Christmas together, so I sacrificed my family for his, but he didn't want to go - and he did not go in the end but he wouldn't say. His father asked him two months beforehand and he said no - I said yes on the side, but he won't say yes because he won't hold himself to anything and he might change his mind and say no ... He just doesn't seem to worry about other people's feelings.

Jenny is left to negotiate, and to placate. Because Jenny places such prime importance on 'family' she continues to communicate with Rob's parents: one gets the impression, however, that Rob would be content to lose contact. He seems

determined to 'go it alone' without direction or help from his family, even Jenny. He wants to be boss.

Jenny and her family

Len (father) is one of five sons in a Dutch family:

Len: We were in two groups. The eldest were grown up when we were at school. I was second youngest.

It was a good family, but father was a school-teacher. There was always so much coming and going and we were busy flitting all over the country (for school postings).

... it came across to us when we were quite young that he had enough of children at school and he didn't want much to do with children at home. If there was any friction between us it was usually because dad didn't want anything to do with any of the mucking around - making decisions about his own kids. We were a pretty independent crowd. We didn't rely a great deal on our parents.

My parents were in their early life very narrow-minded. They tried to bring us up too strait-laced, and bigoted. Roman Catholicism was a 'no-no', and if one of the eligible younger men in the family looked sideways at a Catholic girl that was nearly the end of the world. It took a war and a couple of bad injuries and the death of one of my brothers to jolt them, or jolt mother, out of it.

When I was in the Navy I wrote a letter to my mother saying I'd met a girl in Townsville - terrific family - only one problem - she was a Catholic. I got a reply paid telegram: ring me up immediately, collect. I rang her up and was told how once they'd got hold of me that would be the end. Don't sign anything. Don't do anything. I've got to, I'll come up straight away. That's how narrow they were.

Barb chimed in with a comment:

And then her grandson married a Catholic and she accepted him.

The brothers and their families remain very close: link up for twenty-firsts, weddings, and go out of their way, 1000 kilometres out of the way, to see each other. Len, bursting with pride and delight ...

There's no difference between the relationship between the youngest and the oldest or anywhere in the outfit.

Barb: Because none of the boys ever grew up. They're still kids. Men like this - they've always got a fun streak in them. If it's there it lasts forever. They can always relax and have fun.

Michael (talking of his cousins): If you don't see them for a while, you don't know them. For the first two days when you meet up ... they're sort of like cousins and then ...

Barb: They're friends.

Michael: And then all of a sudden everybody relaxes and away you go - as if you've been mates for years.

One of the brothers lives in Sydney: his family are all 'professional' and while the adults may say they get along, Jenny suggests there is some feeling of inferiority on hers, Michael's and Pamela's part (brother and sister) because they cannot match the professional qualifications of their cousins.

Len was in the Navy during the war: when he returned he was given a soldier's allotment in the western part of Victoria. They started from scratch - lived in a garage at first, then built, but the land was never a financial success. Over the years drought followed drought.

During the years on that land, Barb, who originally trained as a radiographer, worked as a medical receptionist to try and make ends meet. In 1967 the drought was so severe that the children were taken out of private boarding school because of financial difficulties; Len spent six months on the road, walking the sheep; he and a partner shared this task, but Len did not make it home in that period.

They moved to their present farm when Mac, one of Len's brothers, recognised the financial straits they were in, and offered them management of the farm, and residence in the new house. Mac practises as a solicitor in a township about 35 kilometres from the farm. Now he and Len share ownership of the farm, and Mac and his family have built a log cabin for their use at weekends and holidays, some thirty yards distant from the main house.

The first farm was more isolated than the present one. Fortunately, Michael and Jenny were healthy babies: both big at birth, Michael ten pounds and Jenny nine; Pamela was born by caesarean, and was very sick for the first six months. Barb found it hard to look after all three children. During the time Jenny had diarrhoea:

Barb: I thought she was doing it deliberately to spite me. Len is very capable in the house but while I'm fit and well he doesn't do a thing, but when I'm sick he just takes over completely, and when he's done a hard day's work on the farm and he'd come in after I'd fed the kids at night - feeding them meant getting them to bed. Sometimes I was just so tired I'd drop into bed and he was left with all the cleaning up and the dishes and it was all done before morning - it's not done here now.

Len: I'm bloody brilliant - that's my trouble.

Barb has had a lot of ill health; and a heart attack in 1978. Jenny says her mother worries a great deal about her health.

Jenny: It didn't help her having a coronary - her mother died young, about fifty.

Barb also gets migraines, and bouts of depression.

Barb: I know I wasn't a good mother because I was short-tempered and every time I had a headache it was taken out on everybody else.

There were lots of hassles between Barb and Jenny in those early years. Barb said she always had to be the 'heavy' because Len was outside.

Barb: When Jenny was growing up you could not drive her. We decided this very early on. You could never say to Jenny, go and do that - she would defy you until she was black and blue, you could belt her and she wouldn't do it if she didn't want to, but if you had a carrot on the end of a stick and bribe her into something, she would do anything for you. She was a very determined young lady.

Jenny: I hated Mum - as much as a teenager can hate her Mum. Every time Mum and I had an argument I'd run off to the bedroom and cry for hours.

I always loved Dad better than Mum when I was having all that trouble and I didn't like it. Mum said she couldn't change and perhaps I had to go a little further because she was so set in her ways. Dad and I had to sit down and work it through, and Mum and I had to consciously work through to a compromise.

Len: We're all very strongwilled. The whole family are strongwilled - if we have any friction it's one will against the other.

Barb: It isn't a fault - it's probably better than everybody being weak.

Len: Barb's got the strongest will of us all. We blow up - and I probably blow up more quickly than anybody else, and it clears up just as quick.

Barb: I don't like arguments - I'd rather walk out than have an argument.

Michael: I try to reason for a while, then I find it doesn't work so I just throw the towel in. When I was growing up I packed up one day and left home, walked to the gate and came back in again. I often thought of walking out but then I thought, I hadn't been prepared for the outside world so I'd probably get killed. This is better.

Barb and Len say they tried hard to give the children an education.

Len: We felt when the kids were growing up if we could manage to educate them, we would be doing a bit more than we thought we were able to do, but we were running on a very small shoestring and once we got them to the secondary school stage, how long could we keep them there? We were budgeting the whole time.

Barb: We felt at that stage we weren't very well off and we would never be able to give them a great deal in money, but we could give them an education, and if they were able to use that to benefit themselves, then that was the best thing we could do for them.

Both Michael and Jenny were sent to private secondary schools. Jenny was a boarder but the financial strain caused her to leave the institution. She did, however, continue on at the school by staying as a 'private boarder' with a 'dentist and his family'. She failed her leaving certificate and her parents couldn't afford to keep her on at school for two

subjects.

Jenny: They gave me a choice of one of the local high schools or correspondence, so I stayed home and got a job in the school holidays - that way I paid for my books. Mum was still travelling into Ballarat each day and Dad was shearing so I milked the cows - and fed out the cows. Dad would drive out the truck for me and then he'd go off.

I was smoking like mad and trying to hide the smoke from Mum when she got home. When she got home she'd see what work I'd done.

I'd get up and wander because there was no-one there to supervise me. I didn't think I had it in me - often I did get behind in my work - I really didn't think I'd pass but I did - it was just a fluke. I mean it would pile up - I had five essays to write in one week at one stage.

Mum was trying to help me grow up at that stage - the whole family's only very average. Never been any brilliance - I think I was the hope of the family because I was the bookworm.

When the family lived in western Victoria they were all involved with the Presbyterian Church, the children attending Sunday School, and Len was an elder. Len and Barb's views on sexual relationships, parenting, family ... reflect this involvement. They are conservative in their outlook, and see family as central to living. Since moving they have not attended church as regularly because of the time of the service - 2.30 p.m.

Barb: We usually have family here at that time.

One night Ana and I spent over three hours sitting talking with Len, Barb and Michael. Though there were some issues where they differed in their opinions, some points they felt less than certain about, their views on 'family' and the centrality of 'family' were unshakeable.

Len: I think we've got a pretty special relationship with all our family - my side of the family and Barb's side. We're all very close.

Barb: I think it's a thing that has to be worked at.

Marg: Who's done the working?

Barb: *Everybody. I think there could have been differences at various times, but I don't think anybody's tried to make them - they've tried not to.*

You've all got roots. There's a relationship in a family - you've all got roots.

Michael: *It's living together for so long - that's all it is. It didn't matter whether you hated them or not, they're still family.*

Barb: *You get to know their bad points and their good points and you either accept them or reject them. In lots of families people do reject other members of their families. It's very much a personality thing because there are lots of girls who don't get on with their mothers, and sons who don't get on with their fathers. I don't know that that's inherited.*

Michael: *It didn't matter what any of us did as far as all the relations go, we'd all be behind them.*

Len: *It didn't matter which one of the relations went off the rails, they'd know darn well they could come to any one of the others.*

Barb: *I think everybody's been a support to Simon (nephew) haven't they? He lost his job and everybody looked around.*

Simon's mother - Boobs - found him a job.

Len: *Boobs is our special name for our sister-in-law.*

Barb: *She's rather large in one part of the body.*

Len: *Mainly because she's one of the few in the family that is rather large.*

I asked how they would define 'family':

Barb: *We've got some good friends that are practically family.*

Len: *I was trying to work that out too. I've got some particularly good friends ...*

Barb: *Mike has a couple of good friends of ours that treat him as part of their family.*

Michael: *Yeah. I've got about fifteen families. I've got a lot of people I get very close to. I don't like*

losing those relationships I had. We used to live in western Victoria for eighteen years. I just go down there and I'm part of the family for four or five months of the year shearing.

Len: I think this is probably a thing in the country too - there are probably a dozen places where we could just barge in without notice - for as long as we wanted - and this is what you'd expect of family.

Marg: What's so special, Mum and Dad, between you and the kids? When does love start to grow?

Barb: I think it's as soon as they are handed to you. It's something you've waited for all that time and as soon as you've got them ...

Len: I think it was before that - as soon as they were conceived - there was something in you that was part of you and you were looking forward to that birth.

Barb: When you're feeding kids and you've got them for the first four or five years of their life - we had no family near us - we didn't get holidays or get away - there are times when you'd be looking for a break but you wouldn't get it, and then if you were away for a day or night, you just couldn't settle. You thought, I wonder if someone is doing this for them - are they being treated the way they should be treated?

During this conversation, Len, tears in his eyes and the tape switched off because of the intensity of feeling (a joint decision) described how wonderful he considered it to be when he saw Barb breastfeeding: he talked of sitting on the bed, in awe.

Len: I was rapt - I couldn't see enough of it.

Marg: What did you try and do with your kids?

Len: We didn't ever have any problems or queries that they wouldn't be exactly young ones of what we were. We thought we were terrific, of course.

Marg: What kind of people did you want them to be?

Barb: Just good people in the community.

Len: I thought that I would be disappointed if at least one of them wasn't interested in the land. I

suppose the main reason was that I had had the opportunity of seeing city life, navy life and the land and a big section of people in both places, and I felt that the type of living you did on the land - there wasn't any to beat it. Certainly there are lots of ways to make more money than being on the land - but there wasn't a better way of life as far as I could see. I think that the three of them are very farm type people - they'd all be farmers or farmers wives.

Marg: ... Farm type people are ...?

Len: *I think they're easier going and they don't have the tensions and the rush of life in the city - they pay more attention to people as people and not just somebody they pass in the street.*

Marg: Do you think you were the best parents for your kids?

Barb: *I don't know - probably not. You do the best you can. Because it's something you're not trained for - it's only trial and error. It's the most important job you ever do but there's no training for it. The beauty of it is they grow up in spite of the things you did.*

Marg: What would be the worst thing that could have happened to your three when they were growing up?

Barb: *That would have been the worst thing. To have lost a child.*

Len: *I still dream about having lost one of my kids, and I can never see which one it is but I think it was Pamela and I find it impossible to accept in a dream and I keep fighting, wondering how I can reverse it - and this is a dream I've been having for over twenty-five years or near enough. I've had this dream ever since we were married - about this lost child.*

Marg: How long have you been married?

Barb: *Twenty eight years.*

Len: *About a hundred years!*

Marg: Is there anything you can think of that helps explain your very special family and your very special caring?

Michael: *A lot of luck.*

Barb: *I think it goes back to Len's parents perhaps which were very matriarchal and patriarchal and kept family together. They both lived into their nineties. They were very special people in themselves and I think perhaps we all set them up as an example for the rest of us.*

Rob, Jenny and Lisa

Rob and Jenny lived in the same flat for a couple of years:

Jenny: When we were first going out I would say - gee I love you, and I asked him to say that he loved me to make me feel better but he wouldn't say it until he really meant it ... and the day he said it it was just like ...

Body language took over at this point: hands fluttered, eyes lit up. Jenny's face shone. Jenny was using contraception, but changing from one form to another: she found out she was pregnant on the morning of her final nursing exam. She went to a doctor who gave her a certificate which she sent to the Examination Board: they gave her an oral exam which she says she just scraped through. Rob had decreed two weeks earlier

We'll get engaged when you pass your exams.

Jenny said she was therefore feeling engaged. When one of Rob's best friends found out about the pregnancy he said ..

Listen mate - you do the right thing by her.

Both Rob and Jenny were at first undecided about keeping the baby. Jenny says she put a damper on her feelings until she knew they were going to keep her.

Jenny: At first I didn't want to get married. I wanted the baby adopted or aborted and I needed to face that. I actually went to the Wainer Clinic (abortion clinic). They were terrific - as soon as I walked in I knew I wouldn't.

It is hard to tell if at any stage Jenny would have considered an abortion or adoption had not Rob been making all the decisions.

Rob and Jenny chose to tell their parents about the

pregnancy on the same day, but Rob to his parents, and Jenny to hers.

Jenny: I came down to tell Mum and Dad. I came down alone because Mum and Dad didn't know Rob very well. I wanted to tell them on my own. Mum and Dad were terrific. I knew they would be nothing but terrific. I told Mum first: she said, 'You don't have to get married - you can come and live here or live in the cottage.' Dad put his arms around me and gave me a great big cuddle - he was busy wiping my tears away. Mum was the sensible one.

We went to Rob's family about a week after the pregnancy news - they and I had a big confrontation. They were putting the ground rules down if we got married. At that stage we'd decided we were going to get married (4½ months) then we changed our minds - or Rob did, I suppose, and said we'd wait and think it through. It came hard - it was harder to explain to Mum and Dad. I knew Rob - I knew what he was like.

Jenny chose to go along with Rob's decisions: she has always been the one to compromise, to bow before his wishes. Because she was finding the conversation so painful at this point, I did not probe, overmuch. For instance, I did not ask the nature of the ground rules laid down by Rob's parents, nor did I show my surprise at Jenny's pliancy, then or at other times.

Rob finally decided when they were getting married, and then prohibited Jenny from informing her parents.⁵ They got married when Jenny was eight months pregnant, the wedding being held in front of the television set in the lounge of their flat. Rob's old flatmate was best man: no members of either family were present.

It was Jenny's birthday the day before the wedding, and her family drove into town to see her. Len and Barb gave

⁵ Jenny actually broke this promise, but Rob still does not know that she told her parents.

Jenny a sewing machine; Michael gave her a crockpot, and Pamela gave an electric frypan. They were trying to make things easier for Jenny, to contribute as they could, for they knew they were being excluded by Rob; they felt for Jenny. The wedding was the next day, and the day after that both sets of parents were told.

Jenny says, and in part one feels that she is trying to rationalise the whole situation and exorcise some of the hurt, that

The best thing we ever did was get ourselves sorted out before Lisa was born. We went into marriage with our eyes open.

I presume that Jenny means she was aware that Rob would insist on being boss, and that they had established themselves as a couple (or threesome), independent of both families.

Barb was kept in ignorance not only about the wedding date (ostensibly), but about Jenny being on contraceptives. When I asked Barb how she felt about Jenny getting pregnant, she said ...

I was disappointed. I felt in this day and age they could have been more careful, and they were living together 'cause that's what they wanted to do which I didn't approve of, but it wasn't my life to live.

I know that after she left home I think we both decided we'd brought them up as well as we could and it was up to them to look after themselves as well as they were able. It was either that or go mental worrying about them.

Rob was with Jenny throughout the labour, and left the theatre only when it became necessary to use forceps.

Jenny: She was too big and I was too small. Sometimes I couldn't see (Rob) but I just knew he was there. I knew he was behind the mask - if the mask was gone he was gone.

I was sick, and frightened. Nobody, and I mean nobody, can describe what it's like to go into labour and have a baby - I don't care who they

are, they just can't. 6

After the birth Jenny had an infection, and had been told she might not be able to have any more children.

Jenny: I think I'd go round the bend if I couldn't have had another baby.

When Jenny and Lisa returned to the flat, Jenny found on their double bed new sheets and a blue patchwork quilt specially made by Barb. Jenny's eyes watered as she recalled that gesture.

For the first few months, while they were still living in the city, Jenny's parents made every effort to see them, and to support them in a practical way by taking gifts of food. Barb says they could see they were having a struggle, but relationships between Barb and Len and Rob were strained. Rob had still only been out to the farm four or five times (his choice), including the time when he had got drunk while sitting in his car, and some of his friends sat on the front steps and smoked dope. That was at Jenny's twenty-first.

When Lisa was four months old, they moved to the cottage, and Jenny started night shift at a nearby hospital to try and earn some money.

Barb: I do feel that fathers must feel a little rejected when that baby comes home but then again lots of babies are too tiny and little to be handled. Rob wouldn't do anything for Lisa for a long time and Jenny got terribly worried even when she was about one. He wouldn't mind her or nurse her, and when Jen was night nursing, he wouldn't let her take a job unless she took Lisa with her. She had to take Lisa with her every night, but when Lisa got to nearly two and interesting and lovable and gorgeous he'd do anything for her. He'd babysit when Jenny was working.

⁶ Compare with Diana McAlpine: ... I don't think people realise what it feels like ... all these strange sensations within my body. I wasn't sure what they meant ... It's turned me into a very sympathetic, understanding midwife.' Both Jenny and Diana are nurses.

Jenny breastfed Lisa for ten months:

I'd wanted to give up because for a start we were going away for three days. Mum was having Lisa for the three days. Before that I'd realised I was breastfeeding Lisa because she was totally mine. He was never interested in her except to cuddle and I thought the sooner I stopped breastfeeding Lisa the sooner he has a chance of helping her grow up a little bit faster. I can remember saying at times. I want to stop breastfeeding her, but I don't want to, and I knew that I'd really have to make an effort. She'd wake up at 2 a.m. every night, and once I'd stopped breastfeeding she just stopped it - just wanted a cuddle, that's all.

As Lisa got older, Rob looked after her at night while Jenny was at work:

Two nights a week I'd leave here at half past nine and I wouldn't be home till quarter to eight in the morning. Rob had to get her up and dressed. She loved daddy's day - she could be outside with him all day and she just toddled around behind him. She really used to look forward to it. I'd sleep during the day.

The other day Jenny worked, Rob was at the market, and Barb looked after Lisa.

Jenny loves nursing, and the chance to get away:

I hated the responsibility when I first finished - I hated it, but the best thing I ever did was to do night duty. You've got no-one to pass the buck to, especially in a small hospital. You've got to make decisions, and your decisions can cost a life sometimes if you're not fast enough or accurate enough in your assessment. You've got to cope. Sometimes it's really hard coping with really sick people because there's just no reason. You've got to find an explanation, some reason. That someone would want to harm a little child, or why does God want to take this child who seems so much nicer than all the other little brats. If you see a terminal, anybody that's dying, always seems so much like your next door neighbour, or someone you know very well and why the hell does it have to be them and little kids with so much strength ...

I feel God controls life and death and that's the only thing I get angry with him or pleased with him

about. I'm probably religious, but I don't rely on religion to help me through.

Later Jenny wanted a break from nursing, and that is one of the decisions she said they made.

Rob doesn't give many clues to what's going on in his brain - he's decision maker but occasionally I get to put a piece in, depending on how important it is at the time. I feel safer if I've got a good reason, but unless (I have) I'm not taken any notice of.

When Rob got the job (for the stockyards) it was on a four months trial, so I thought I might be going back to work. I've always wanted to get pregnant. Sexually we were having a feast, because Rob wanted me to get pregnant. Rob and Dad knew for two months beforehand he wanted me to get pregnant. I was hoping I'd be allowed to when Rob got the job ...

When Jenny did get pregnant there was great jubilation. For her it was a chance to enjoy being pregnant after the traumas of Lisa's pregnancy. For Barb and Len, and Rob's parents, a chance to celebrate openly. Both grandmothers were knitting socks, singlets, and Barb was finishing a cane crib which her mother had started before she died.

Jenny says that people's attitudes changed after the first pregnancy:

I found Mum and Dad, Mac and Sybil (uncle and aunt) talked more freely about sex and having kids after I'd been through it.

This pregnancy had an added significance:

To me it was a test in one way - it proved that he loved me enough to want another baby, because if he didn't love me we wouldn't have had another baby.

Marg: Were you really in doubt?

Not really, but yes, I suppose I was. I know when he married me I thought he wouldn't have married me if he didn't love me. I knew in the back of my mind that he did but this was just confirmation. I've never doubted him, but okay, it just seemed to make a difference to the foundations. I've never doubted he loved Lisa.

Lisa was patting Jenny's stomach at one point:

Jenny: It's a long time to go yet. It's Lisa's, and Daddy's, and Mummy's.

Then:

From conception, there's part of three people in me - me, my husband, and the baby. Lisa's not a part of what's going on inside me, but no less a part of the family.

Rob has a boy's name worked out this time, but he won't tell me what it is. Last time we had a girl's name worked out.

One night, when they were sitting on the couch, Jenny said to Rob:

The baby can look like you as long as it doesn't have beady eyes, a hook nose, floppy ears, and a bung (aboriginal) lip.

Rob smiled, nodded, and said not a word.

Marg (to Rob): When did you start loving Lisa?

Rob: I don't remember. It was probably when she was first born. Certainly not while Jen was carrying her. I always wanted a girl. Once I knuckled down to it ... and the more she's grown ...

On one of his days at the saleyards, Rob bought a horse, Pickwick, for Lisa.

Jenny: Rob fell in love with the little horse - Dad was with him. They would have been better with an old nag than a little stallion. I mean he's a three year old - you can't trust them. Bit of a white elephant, I think.

Jenny cannot question Rob about these decisions: only when she feels really strongly about something, or if she considers she has a chance of influencing the outcome of a course of action, does she try to persuade Rob.

One area where Jenny does have some say is in the bedroom:

Jenny: Rob's terribly high-sexed - he'd have sex every night - he used to get upset. I just need to be held and not made love to. We talk about it, we work it out. I need my own space. As long as he wasn't being rejected. I usually say why I don't feel like it; sometimes he tries to over-rule that but I usually give in then.

The bedroom's our territory. We don't shut doors. We have baths together but making love - I've got a one-track mind. We won't make love in front of Lisa. Lisa's a very inquisitive child and she's going to be answered honestly.

One of Rob's sisters-in-law asked Jenny what she was going to tell Lisa about the wedding (and the 'premature' birth). Jenny was rather exasperated.

Jenny: I honestly hadn't thought about it. The last thing I can think of doing, is hiding it from her (Lisa) saying we were married twelve months earlier. I'd hate to lie to her. I reckon it was shocking. I was hurt that she could ask.

It really shocked me ... because she lived with her husband (before they were married). It didn't worry me that I was pregnant and not married. I wore a plain gold band not for my sake - for other people. I found that other people got embarrassed. It was only a cheap Myer (department store) one - \$2.50 type. That was at work, and at home I just didn't. I don't think our family and friends needed it.

Neither Rob nor Jenny spend time analysing what they are doing, and the eight day period proved to be quite traumatic for Jenny for she was encouraged (forced?), to pause and question both her past and present, and in particular, her relationship with her parents, and Rob. Rob simply ignored what was going on, and responded to me as a friend and house-guest. He told me on the last night that the research was a load of crap; he meant it, for, after all, what was the purpose of sitting round looking at people, and asking all these 'dumb' questions. He knew who he was, what he wanted to do - and that's all that matters. The next day when I left he gave me a kiss.

Jenny: *I don't analyse myself very much - slop along comfortably. I worry what others think of me, except if I feel strongly about something, or if anybody criticises my family, then bugger them! I'll get my back up.*

Prior to the research time Rob and Jenny had been having lots of rows. Jenny

... because I'm pregnant, I think my emotions are all uptight and bothered.

Jenny sweeps the underlying tension under the carpet, or, in this instance, 'blames' it on her pregnancy. Barb and Len, though, are concerned about Rob's fiercely protected autonomy, and the relationship between Jenny and Rob.

Len: *I decided very early in the piece that no matter what, unless it was the last straw, our family shouldn't interfere. Rob was family the minute Jenny took to him. Now I didn't have to like him immediately.⁷ Often Rob treats Jenny ... I'd never treat men that way. I've found it very hard to understand, because they obviously feel very strongly for each other. It must be something to do with his mother and father. I find it very hard now. I've either got to walk away, or otherwise I'd probably say things I'd be sorry for. I know once I say it, I'd have to follow it up, and that would be the end of a terrific friendship.⁸ ... I'm hoping that he's seeing the way we treat each other and the way our family react - it might rub off.*

Barb: *We had no confrontation with him over the pregnancy for which I'm grateful now - we think a lot of him.*

Len: *We didn't know him beforehand.*

Rob's independence is shown through in practical things: when Rob uses the farm car for farm work, he delivers it back to the main workshed, fills it up, cleans it and parks it

⁷ In this family one makes a commitment because someone joins the family, but ...

⁸ In the seven months on the farm, Len, Barb and Michael's opinion of Rob had changed, dramatically. This is realised by Rob.

back in the carport.

Michael: He doesn't take advantage of anybody.

Because of Rob's stance it was difficult to ask questions. Jenny was surprised that Rob had even agreed to participate. She thought it would be fun, a chance to be with another person for a lengthy period. She said:

If he agrees to do the research it will be because of you. No-one else would even be considered. He hates anyone being involved with our private lives.

I met with some success:

Marg: When did you start to love the rest of the family (besides Jenny and Lisa)?

Rob: Jenny's parents before we were married. Michael only about one month ago. We went out and played a game of golf. It was important to me, but he was only here for about six months of the year. He's a lot older than me. He's nearly thirty, isn't he?

*Marg (to Rob): If you had to turn to anyone, who ...?
(Rob intercepted)*

Rob: Myself. I've take out very heavy insurance on me to make sure Jenny and everything's covered. I wouldn't want to turn to anyone, 'cause I wouldn't have to worry about it.

I rule the joint.

However, Jenny and I sat and talked, and talked ...

On education ...

I want Lisa to go to a private school. The same reason I want her to go to a small primary school. The teacher ratio's better.

I'd like to give her everything she wants - just the usual things. An education if she wants ... without going to the extreme of giving her things she doesn't really need.

I grew up in the country. People have got time

for each other in the country.⁹ The pace is slower. Kids are kids longer. There aren't the outside influences, you can control these.

There are more opportunities open to Lisa than Ana. Lisa has got all the opportunities that Ana's got in the city because we've got relations there as well as what she's got here. I want Lisa to have the best of both worlds.

On drugs ...

I'd try and talk her out of it. I'd be disappointed but I'd stick by her. I'd always be there, especially just to be there when I was needed.

On sexual matters ...

Marg: What are you going to do when Lisa wants to start sleeping with someone?

Jenny: *I'd die, I'd die, I'd hate it, because as I said I was a virgin till just before I met Rob, and there was only one other guy. I'm going to try and instil in her the same principles my parents did in me - she's going to hate me for it too and she's going to hate Rob more because he's going to be a terribly strict father when she's older. I dread to think what she's going to think of him when she wants to go out with guys. I don't know how he's going to cope.*

If someone was abusing her, not just having sex with her - willingly abusing her, he would kill them - so would I. It's one thing I can't tolerate - sexual abuse of children. You hear on the news about a three year old being sexually interfered with - my heart just cries for them and I sit here and cry.

About the future ...

I don't know that I can cope. Sometimes I worry that I won't be able to carry out my responsibilities but, you know, I'm hoping. To me the future is something I can't perceive - it's something that's going to change, or am I going to change with it, or going to stay the same?

I just sort of live today. I mean you look into the future. I think of how I'll cope with Lisa

⁹ Compare Len's comment on p. 362.

when she's older, and I think it's not going to be that she's thirteen, and I'm still me. I'm going to be that much older and more able to cope with the situation, hopefully, and we will have grown closely and we will be able to understand and talk to each other, and I think that's the important thing. That we will trust and love and care for each other. The same as, if not more than, Mum and I. I'd like to have it more because I had the trauma in the middle.

On her own future ...

I'd love to go back and do midwifery, but I won't because it's full time and evening and shift work and you can't do that with kids. I won't work while the kids are young during the daytime. I'm going to enjoy them and spoil them like I have Lisa.

On Rob, Jenny, Lisa and money ...

Child endowment goes into an account for Lisa. We don't know when we'll give it to her, but it will be for her. We've both made wills out: they're exactly the same. They leave to the survivor or the children. I think we decided it was to go into trust for the kids. We asked Mum and Dad to look after her if anything happened to us. You know that in our family there isn't that generation gap - she's got the benefit from our family which I much prefer her to grow up in than in Rob's because there are too many hassles.

(Rob's mother, according to Jenny, is 'the lady with the pants.' Her sons, and husband, object to her authority and this causes arguments.)

On extramarital sex ...

I couldn't - I couldn't face Rob if I did. I couldn't keep it from him. I don't think you can ever say what would happen or what you do in some circumstances, but I don't think I would.

I mean - my husband's lived with prostitutes before he met me, not sexually but lived in the same house. I'd be stupid to expect him not to have been in bed with anybody else. I wouldn't care if he's loved someone else, for I know his love is genuine - it's not just a word - it's a real feeling.

On remarriage ...

I wouldn't not remarry, not if I found someone I loved, but I wouldn't expect Rob not to either. I mean I wouldn't go straight out and look for another man. If I'd met someone that I loved, that could share with me whatever I had, I would get married.

*I do believe in living together before marriage. It's the biggest eye-opener.*¹⁰

On children ...

Marg: If there was a fire in the front bedroom, who would you rescue?

Jenny: *I think I'd rescue Ana, then Lisa. It would be the other person's child if I had to make a choice, because they were entrusted to my care ... because I couldn't explain it to them, but ... (and again Jenny couldn't find the words to continue for the thought was too horrific).*

Jenny loves children, and is a 'natural' with them. She takes great delight in playing with Lisa, and Ana benefited from Jenny's sense of humour, fun, and plain common sense. There were plenty of cuddles and hugs for both children. That is why I asked Jenny the next question. I knew it was cruel, particularly when she was pregnant.

Marg: What would happen if you gave birth to a child who wasn't capable of caring, for whatever reason?

Jenny: *To an autistic child? Gee, I don't know. I really don't know, because it means a lot to me - cuddling - it would be hard not to cuddle a child - really hard, because I get a lot from it, and I think Lisa gets a lot from it.*

Marg: Mentally handicapped?

Jenny: *Mentally handicapped I don't know. I don't think it would worry me that much. It would worry me more when I'm not there. It worries me with any sort of deformity or handicap. It's when I'm gone. I hope that I can cope with most things, but sometimes I've seen some horrible things in St Vincent's.*

¹⁰ See comment on p. 366.

Marg: The only reason I feel I could ask you is because of nursing (I was trying to justify such intrusive questions!)

Jenny: *I've seen some people reject them and some people that you imagine should reject them who have been fantastic. You wonder whether institutional care-type placing is best for the children or worst. Not at the time but talking of the future ...*

Marg: Can you see yourself placing a child in an institution?

Jenny: *That would be a fight I'd have to have at the time with myself. If it was better for the child I'd do it, but it would nearly kill me, I think.*

Marg: What about Rob ... which interests come first?

Jenny: *The child's.*

Jenny was crying at this stage. I knew it was rough, tough, and I was being bloody relentless.

Marg: You and the woman in the last family, Diana, are the only people that I know of who really do put the child's interests first.

Jenny: *Yeah. I don't know. I've had to. These are some of the things I was saying, I find very difficult with your questions.*

I've seen people who thought they could handle something and have handled it terrifically and then break ... it would take a fair bit of bending before I break ... I don't deny the fact that I would break.

Triptych: 3

Rob: It's not we who does it, it's me who does it.

The exercise of power ¹¹ is the most blatant motif in this family praxis - power in various guises: as

- collusion - Rob joins forces with his father-in-law to deny Jenny knowledge;
- domination - Jenny has to justify every cent she spends;
- influence - Len and Barb are hoping that Rob will learn from their example;
- authority - Jenny hoped she would be allowed to return to work; and hoped to be allowed to get pregnant;
- independence - Rob wanted Jenny to do their share of the milking so they could show their family was independent.

Lisa is too young to challenge or usurp; she has only to cry or make demands on Jenny and she is given what she wants, or needs. Lisa also thrives on being centre stage in Rob and Jenny's lives. Jenny is a strong person who has enjoyed an independent career; she is sure of her base-line values .. those concerning sexuality, family, work habits .. and yet is now dominated by Rob. Much of her considerable energy, and sense of potency, seems diverted from being power-over-her-self, to being power-holding-down-self-in-order-to-fit-in-with-Rob.

Jenny explains Rob's power, particularly his 'self-proclaimed and inalienable' right to make decisions, by saying that it was Rob who first decided about getting married.

She knows Rob is fiercely independent.

Sometimes it gets a bit hard to handle, but most times it works out pretty well.

¹¹ See Part 3 for discussion of power.

*It depends on how I'm feeling. If I want a brawl,
I speak my piece.*

*Occasionally I get to put in, depending on how im-
portant it is ...*

Rob has called the tune for most of the six years they have known each other:

- he called off their marriage because he didn't like his parents taking over the arrangements, or setting ground rules;
- he forbade Jenny telling her parents about the wedding;
- he always insisted on paying when they went out (though Jenny worked out ways to get round this);

yet Jenny defended Rob all the time, even when he humiliated her, or told her off, for example, in front of me, and as he had done countless times before her parents, brother ...

Len: Often Rob treats Jenny ... I'd never treat men that way.

When I suggested to Jenny that some people might think Rob too much of a boss, Jenny replied ...

They can get stuffed. They don't have to live with him.

Power in the relationship between Jenny and Rob is exercised unequally for Rob must always be boss. He elects to 'own' the financial resources, to limit or deny access to those resources, and knowledge about them, and denies access to 'where he is' in his thinking and decision making. Jenny has no answer to Rob's independence; she chooses to stay in the relationship, and therefore Rob retains the upper hand.

The one who appears master of himself has a strength which intimidates others.

Sennett, 1981:84

Jenny is intimidated: that she accepts such an imbalance of

power reflects Rob's independence and authority, and her dependence, lack of potency or resolve, and her perception of her inability to make changes.

Rob doesn't give many clues to what's going on in his brain ...

(this pregnancy) ... To me it was a test in one way - it proved that he loved me enough to want another baby ...

Jenny likes helping out with the milking because

It makes me feel as though I'm doing something for once.

Jenny's sense of who she is, and her importance in being that person, do not justify in her mind the right to assert herself. She knows she is loved: as a daughter, as Rob's wife (or she thinks she is?), and she has no doubts about her ability, or strength of love for Lisa. But being defined in relation to other people - as daughter, wife, mother, does not give Jenny a secure sense of herself as an individual. Jenny is not, however, one of the 'doormats of the western world'.¹²

While I was training I felt I was me.

Jenny 'comes alive' in the country, but Rob's behaviour 'forces' Jenny to be more docile than she is. Rob's independence may be a shield, a protection against his mother's strength, and Jenny's. One suspects it has become exaggerated and will 'even out'. That Rob and Jenny's relationship survives amidst much laughter and teasing, good-natured ribaldry and hard work is largely due to Jenny (cf. Parson's instrumental/expressive dichotomy). Jenny is an extrovert with a great capacity for loving.

Rob, by being so strong and stubborn and independent, evokes a grudging respect - from Jenny and her family: he

¹² See Dixson (1976).

has also shown himself willing to learn, on the farm and in relationship terms - with his daughter and with people like Michael ...

Parenting, parentwork, parenthood

Jenny comes from a strong, caring, nurturing family. Likewise Len, Jenny's father. His family still remain in close, supportive contact. Rob, however, left home at fifteen because he did not like his family situation: he therefore brings a different inheritance to his 'new' family.

Jenny's caring extends beyond her family. Friends are especially important, and Jenny keeps in contact, either by phone or visits with a number of people. Anyone who is suffering also 'touches' Jenny, and she found it particularly hard when she was nursing to cope, emotionally, with sick or dying children. When someone close to her is sick, Jenny is ineffectual:

*Barb: When Lisa had diarrhoea, she was useless - panicky.
When I was sick, she couldn't cope.*

Jenny cares without weighing up the advantages/disadvantages, or thinking of herself: she is essentially a giving person. Rob is learning, from Jenny, and her family.

Parentwork

Jenny is responsible for looking after Lisa, feeding, clothing, entertaining, keeping her safe, teaching her. Rob refused to look after her until she was a toddler: he made that choice, and perhaps felt unable to manage until then, but it is a choice not available to most women. Jenny is also expected to be responsible for the housework, and Rob for the provision of money: both accept that role allotment.

Len and Barb had a similar division of labour, though Len wanted to be more involved from the time the children were very young. He talked of sitting on the bed watching Barb

breastfeed:

Len: I was rapt - I couldn't see enough of it.

Len would help out with the housework if Barb was sick.

Barb: Len is very capable in the house but while I'm fit and well he doesn't do a thing, but when I'm sick he just takes over completely, and when he's done a hard day's work on the farm and he'd come in ...

Again, few women have the choice of 'helping out': they are expected to work, sick or not sick.

Parenthood

Jenny and Rob conform to 'traditional' roles as they understand them: Jenny is vulnerable, and her dependency on Rob partly comes about because of her lack of confidence. She says, for instance, about housekeeping:

I clean up when people are coming - I worry what they think of me.

and about clothes:

If I feel comfortable and 'think' nice, I feel other people think I look nice.

Barb says that Jenny lacks confidence in herself:

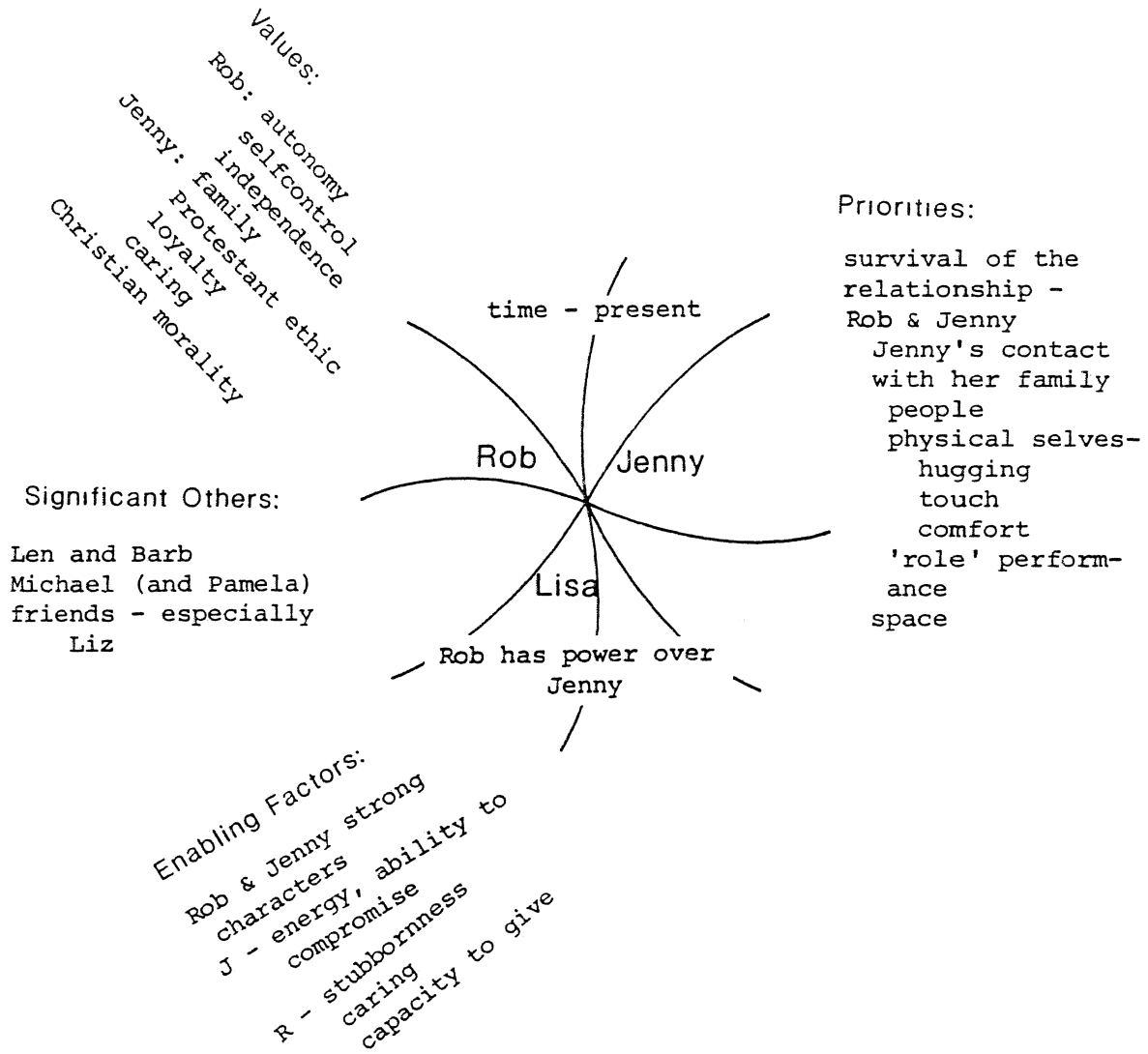
Len: We think she's a terrific mother, she's a real softie.

Barb: And she puts on a great big front to hide it.

In the one area of 'mothering' Jenny is very confident: in all others she lacks the security, or sense of self, which enables her to do as she wants to do. Her relationship with Rob is one of the key areas where Jenny has to watch every step.

Rob is so determined to do 'things right' by his standards, that his autonomy becomes a handicap to others: they want to help, but don't quite know how to offer it. Len and Michael both suggest that Rob is maturing, mellowing, and becoming more able to give and take.

Total social fact



Jenny: ... then we changed our minds, or Rob did I suppose.

*Four levels of analysis**Descriptive*

As detailed. One additional notion which helps comprehension of Rob and Jenny's lifestyle is to look at their age, the time when they left home, and what they did in that period.

Both are twenty-four, both have lived away from home for over eight years, but their experience in those years differs greatly.

Jenny was a boarder at a Presbyterian girls' school, then with another family, back home for two years, and then a resident in a nurses' home, and then flatting with nurses. For most of that period Jenny was part of the lower echelons of an hierarchical setup, and particularly with the nurses home, an authoritarian one where decisions were made, responsibility about money, diet, hours .. rested with others, and questioning of that authority was forbidden.

Rob left home when he was fifteen: he moved from flat to flat, tried two training courses and gave them up, sought employment in the area of landscape gardening, where there is a certain autonomy (simply because one is outside, and usually removed from direct supervision); he decided about hours, money ...

Normative

Jenny and Rob 'fit' within the traditional norms - yet they have also developed their own should/should nots which are meticulously followed: for example, 'our family will help out - we will show our independence, even if the risk to Jenny and the baby is more than usual'. If Jenny fails to meet Rob's requirements she is likely to be told off, regardless of who is present.

Cognitive

Rob and Jenny don't see the need to theorise about what they are doing for they 'just do it'. They are both essentially practical people, able to work at their own pace (or negotiated pace for Rob when he is working with Len and Michael), and to their own rules. If Jenny stopped to question what she, or they, were doing, then the tension which lies dormant but ready-to-burst may cause ruptions unable to be healed. In part, the research period triggered this 'evaluation'. I was conscious several times of withdrawing. Jenny, too, deflected questioning if it was getting too near painful areas.

Explanatory

Power is the structuring principle in this family, the force which gives rise to the shape and content of much of the praxis. Complementing that, or enhancing the relationship between Rob and Jenny and Lisa, is an abundant caring, a commitment to each person, and to the 'family as a whole'.

Eggs in the basket

Marg (re Lisa): Do you think, now, she's more yours or Rob's, or ...?

Jenny: No - I think she's ours.

The 'eggs in the basket' exercise proved the 'truth' of this. Jenny worked these for herself and Rob, then Rob agreed to do them on the last night, mumbling at the same time that the research was a load of crap: both Jenny and Rob put similar amounts into the parent basket.

	<i>Self</i>	<i>Mother</i>	<i>Wife</i>	<i>Daughter</i>
<i>Jenny</i>	(11)	(11)	(11)	(7)
<i>For Rob</i>	(13)	(13)	(12)	(2)
	<i>Self</i>	<i>Father</i>	<i>Husband</i>	<i>Son</i>

Jenny explained that

*Mum doesn't need me as much as Rob or Lisa.
She has more people to rely on than they do -
that's the way I'd like it to be too.*

	<i>Self</i>	<i>Father</i>	<i>Husband</i>	<i>Son</i>
<i>Rob (for himself)</i>	(20)	(14)	(5)	(1)

Rob, speaking of Jenny's allotment:

That's silly ... self way out in front.

Research comment

During the research period, I asked permission from Jenny and Rob to speak with Jenny's parents, and drove to their home in Rob and Jenny's car. I took Ana with me.

It was a special evening, the love and caring that marks the van den Berg family being freely given to us. The evening took on a special glow, a quality of uniqueness, for it was one of the first occasions Len, Barb and Michael had taken the opportunity to talk about their family and, in particular, Rob's entry into the family. There was a lot of pain, but Len's sense of humour, which Jenny has inherited, helped ease the conversation over such times. Ana and I drove home in pitch black, country black, night. We got home about 10.30.

Jenny and Rob were watching the Winter Olympics on television. They went to bed but I was still mulling over the evening, and churning, so I turned out all the lights bar one at the back of the kitchen. About 12.30 I went to go to bed, but couldn't find my way. I stood, petrified, in the little hallway, a space of about four feet square. Whichever way I moved, I banged into doors, made the floor squeak, or thought I was entering their bedroom. I was scared, and scared of waking Rob up:

(from notes): He's so much master of his home ... think I was worried he would say 'I work hard all day, bloody hard all day and I can't sleep at night if you have television on ..'

I was also worried Rob would throw me out. I experienced, potentially, the 'wrath' of Rob, and found myself swallowing 'me'. I did not feel free to turn on the light, though that was the obvious thing to do.

Some weeks after we left, I received a letter from Jenny.

Well, we didn't really notice much difference when you had gone, except of course the relief of just being the three of us again. Rob has finally put some laminex on my bench top. It only took me about twenty months of nagging. It's not what I wanted in colour, etc., but who's complaining?

In another letter, May 1982 ...

Lisa started school this year. We got quite a surprise when she came home with readers and proceeded to read to us. Shelley is nineteen months old now, walking, running, talking (and we have suspicions) swearing at us.

One day at a time, sweet Lord
That's all I have to come through
Just give me the strength
To do every day
What I have to do.
Yesterday's gone, sweet Jesus
And tomorrow may never be mine
Lord help me today
Show me the way
One day at a time.

The words of this song echo from the walls and ceiling of this family home: the record gets played by Kevin (42) daily, at least; so does Barbra Streisand's record, *Wet*, and the *Song of Dracula* ... four people live in this home, plus Trudy the dog. Four people who have shared in suffering, have learned about themselves, their strengths, their breaking points, people who aim to survive, one day at a time.

Until three years ago there were five: Valerie, Kevin's wife, and mother of Michelle (14), Catherine (12) and Sandra (10), died of cancer in 1976. She had been sick for six years. Initially this sickness was diagnosed as a lump in the breast; a mastectomy followed, then the cancer spread to the uterus, then the bones. Until three days before she died Valerie, by family decision, stayed at home: she managed the family until then, with the support of Kevin's mother (Mrs White), the local Anglican church and a neighbourhood network. Valerie is described by everyone as being the practical one, the anchor: she taught her daughters to look after themselves, their father and the house.

Sandra: I learnt how to cook when I was seven - that's when I had to start doing the tea. Mum reckoned I'd make a good nurse for what I done for her but what I had to do for her I wouldn't want to do now.

Valerie and Kevin met at a dance: they married in 1966 when Valerie was 28 and Kevin 26. Kevin was working at the time as a shipping clerk. Previously he had spent two years in New Zealand, a major break for Kevin from his family. He says this period gave him ...

... a chance to grow up.

*Dad made the decisions - till I left the family
(at twenty). I wanted to make my own decisions
- probably one of the reasons I was nervous, tense
- because I'd never learnt to handle ...*

On his return from New Zealand Kevin worked as a storeman. He decided to return to study and obtain his Leaving Certificate, but this proved an uncomfortable move for he found study tough going. (As a child Kevin had spent two years - Grades 3 and 4 - in a special school.) His boss checked on his progress and then said 'Goodbye Kevin' as he gave him the sack.

Kevin and Valerie were married by this time. Valerie had trained as a nurse in a country hospital in Victoria: Kevin explained that she hadn't needed such high grades to train at that particular place. Valerie also completed her midwifery training, then went overseas with a group of friends. They toured the continent, including a visit to Russia, 'all for five hundred pounds'. Kevin relayed this information with a touch of awe.

After being given the sack, Valerie and Kevin moved into a dairy which they ran for twenty months. Michelle was born during this time, and Kevin's mother helped out with babysitting whenever she could. Kevin then moved into the taxi truck business, again a 'disastrous move', in his words ...

*I'm just not sort of practical - I'd forget to tie
the rope on the pane of glass.*

Kevin applied to get into the police force, passed the medical test, but

*I failed the interview ... just as well 'cause in
those days I was so nervous.*

He started driving taxis in 1968, thoroughly enjoys it, but thinks he would like a change by 1988:

I might try farming.

Kevin's car is usually parked in the driveway of the three bedroom house in Oakleigh where they live. No one is particularly interested in gardening, so both front and back yards are rather scrawny.

The street has the appearance of being comfortable rather than smart: Holdens and Corollas park side by side on the grass verge. Oakleigh is not a fashionable suburb: it has a high migrant population, though most of Michelle, Catherine and Sandra's friends seem to be Anglo-Saxon.

Michelle describes her father as a 'cuddly bear': he has curly grey hair which he is constantly rearranging with his hands, a habit rather than a nervous movement. He is about 5 feet 10 inches in height, overweight, slouching in his walk, his feet and arms floppy when he sprawls in a chair. Clothes are worn to cover, not to impress. Kevin has a slight speech defect: he asked me the second night I was there when I was going to finish my 'fesis'. He talks, too, of his 'bruvver', of his 'muvver'.

Michelle is more woman than child: blonde long hair, keen on clothes:

I don't really worry about fashion but I like to look nice

- responsible, intelligent, keen on singing, drama, jazz ballet. Old beyond her years in her understanding, yet very much a teenager: in the midst of a serious conversation about her family, a panel van drove past - Michelle was gone in an instant 'just to look'.

Catherine is the 'I don't know' girl: most questions, from her father, sisters, friends, grandparents, are met with 'I don't know'. Tall, gangly, cross-eyed, ¹ always untidy in her appearance even if everything is ironed and coordinated,

¹ See page 417.

Catherine feels hard done by. She thinks Michelle is too bossy, Sandra too successful in getting her own way.

Sandra is one of those children in the nursery rhyme: 'when she is good she is very, very good; when she is bad' it is best to be out of the road, according to Kevin and her sisters. Sandra is capable in the house; she niggles sometimes when it is her turn to do the meal, or the dishes, especially if she is involved in making something with her wood pieces, or sewing, drawing or reading.

Michelle and Catherine attend a State secondary school, and Sandra the local primary. Michelle is in an A form.

Kevin: When Michelle started secondary school, she'd gone past my expectations because I never passed Proficiency or Intermediate. I'm just amazed that she has the talent she's got. Everything she's got she's got a gift for it.

Catherine has more difficulty with school: this may be due to her diffidence for she seems very much 'an onlooker'. Sandra is more practical. One evening Catherine asked Sandra to help her prepare a two minute talk on stamps:

Kevin: To me my kids have made the grade already. If I go they can still survive - no effort and no sweat. They can stand on their own feet - they've got no problems.

The four do survive, with much laughter and goodhearted teasing. Michelle sees herself as 'the boss', though I would say she is the manager. Kevin describes himself as a 'dreamer', but he is the anchor, the adult parent; he still sets restrictions, vetoes certain moves and has the final say on matters of importance, for example travelling at night on public transport, and priorities of spending. Michelle, however, organises the roster, the buying of foodstuffs and the cleaning of the house. This is so routinised, it took me days to wake up to why this family functions so smoothly: the roster is quibbled about, but it works.

Sandra: She read out a roster and tried to make us stick to it. She made her not do anything.

Catherine: She left her out altogether. She just enjoys herself and does nothing and we've got to do the dishes.

Michelle: I think it's fair what I've done. I suppose if they were willing to clean up properly ...

Catherine: We do so.

Michelle: Excuse me, you don't. You have done it once in your lifetime properly - when I told what happened if I died. You did it then. If I went to the kitchen now I could pick up about ten things you haven't done.

Catherine (reluctantly): Oh, that's right.

The three girls do all the cooking and the dishes from Monday to Saturday. On Sundays Kevin is responsible for the lunch (they make their own every other day), and Sandra for both the cooking and the dishes. The menu remains the same: chops, mince, sausage, plus vegetables, and chicken most Saturdays. Puddings are treats - they specially like bread and butter pudding, with sultanas.

Michelle: Mum taught me the basic things and then I just taught myself. I've taught the girls to make dressings - like honey and orange and lemon - we have it (chicken) a lot of ways. We stick to the menu because it's easy to cook and easy to budget and we all like it. A treat would be fish and chips but we never have it because Dad says it upsets the diet.

Sandra: We can have (cook) whatever we want. What is there.

Michelle: I know several of my friends who would never be able to handle anything. I mean it's not really work now 'cause it's an everyday thing.

Each Saturday morning Catherine goes to the butcher at the end of the road and buys the meat for the week: the selection and quantities are usually the same. Sandra is responsible for buying the vegetables, and Michelle the groceries. Michelle has a keen grasp of prices, what is economical buying, and what is window-dressing. She spent \$26.00 the night we went. Kevin drives her to the supermarket to do the

shopping, and occasionally the others go too. Kevin does not question Michelle's purchases.

Public parts of the house - the living room and hallway in particular - are kept tidy and clean. Two years ago a 'cleaning lady' was employed, but Michelle says the money ran out, and they decided they could do things by themselves. Vacuuming is done when it is needed, by anyone. The kitchen floor gets swept:

Sandra: We have to do it when we empty the bin. We empty the bin when it's full.

Everyone, including Kevin, helps out with the laundry. One morning Catherine ironed her skirt before school: she left the iron on. Sandra turned it off without saying a word. Each is responsible for his/her bedroom - Catherine and Sandra share a room and Sandra gets angry because Catherine leaves her half in a mess.

Daily routines are well established. Kevin leaves in his taxi by 7.15 a.m. but gets up early to have a quiet time and/or go for a jog. His first customers are a group of children, mostly Greek children, that he picks up and delivers to school. There are too many people in the car, though Kevin is loath to offload because he considers these children 'part of his family'. He drives most of the day, though enjoys stopping off at home for a short nap in the early afternoon. He is usually home for dinner at six: Catherine says she starts to worry if he is not home by 9.30. He doesn't phone unless he is out at Tullamarine (the other side of town).

One of Michelle's friends comes in about 8 a.m. Michelle, Catherine and this friend then walk to school about a kilometre away. One morning, this friend, Linda, came in to the house to wait for Michelle:

Catherine: You decided to come inside.

Linda: Yes ... into the pigsty.

Sandra leaves about twenty past eight. After school they are allowed to go anywhere, as long as they are home by 5.30. Sandra often goes to a 'special' friend's house. She said that when her mother died, this friend's mother

... kind of took over my mother - like she's really nice to me.

That this independence is permitted reflects the level of trust in the family. Several times during the eight day period of the research Kevin took off without saying goodbye - to the children, to me; he gave no indication of where he was going, nor how long he would be away. There is freedom for all to do that - a trust, and an acknowledgment of need for their own space.

Michelle's diary cover takes on this idea of privacy and space:

'To those who come across this masterpiece of my lifestyle. Do not open as to me this is a personal and private book and I do not wish to share my thoughts. No matter how simple or silly this diary may be on the outside it is complex to me and no one would be able to understand it except me.

Love from me'

Kevin handles the money. One morning he said

When I woke up this morning I was coming apart - have to get these things off my mind.

He was referring to a \$1300 tax bill, and the fact that he had to do meter readings for the taxi company. He works for the company, though owns the taxi. He bought it after Valerie died:

It gave me something to aim for - paying it off.

He owns the house, but borrowed \$17,000 on that to pay for the taxi.

The first year, driving a taxi, I only earned \$6,000 taxable income. This year it was \$8,000. \$90.00 a week goes on paying it off. \$105 a month for depot fees and then you've got repairs, tyres ...

Kevin puts the fares in his pocket.

It's just bloody change. We've got a meter reading and I just take the figures down. I take so much for shopping - I don't work it out - what I've got left over I put in the bank. I don't try to work it out.

Then Kevin said to Michelle and Catherine:

Can you put off going to the dentist till April - after I've paid the tax bill?

Pocket money is given regularly: Michelle gets \$2.70, Catherine \$2.20 and Sandra \$1.10. Other money is given from the 'top pocket' when they need it.

Kevin doesn't contribute to any hospital benefits:

That's one of the reasons I don't go to doctors if I can help it. I've got no insurance policies except for the car, I don't believe in them because they devalue at such a rate and I don't like what they do with their money because they invest it in tall buildings in the city.

I like security - I'd like to have \$2,000 or \$3,000 in front of me but ... I seem to get enough to meet my needs even though I wonder where it's coming from. I've got a bank account - I've always got some bills outstanding.

Kevin is aware of his shortcomings, and his double standards:

I like to be a person who doesn't worry about money - or things like that. To show as a parent that you've got no worries about money (but) your actual actions make a liar of that statement. Different actions - what I like to be and what I am is two different things.

Once a fortnight, Kevin has a meeting at the house. This is known as a 'search for God' study group, one of a series of such groups attached to ARE - Association for Research and Enlightenment. Kevin's group focusses upon dreams and their interpretation.

In the 1960s Kevin sampled various churches and religious groups: Anglican, Presbyterian, Christian Science and Quakers. He is now firmly involved with the Quaker Movement, and the family base their annual holiday round the Quaker Yearly Meeting which is held in different parts of Australia each January. The ARE group is 'way out' from Quakerism, part of Kevin's search for understanding, his attempt to make sense of himself and his position in the world.

In 1979 he was given a spiritual reading by one of the leaders in the ARE spiritual philosophy group. This was an important experience for him. Some words from that reading (permission given for inclusion) ...

The aura is well formed ... it indicates no great problems on the physical and mental levels. The vibrations are horizontal, indicating that the soul has well settled within the body ...

Your spirituality must be emotionally warmly expressed, you're not an intellect by which you can intellectualise all the feelings that come to you, neither do you have to ...

Michelle shares the interest in the interpretation of dreams: all attend Quaker Meeting regularly.

People at Quaker Meeting, neighbours, Kevin's parents .. all lend support to this family but they function 'independently.' Kevin says that Valerie's illness forced them to sort out their priorities.

Kevin: You've first got to hear your wife's got cancer and, then you alter your way of life.

Each day's a miniature lifetime - there's no future, no past. There's only the present, the future can't help us. I accept that the only real meaning to life is what we're doing right now.

*This is the only real life at the moment - what
we put in; one day at a time born out of pain
and suffering.*

*Some people are a lot fitter and stronger, in
their system; not our family - we've got to re-
cognise the limits of our family and stay within
the limits.*

We get a lot done - but under our terms.

One day at a time, sweet Jesus
I'm only human
I'm just a man
help me believe in what I could be
and all that I am

pushing and shoving
crowding my mind
so for my soul
teach me to take
one day at a time.

Triptych: 2

Valerie's family

Valerie's parents, George and Mary Steinfort, live on a farm about fifty kilometres from Melbourne. The girls usually spend part of their school holidays on the farm, but last time they went to stay they came home feeling very uncomfortable: they told Kevin that 'Nanna and Grandpa argued too much.'

Marg: Tell me about Nanna and Grandpa (Valerie's parents are called Nanna and Grandpa, Kevin's parents Nanna and Poppa).

Michelle: Nan's a real sweet and loving person. Nanna and Grandpa, they don't show their feelings so you don't know what they're feeling. They're not as loving - I mean they're as loving inside them but they don't show it.

Sandra: Like they're always fighting with each other.

Michelle: Oh, they're not. I suppose it's because they're so used to arguing they argue.

Kevin says of Valerie's family:

Valerie had a bit of difficulty in her upbringing because her father's pretty strict - he's the old German stock. When he's cutting hay or grass, he'd go round afterwards picking up whereas our farmers wouldn't. If you didn't do a job properly you were a damned fool or a damned idiot and he expected everyone to keep his high standards. The mum was city background - and she's never totally adjusted to the farm. She's never been able to drive so she's always been tied to the farm ...

Marg: How did they cope with Valerie's illness and death?

Kevin: Oh. She (Mrs Steinfort) was frustrated because she couldn't do anything. Pop was a bit shocked.

One of Valerie's brothers, Martin, lives in Los Angeles: he was unable to attend the funeral and a few months afterwards he shouted Michelle a trip to the States when another of Valerie's sisters was going over there on a visit. Kevin said it was one of the best things that could have happened

to Michelle:

It was just what she needed - 'cause she had a break for six weeks from responsibility. She was a different kid when she got back.

Mrs Steinfort's sister, Auntie Flo, lives in Melbourne. The girls talk lovingly about her but they don't go to see her very often.

Kevin's mother says of Valerie and her family:

Valerie was like my first daughter and she accepted me - because when they were married and came back to our place, as she got into the car she said 'goodbye mother'. Really, I was closer to her than her own mother. She told Kevin one time when they were courting that she had never known love like it.

I remember one time we were shocked when she didn't want to go up to her mother's. She mostly went up there out of a sense of duty - I know there's no love lost between the parents and that's why I think he's on old grump. He goes off outside so much - I think he finds his happiness there.

Valerie couldn't understand what it is like to have a close family - even though she was so ill her mother didn't seem to grasp it. She's a very nice person but I think they live in a world that's their own. To me I'd have been down on the bus every week to see my daughter. She could only come down when he came down, but I wouldn't have cared anyhow. If I'd known my daughter was dying I'd have got there somehow or made him come.

Kevin and his family

Kevin has one brother, Chris, who is six years younger. Kevin was born in 1938.

My Dad went to the war when I was younger. I missed him for the first three or four years of my life, so I missed a bit of the companionship there. There was plenty of love; plenty of food. I always had top food because Dad wasn't at home. Dad's a bit of a con man in some senses. He got petrol during the war. He worked in the markets (when he came home), the third generation to work there.

Ken and Eileen White now live in a neat modern unit about five kilometres from Kevin's place.

When the boys were growing up the family lived in another part of Melbourne.

Mrs White's mother had a series of heart attacks and moved in:

Kevin: She was going to stay with us for a month but she ended up staying with us for ten years with angina. She'd have about three or four attacks a day. As a kid you had to be careful - don't upset grandma - don't do this. I hated it, because of the effect it had on my mother. She was worrying about her. You seem helpless to help your mother and you see this intruding. It's the most frustrating experience for a kid.

Eileen: She was a delightful person. Everybody loved her. She never grew old. I had her for fourteen years ² which was very trying at times. With good care, and love, she lasted for fourteen years. But it took it out of us. Ken (White) was the one who suffered. We've had our ups and downs, but we've always had that love. That gets you through.

That love was sorely needed, too, in Mrs White's own childhood. Her father left home after incurring a huge amount

² Conflicting times given.

in gambling debts. He had been 'in a good job as an accountant', but when he left

Eileen: Mum battled to keep things going ... Mum was paying his debts so she didn't have much left so we lived in one room and shared a bed, so the girls don't really know how lucky they are. From the time I was about ten to seventeen. That's why a home is so important to me. Fortunately for her I was an only one.

Mrs White finds it difficult to criticise anyone, even her father:

I mean, there was nothing wrong with him, except that he was weak.

Kevin says this characteristic he found frustrating, though understandable:

Kevin: She's never been able to express herself or lose her temper or fight because her father ran out when she was a little girl and she hid the hurt. She must have had rows between her mother and herself, and she naturally associates rows with bruising somebody.

And still trying to explain himself:

I like Mum, but I never sort of grew to love her until I left. That was because I didn't really trust her because she's a very domineering person in one way. Like Mum didn't like arguments or upset with my brother: 'No don't, you'll upset me', and she used to put an emotional barrier between you. In certain respects I didn't like her. I didn't know why, though. I understood it later on. Mum's often tried to get close to me. I've let my guard down now. The first time I said I loved her - it was ages ago.

Kevin is faintly critical of his parents:

Looking back, Mum won't do anything without Dad, and vice versa. In some ways they haven't experimented with their own lifestyle - they've got their own neat and ordered lifestyle and they'll still be independent people but maybe Mum thought this was the right way to live.

Discussion about sexual matters was taboo - and still is 'awkward'. Kevin said he used to masturbate as a kid: 'Mum would have had a fit'. He said he also worried about his small penis.

... I was very orthodox as a child - hated anything to do with breaking rules ... I felt safe - touch of the walls - security but when you find out it doesn't work ..

I had my first girlfriend when I was nineteen: never had sex with anyone till I got married. That sex book, Where Do I Come From?³ would have told me more in five minutes than I would have learnt in my first twenty years. If I'd had that back as a kid ...

I was pretty sensitive as a kid. I didn't know what sex was till I was about nineteen. One of my experiences was in National Service camp. They were playing around with sex and I was shocked - skylarking - and as a result one of the guys said 'I'm going to get you tonight in a sexual way'. I just didn't know what to do about that situation so I went to the highest authority I knew - the Captain. That caused a stink. Those two boys got kicked out of camp and everyone hated me.

³ Book seen at a friend's place.

Kevin and Valerie

Marg: What were you like before Valerie got sick?

Kevin: *Typical selfish male. I had a very generous mother who looked after my wants and the male takes that for granted, and Valerie was very practical.*

Was it a good marriage?

Yes, it was solid - we were a good team, we were a team.

Did you and Valerie row?

Kevin's face lit up as if he is still surprised and delighted about this aspect of their relationship.

That's what was beautiful about it. She could hit me on the head with a saucepan. She had a rare gift. If you could show her she was wrong, that's it. She'd switch around as if it never happened. It was so completely scrapped, so what rows we had were good clean ones.

You are a very touching person ... was she?

She responded to it. Love grows on you. I think love's a growing thing. I wasn't such a loving person to such a degree.

You mentioned ... that Valerie wasn't very passionate.

It was probably my doing. I couldn't understand women. Probably if I'd had the knowledge. Now if I met her ...

When she first got sick, can you remember what that was like?

Yeah. It's just like a sort of lump, and I'm a man of faith, you know - no problems. She was quite convinced ... and then the surgeon came up and he was shattered too. It was about a month between finding the lump and the operation.

She had her breast removed. How did she cope with that?

In one way she wasn't possessed with glamour about her body. She was very flat-chested to begin with. She wasn't over-endowed so I wasn't particularly worried. She helped me to adjust to it by her attitude - if she had of worried about it I would

have suffered too, but she didn't worry about it and I accepted. About a year or two later she had to go again, and this time it was the uterus.

I had a very understanding boss - he must have suffered hell with me but I couldn't work full time, especially towards the end and he kept me on. There were days when I couldn't work.

Kevin got quieter and quieter. As he talked there was a stillness in the room.

It was God's gift to me - the sickness - Valerie's gift to me in a sense that it made me grow up. Death's a funny thing. I read this in my little book - it's a growing thing no matter even if you lose out, you still grow up and the effect of the sickness was it develops your compassion - your understanding. If you have a sick person - like a person who's never been sick, like they've got no sympathy for other people - it's got no meaning for them, they can't understand.

It must have been hard seeing her and not be able to ease the suffering. Must have been really frustrating.

I was not expecting Kevin's response. His voice became even more subdued. Remorse showed on his face, in his hands, his whole body. He was obviously deeply back in those days, re-living ..

Well. It's just lack of sex - that's fairly frustrating - lack of communication or affection. It's funny how you can love them without sex. We still had it ... you don't know when to stop.

I had lessons to learn. One of the lessons. I was a very egotistical - a very selfish male ... and it was only through experience I learnt to understand - I had to learn. I had to do it the hard way.

Mrs White, talking about Valerie's illness:

When she had the second flareup, I was about to get into good works. I was very interested in spastic children, but then I decided my place was at home. Valerie only had to ring up. I thought she should enjoy life as much as she could. The

girls came here from a very early age.

These kids have been my life - I mean I've given up everything for them - that's neither here nor there because I love them and I've had them since babyhood. They just come to me ... I'm part of their life. If I can't do the physical things for them, I can help by letting them have the feeling of being able to come to me - that I'm always there.

I mean they went through a terrible time. I mean they were only 7, 9, 11 (when she died) ... those little kids used to come home and see Valerie in her chair - they got her into the commode - it was unnatural for children. I couldn't move her because I'd been in a car accident (and injured my back). I just kept going there and many a time, I'd lie in the bed beside her, and if she felt like talking, she'd talk, and if she didn't feel like talking - she knew when I did.

I remember this day she didn't feel like getting up. She said - Catherine feels I should Mum - I better do what she wants me to do - and she made such an effort to get up and sit up when they got home.

Kevin ... he really cares - he tries so hard and he's worked so hard with those kids.

Mrs White also talked of the neighbours and friends who helped out, including some of the mothers of the children's friends.

... and there was Susan, Lesley as well. Her mother was wonderful during the period. They were really fantastic. You've never known such caring. I think that was what kept us all going. With someone coming in from the street - someone from the Young Wives and from the church as well. When Valerie was going into hospital they visited her and arranged everything. Each one took it in turn and they left the children with one when she was having the radium treatment.

I asked permission to speak with Beverley (next door neighbour) about Valerie: the support such neighbours had given was obviously a key factor in the family's survival.

Beverley: Valerie was so approachable. Like a week before she died I was making some bread and I went in to

ask her what (oven) shelf to put it on - she was grateful for what people did for her.

One day the Young Wives were there and she laughed and joked with them even though at that stage she was on small meals because her lung cage had collapsed.

Another time ladies from St Peter's came and did her laundry and she was so pleased (because) they'd done over the taps with Brasso.

I think when the girls get older, they will say they had a happy home. Kevin is friendly with them and takes an interest in them. The girls are trustworthy. If they want anything they come in here, and if I want a lemon I'll go and ask them.

I think Valerie saw Christianity as anybody who gave to her. She was very open.

Beverley talked about the 26 year old neighbour on the other side of the fence who has had a lump removed from the testicle and now from the glands 'further up'. I recall the thud inside me when I heard this, and copied into my notebook words from Dag Hammarskjöld's Markings:

My friend, the Popular Psychologist, is certain of his diagnosis. And has understood nothing, nothing.

Hammarskjöld, 1964:76

Kevin, (Valerie), Michelle, Catherine, Sandra

Past ...

Kevin did not anticipate becoming 'a father', such were his feelings of inadequacy.

Michelle was a surprise ... I didn't know ... I was very frightened. I didn't expect that ... because of too much an inferiority complex.

There's no girls born in the family for forty-six years and I just naturally expected a boy. Valerie said: What's wrong? (after the birth) I was convinced we were going to have a boy. He was going to be a boy - Ian. Valerie named Michelle because I was so shocked. I never worried after the first one ... I named it.

Marg: When did you start loving Michelle?

Kevin: *A man goes through many things - he's a product of what his daughter does - first the daughter's a showpiece - after a while you love her as a person. There's no set time you can tell. I think love's a growing thing.*

As a first parent I thought - oh well, a baby was part of the mother's duty to look after and I missed a lot of contact in that respect. (I was) a little better with Catherine. We were more organised. We didn't expect her, she was a surprise and we were grateful.

Marg: Were you there for any of the births?

Kevin: *Sandra I was. We had a bitch of a midwife. I would have done a sow-kick if it wasn't for Valerie.*

I've had a close relationship with Sandra ever since she was a baby. It's the first time I ever learnt about kids was with her. As a baby she was crying like hell and I tried everything - pretending to be good till I actually changed in my heart and felt something. I was sorry, and she stopped straight away.

You know how you pretend when you're communicating, and you're happy and snug - well she knew I was pretending and she could feel from the heart as soon as I stopped pretending. It must have been about three months, four ... it just gave me an inkling what goes on with kids.

Did you ever read The Prophet? Valerie was always taken by 'your children are not my children' - which means she was non-possessive - she didn't want to hang on to the kids. She wanted them to grow in their own way - be individuals. I share in Valerie's sentiment that these kids are not my kids. I guess if she had a purpose she wanted what was best for me and the kids ... even through her cancer. It was the gift of love.

Present ...

Kevin talking about the three girls:

Michelle's inherited a bit of both of us - she's got my spirituality and Valerie's practicality.

Catherine - at this stage of the game I can't tell which way she's heading. I guess she's the one that's most concerned. Like when Trudy (dog) had the accident she was the one that went out to see if everything was okay.

Sandra ... her gifts are loving.

Catherine: Not all the time.

Kevin: No, but let's put it this way - when she's loving she's very loving, but she's got the reverse. If she can train her love, she'd be a very powerful person but otherwise. Like sometimes she lets 'the other' take control and causes friction. We'll make her do something but she doesn't do it with good grace.

Marg: What do you want for your kids?

Kevin: I suppose in spiritual terms I want them to know life and be able to share it.

I'd hate to be a weekend parent. I want my kids with me all the time. I think Michelle, Catherine and Sandra are under too much pressure - artificial pressure, and I like us all to have a time of peace and quiet and regain ourselves and know ourselves.

You can see when the kids have reached their limits. I don't believe school's the end-all. I think health's more important. I don't mind if they have a day off and pick up again.

Catherine: You just tell Dad and he lets you stay home.

Kevin: Yeah, but it's up to their good judgment. I don't let them put it over me. I'm just not prepared to

pay the price of ill health. I've just lived with it and I'm not going to. I feel they can get mentally fatigued. Some people are a lot fitter and stronger in their system ... not our family. We've got to recognise the limits of our family and we stay within the limits. We get a lot done but under our terms.

Kevin has obviously had to cope with some criticism of this attitude.

I know some dedicated teachers like Mrs McKay (one of Michelle's teachers) disagree. I appreciate their viewpoint. I never want to get to the stage where we overwork and are over-committed and just don't know who we are ...

If I have a rough day and come straight into the house and the kids come at me - I say, don't tell me that ...

Catherine: You say shut up.

Kevin: It's just a stress factor. Once I take a ten minute break, give me twenty minutes, otherwise the kids cop it ... it could have been the day.

Catherine: Sandra nags and pesters him; sometimes I leave him alone.

Michelle: I leave him alone. Pretty hard to ignore him, 'cause he yells the house down (but) I can usually twist Dad round my little finger, can't I Catherine?

Catherine agreed, if somewhat begrudgingly. Michelle had a point. Kevin is more dependent on her than the other two. He does admire her scholastic ability, as well as her creativity, and her ability to organise the household. For the sake of peace and quiet he probably gives in to Michelle, at times. It is also a recognition that a compromise is often necessary for the family to survive.

Kevin may be a dreamer, but he is also realistic, and has a bounteous supply of common sense. His caring is deep, unqualified, rich, and willingly shared.

Kevin: Basically there's only one love. This is the core of my belief. I suppose the love for a female gives

a richness to your life. I mean love for a human shape and form. I need to be told I'm loved. This gives me a greater depth, and knowing that I am loved sort of opens the door and releases the love. You share yourself above it. (The girls) show me their love in their way, through a picture, a nice meal, or they might make your bed. (I show my love) by being myself - at the time. Michelle comes home and I share her joy. Kids come here. I share their joy or I share their sorrow. I guess it's called sensing all things in all men.

Throughout the eight days there were many times when we sat talking - sometimes two of us, often five. Another 'question/answer session'; all five present at first.

Marg: What would be the worst thing that could happen to your kids?

Kevin: *Basically I believe kids don't get what they can't handle. Even though I'm a parent without a lady's hand I believe they can handle any situation. We've been through cancer. I wouldn't want to face it ... (again).*

Marg: What are you going to do when your kids start going out with boys?

Kevin: *The first one has. She went out with two boys two nights in a row. Michelle and I have formed the basis of trust that I knew it was okay. I took the trust - when I trust her I had to trust myself.*

Marg: What if one of the girls got pregnant?

Kevin: *Yeah, I've thought about that, but I'd just have to accept it. Accept the kid. We've all got our emotions and we've all got to learn to accept each other. Valerie talked about periods and Michelle's talked about it - she organises that side.*

Kevin left the room.

Michelle: *I've tried to talk to Catherine. Well, I know when I was told about it. Like I was embarrassed. Like Catherine.*

Sandra: *There's a girl in Grade 5 that's bleeding. She wears them and Catherine won't wear them.*

Marg: Wears what?

Sandra: *Wears bras.*

Catherine: So?

Sandra: *That girl doesn't even get embarrassed.*

Michelle: *I started having periods at the beginning of Grade 6.*

Marg: How does Dad cope with that?

Michelle: *He doesn't want to. I told Catherine and explained, but I told her if she wanted something explained to ask me.*

Catherine: *But I've got nothing to explain to her.*

Michelle: *This little one here (Sandra). I haven't talked to her yet.*

Michelle paused and switched from being 'mother' to 'being fourteen'.

The teacher wants us to write these autobiographies about what's made us grow up. I don't want to write about that - it's too personal - like for me it would be Mum, and though they say they don't talk ...

Marg: Does Dad try to be Mum as well?

Three of them together: *Just Dad!*

Michelle: *If he tried to be mum as well as Dad it would be a really difficult task because I don't think a dad can be a mum. And also I don't think anyone could be like our Mum. No-one, not even Nan (Kevin's mother) or me, could be Mum. She didn't worry about her problems - she worried about everybody else's.*

Sandra: *... and she was good at most things. She painted all our kitchen. She fixed the tyres on my bike.*

Michelle: *Mum was the manager. She did all the bills and everything. Mum was sort of like ...*

Sandra: *A man.*

Michelle: *No, she wasn't a man, but she was very strong willed.*

Marg: If Mum was alive, would she be working or ...

Michelle: *At home - she'd always be at home. I wouldn't want my Mum to work.*

Catherine: *Neither would I.*

Sandra: *She'd be at home.*

Michelle: *I think a kid needs their parents at home. I suppose a child needs both of their parents but like I reckon a mother to me is more important than a father.*

Sandra: *Mmmmmmm!*

Michelle: *Because a mother has brought the child into the world so I reckon that child's closer to the mother.*

Sandra: *You know how children have a favourite one out of the two parents so one week I'd have Dad and then Mum and then Dad ...*

Michelle: *I know it's hard. You should never have favourites in a family .. Well I didn't have favourites because you hurt one parent - I wouldn't want to hurt someone ... (slow, painful conversation) I'd rather have ... I wouldn't like to have Dad dead, and Mum here, but ... I think I feel closer to Mum than Dad ... Like her spirit's with us; like we can still talk to her ...*

Sandra: *... It isn't as if she's nowhere. She's still here with us.*

Michelle: *Every time there's something I can't do, something I think I can't do well, I always say I'll do it for Mum. I'm a terrible unfit person and I kept saying every lap I'll do this one for Mum (talking of a run at school that day).*

Catherine was obviously sceptical about this: she muttered quietly to herself but did not quite have the courage to 'take on' her big sister. The content of the conversation also curtailed such an attack.

Dad's like a big kid - he's my big kid. Dad's a very loving and warm person and he's got a line that if you cross over that he explodes.

Marg: *How do you know the line?*

Michelle: *'Cause we live with him - I've been living with him for fourteen years so I should - like everybody's got a boiling point and Dad has. To me he's like a big baby sometimes ... it's true ... I don't think he's a big baby but he's like a child sometimes - he's had too much responsibility too soon and that sort of shows - as if he's grown up too*

fast - he's a kind person, a loving person and he's very sensitive.

Marg: What's the special thing about Dad, to you?

Catherine: *That he loves you, I suppose.*

Sandra: *He's a big cuddly person and he's nice and kind-hearted and when we're naughty ...*

Michelle: *He explodes ... it's really difficult for the parent to live up to the child's expectations, 'cause it's really hard to, 'cause the child's dream is shattered, smashed, when they find out the parents are just human - just real, I mean normal.*

Marg: Would you like to marry somebody like him?

There was a long, long, tense silence.

Michelle: *I'd like to marry someone who was a little stronger.*

Sandra: *Dad's strong.*

Michelle: *I mean strongwilled ... Perhaps it's because I've had to carry so much responsibility.*

Marg: What kind of person are you going to marry?

Catherine: *You don't know till the time comes.*

Michelle: *Someone who loves me - and who I love. Someone who's tender (Sandra starts singing 'Love me tender, love me true' ...) and loving, and who can take care of me. I don't like being the one who makes the decisions all the time. I'd like to be thought of as someone special and I'd like someone to look after me sometimes.*

Michelle is so strong, articulate, and able-to-cope that rarely, it seems, does she crumble. And when she does, who can she lean upon? Her father leans on her; her grandmother tries to understand, but there are light years of difference in interest and an uptightness about 'things sexual' .. Her resilience, however, is surprising. Within seconds, she continued: she made a comment that there were advantages in only having one parent. I asked why.

Michelle: *Oh, wow! Mum and Dad don't fight, therefore we can't be separated - on different sides ...*

Sandra: We get more experienced in work.

Catherine (with a hurumph and sigh of exasperation): Cooking and dishes - one thing we could do without.

Michelle: I reckon it matures you more, 'cause you have to learn to cope with things before everybody else. Like I had to learn to cope with dad, housework.

I know in some ways I wouldn't treat my kids like we've been. I wouldn't smack my kids 'cause I don't think it does anything. I suppose it does, for me, but with Catherine and Sandra it doesn't work at all. I get really upset because I can't control them. They think, 'you're only my sister', and I find that really hard. I try to explain to them that I am (boss) not 'cause I want to be. It's just how it is.

Catherine: Sometimes I think that as Michelle gets older she gets meaner and meaner.

Marg: If Michelle wasn't here what would you do?

Sandra: I'd jump in the lake. Couldn't put up with it.

Michelle: Catherine, you have your bath now.

Catherine: No. I want mine after the shopping.

Michelle: No. You do the dishes then.

Catherine: No. I'm doing the tea - you do the dishes.

Michelle then went and turned off the television and said 'Have a bath'. She then checked up on when Catherine last washed her hair.

Catherine: Don't know (Michelle felt her head). Oh, it's all right.

Catherine tests Michelle's authority, but obliges - perhaps a little more quickly because of my presence. The image she has of herself is not a good one: she constantly knocks herself. Once we were talking about what they wanted in the future.

Michelle: Sometimes before I go to sleep I imagine. I always do it. A kind of fantasy world. I imagine that I'm a person in disguise and really good at something.

Like sometimes I imagine that Mum came back.

Catherine: Yeah, I had dreams ...

Michelle: I want to be an actress.

Sandra: I want to have two children...

Michelle and Sandra, both stronger than Catherine, then tra-laahed their way through a conversation about how they would adopt children, negro children .. Catherine's comment, tucked away inside their conversation, went unheard (by them):

I want to be an animal nurse.

Another time we were talking about arguing:

Marg: You three don't like people fighting and arguing?

Catherine: No, we fight and argue enough for everyone ...

Michelle: No, I hate it - I hate arguing myself ...

Sandra: It's something I don't like in adults - I really feel terrible, when someone I like really fights, because it makes me sad.

Catherine: She doesn't really like me so she doesn't mind arguing with me.

Sandra: And another thing - if Catherine cries for something I would cry too.

Catherine: Come on - you just laugh at me.

Catherine also puts up with a lot of teasing about her eyes. She has quite a squint.

Catherine: I can't help it if I'm cross-eyed. I hate it when people say I'm cross-eyed - I feel like kicking them in the shins. I can't control it.

Mrs White had explained about Catherine's eyes, and also took the chance to exorcise some misgivings she has about Catherine.

Catherine had two operations and then she kept going back every six months (to the specialist). He told her he was playing the waiting game. She wasn't always answering the questions the proper way, and I said, 'Catherine - the doctor can't help you unless you tell him', so anyhow the eyes didn't seem too bad and Kevin feels that God will do something but I feel it needs more than that. When she's tired - they've become worse - or she's worried ...

I mean I love her dearly but she's the one stirrer. I mean there's always that in the family. The other two can be quiet. Catherine is a different nature. She always gets to touch things. She misses this Frances badly - her great friend. She was in the same grade. Catherine was backwards and forwards with her. In fact, I think it was too much. I think she was getting out too much (Frances had gone to the U.S. for an extended period).

Comments about Valerie filtered through many of the conversations in the eight day period. One night Kevin talked quietly, poignantly, about his wife.

Kevin: She was such an optimist. I never realised how brave she was till I saw those X-rays (three months before her death) and then I knew she was going. I accepted the fact that she was going: shortly after that she went.

She knew.

You see she dropped about a foot in height. (Beverley, the next door neighbour, told me her husband shortened the walking stick three times). How she stood it, was just sheer courage, 'cause it's bloody amazing. You tried to pick her up - and I was so scared to pick her up and there were no bones - I was scared I might break a bone or something every time I handled her. There wasn't a bone in her body, nothing, no spine, nothing.

Dr M. said did you want her to die at home? And we were quite prepared - we had the oxygen tent made up - but you can't give her treatment like two or three nurses can. She was in hospital about three days.

Another time all of us were together:

Michelle: She was in a wheelchair for two or three months. Before that it was just like ageing - like it was a walking stick and then gone to bed. Dad took

her into hospital and we couldn't see her any more.

Sandra: When Dad left her in the morning she died.

Kevin: Mum's eyes went to somebody else so they could see.

Michelle: Like it was strange ... 'cause that morning, it was just a normal morning going to school - she was just in hospital to get looked at. She said I'll see you when I get home. That night we couldn't go and visit her; Dad stayed the night at the hospital. In the morning, Dad said, you can come and see Mum. So we all got in the taxi and we went to the hospital; as soon as Dad had left, she had died. It was really good that he stayed there but I reckon Mum would never have let us see her like that - which is a good thing - because now we have good memories of ...

Sandra: The night before she died, she was scared, and she asked Dad what it would be like; Dad said it would be just like a caterpillar going into a cocoon and then coming out in a new life.

Michelle: I was talking to her (one time); I was very upset. We never talked about death - like we didn't think she was going to die - we knew that she was going to die but we didn't think she would ...

Catherine: I didn't.

Michelle: I never realised that she'd leave us ... Well anyway, I said when you die, can you meet me at heaven-gate; then she said yes, so I'm really happy about that so I don't care when I die.

Sandra: I wouldn't mind if I died, 'cause then I could see all my family and relations that have died - I might be able to see the devil (laughter).

Michelle: You don't know what's up there.

Catherine: They might be overseas in Canada or something.

Sandra: They might die at the wrong moment on an overseas trip. They might be in the middle of the ocean.

Catherine: A heaven tour (and go up in the wrong place ...!)

Michelle: I can remember one time when I was really upset 'cause I'd been told off - I'd just been smacked (by Dad) 'cause I'd pushed the wheelchair too roughly 'cause I was in a bad mood ... I was really mad ... because, because she was in a wheelchair and why should I push her round ... That was my attitude, that night. Then I put Mum to bed and it was cold, and I got in too, and I started crying and she asked me what was wrong - and I said I was sad or something. She asked me why so I

said because I get upset. This is a true excuse ... When you (mother) cry and I get upset ... and after that she never cried once when we were there. That's why I used to blame myself that I killed her. It's not silly because I sort of did 'cause like it would have been better for her to have let it out. I still think that - when I get in sad moods, I think that all the time. I wish I had of realised. I wish ... I know she's here, it's just you need to have someone just to go up and hug them just to know that they're there - like when your faith isn't too strong, and you think it's not fair; why can't she be here? I hate going to the doctors, after seeing my Mum.

Mrs White knew that Michelle considered herself responsible for her mother's death: she has tried to talk about it with her; so, too, has Kevin.

Then Kevin broke into a soliloquy:

It made us stand on our feet when Mum died - we had to. I had to be the authority figure (laughter). Make my own decisions ...

Michelle's a very advanced child. I broke into tears a couple of times, and then Michelle decided she'd better not push me too far, and accepted me as normal and she started to pull her weight then.

You can get closer to your kids ... One of the disadvantages is not talking to another adult, but that I don't lack because I drive a taxi. When Valerie was sick I used to talk to people about that ... I knew the strain of having someone sick - you want to stay here and look after them and go to work too.

I don't think I'd have the life - I wouldn't be my own self now - I wouldn't be at this stage if she was still alive. I'd still be a selfish male - doing my best and making progress but still ... It upsets me (to hear) people say you've got to do this, do that. In dream language, you've got to be right in the driving seat - simply because if somebody else is driving the car you've lost control of your destiny ... you're dependent on your beliefs to pull you through. You don't say - what would this person do or say or what would this person think ...? If you follow your dreams you're going to shatter a few things - you're going to shatter my parents' way of life - it's a shattering way of doing things. You've got the usual worldly chatter coming in - you've still got to battle - you just

hope you're doing the right decisions ... You've just got to have patience - to watch the jigsaw puzzle and put in the pieces.

Sometimes Kevin's way of completing the jigsaw is rather unusual.

Three incidents serve to illuminate relationships in this family. One occurred in January 1980, the other two whilst I was part of the network.

One

In November 1979, Kevin attended an Anglican retreat. He met a woman called Dora, they started going out together and planned to get married in late January. However, on Christmas Day both Kevin and Dora announced their engagement to their respective families. This met with such a shock reaction that the decision was 'deferred'.

During January, Dora's fifteen year old daughter Maria and Michelle got talking to a group of boys they met on a street. They hopped into the van and went for a ride. Michelle recalls that some beer was drunk, some marijuana smoked, and then she thinks she passed out. When she woke up she thought she had been raped: a visit to the doctor confirmed she was still a virgin, but she got a fright, sufficiently so to make her too scared to return home, and she instead went to Kevin's sister-in-law. When Kevin discovered where Michelle was he phoned: Michelle started crying and then his brother 'grabbed the phone' and accused Kevin of not looking after his daughter.

Kevin said because of his handling of the incident:

I thought I had lost a daughter. I thought I had lost them both (Dora and Michelle). I went to Open Meeting (Quaker) and got up and asked what I was supposed to do when a daughter started asking about the Pill.

This is 'typical Kevin' - straight, naive and very, very caring. This public request for information 'hit' Michelle for when she was told about it, she apologised about the whole fiasco to her father, and the matter was dropped.

Michelle and Maria are two very different people. Maria dresses and acts like a seventeen year old. Several times Maria had tried to persuade Michelle to go to a club or out with her but Michelle had been reluctant. She did, however, feel she should try and like her because of Dora.

Michelle: I acted the whole thing with me and Maria. While I'm trying to say, darling Maria, inside I'm thinking, 'You stupid person'.

Mrs White made the following comments about the incident:

I don't advocate Michelle was right. She shouldn't have gone - she should have known better, but she would never have gone without Maria. I don't want anything to do with that child. I feel repulsed. I can't bear deceitfulness and I feel that child just made up to me. In a child that was terrible.

She's a bad influence on Michelle. Michelle was born to be of many colours - the fumes got to her. She didn't know whether she was a virgin or not. You can imagine how upset we all were.

Kevin: Since then she's been shy of Maria.

Two

Scene: Living room, Friday night (my second night), February 1980. Present: Kevin, Dora, Michelle, Catherine (Sandra at grandparents' for weekend), and Heidi, Dora's eight year old daughter.

Kevin: Michelle, Catherine ...

Catherine: What?

Kevin: Dora and I did some shopping today ... (Dora held out her hand so they could see the engagement ring).

Silence, except for the television still blaring.

Michelle got up, slammed the door, calling out 'I'm going for a walk'. The next few hours were painful, for everyone.

Michelle phoned after an hour or so. Catherine and Heidi raced to the phone, Kevin too. He picked up the receiver - the phone clicked.

Kevin: Ah - she's communicated.

The relief swept through the room.

Michelle was eventually traced by Kevin phoning various of her friends, charting her direction, then I drove round Oakleigh looking for her: I offered to do this and the suggestion was gratefully received.

In the space of the two and a half hours Michelle was out conversation was intense. I had asked permission to tape the announcement ⁴ but the heavy breathing, silences, sighs, do not translate to the written word via a taperecorder. The worded aspects of that conversation included ...

Dora: I thought if we got engaged it would give them the idea that eventually we will get married. We've got to find out whether it's me, Kevin, or whether it could be anybody who lived here now. I'd been expecting this reaction so I'm not surprised.

Do we let the kids beat us by going along with them? or work it out - in the ultimate end they're going to be the ones that say we're going to be married

⁴ I knew about the engagement having seen Kevin and Dora at lunchtime when they arrived home after buying the ring. I offered to be absent that night but was asked to stay ... and to talk to Michelle.

Dora: Will you do something for me? Will you talk with Michelle? I think she and my daughter, Maria, get on okay, but she might talk to you seeing you're here.

I was noncommittal and didn't do anything specific about this request.

or you can't. At this point it's hard to know which path to follow. Kevin knows his kids better than I do. If it was mine (Dora has six - two at home: Maria, 15, unemployed; Heidi, 8) I'd have to take a stand.

Kevin: Kids are so much more difficult - it's so simple when there's only the two of you ...

There's no shortcut to human relationships.

The crux of the problem; we weren't seeing each other for a month, but I broke it the first week and Dora broke it the second ... and all of a sudden we're getting married (not engaged) ⁵ ... they don't know anything of Dora's personal business ...

Michelle's seen these ups and downs and she doesn't know where she is and where she's going ...

I think she's scared ...

(I had this dream); the dream was about a pilot and the pilot was going west - it's something about families and trust. I think the theme of the dream was trust because I didn't trust the pilot, but he's been there before and knew where he was going. I had that assurance that things would work out - we're just going to have to ride out the storm. Just basically believe in myself, believe in Michelle and Dora - this basic faith.

Dora doesn't share some of Kevin's faith; nor does she treat Michelle as the mature person Kevin 'sees'.

Dora: *Michelle has to learn she's a fourteen year old - otherwise she would not have walked out of this room now. She would have sat down and discussed it ...*

Kevin: *If we can get through this we'll get through anything together ... We've got to get our bearings ...*

Dora: *Why couldn't we have met years ago?*

Kevin: *Why? We wouldn't have been ready for each other. It's the experiences we bring each other.*

Kevin disappeared to have some time to himself so Dora took the opportunity to talk:

⁵ Confusion in Kevin's mind?

Dora: Maria is a strange child. I said to her: What you got against Kevin? ... and she said, 'Oh, Kevin's just so good'. She said, 'I turn my record player up deliberately, and if only he would say "Turn that bloody thing off" and lose his cool.' I mean I do, I yell at her and her brothers, they're nineteen and twenty one, they have a go at her. I think she's never had authority and possibly craves this authority but at the same time she's baulking against it ...

It's very difficult to know ... I mean you can't treat one child the same as you would the next because they're totally different ... I'd have gone out to Michelle and made her face it. I'd explain that I understand how she feels and it shouldn't be thrown at you like that ...

I like Michelle. I'm not trying to take on the mother role - if she wants to continue cooking or whatever it's okay by me. I don't want to take over - but a girl of that age - it's not really fair - she should be enjoying life rather than having the responsibility for her younger two sisters and her father. I was watching Michelle with you (Marg) last night. She could relate to you quite freely - there's no competition for his affections, but with me she didn't know for sure ... We're scared. I mean it's ridiculous - we're grown people.

Kevin came back into the room.

Kevin: Thanks for being here (to me). We're just relieved that you're here tonight.

Dora: You took the sting out of it by being here ...

After Michelle and I had returned, Dora asked Michelle to go into the bedroom to talk. While Dora and Michelle were together:

Marg: Would Valerie have liked Dora?

Kevin: She might have been upset by her background ... you know, Housing Commission area, pretty rough daughter. There's a different code of ethics to what we've had - I'm not saying we're any better, but ... they say it differently. More open. And we've got a sort of middle class background and anything outside that pale is suspect. This is only what I think. I don't know if it's true.

Kevin believes in himself, searches for ways of handling 'life', but doubts still appear.

In a conversation a few days later with Michelle, Catherine and Sandra:

Michelle: I was shocked because I just thought Dad would tell me before he got the ring. I know they were going to get engaged but I would have loved to have had a say, loved to have known ...

She seemed very hurt.

Michelle also told Nan, Kevin's mother, that they really couldn't afford a ring.

Michelle: With something so definite as that - like if it was something to do with the household or anything like that it wouldn't matter - but if it's something that changes the whole life ... that I like to know about so I can sort of accept it - that's why I had to go for a walk because I just can't accept it like that (click of fingers).

Marg: Is it accepted now?

Sandra: I was stunned because they got engaged before and then it all went off ... I'm frightened ... because they put it to a later date then a later ...

Marg: Would you prefer it if they just went and got married?

Two definite noes.

Michelle: What's our grouch? I just don't think we'll get on very well in the house ... Maria and me.

Sandra: Heidi and me don't get on.

Marg: You said before you hate Heidi - why?

Catherine: But they get on okay (always the peacemaker, compromiser ...)

Sandra: It makes me feel terrible. The other day we were going to pick her up, she said 'Hi, Dad', and it's not even her Dad - it makes me and Catherine feel terrible - it just makes us feel terrible!

Catherine: We weren't even sure Dad was going to marry Dora, and she kept on calling him dad and it makes you feel really mad.

Sandra: We told her we didn't like it.

Catherine: She just kept on calling him Dad even more.

Sandra: And it makes you feel terrible because sometimes it makes you feel that he likes them better than us. It's not her Dad ...

Michelle: No, but when you think about it - we're all related. We're all human. We're all the same race - like all the monkeys are related.

Catherine: And some of the monkeys are related to some of the human beings too ... (again use of humour to defuse touchy issues ...)

Michelle: I like Dora. I suppose I feel it's because she's going to take over Dad ... like I haven't put my whole self out to like her ... I suppose I could really like her, but she'd never take the place of my Mum, our Mum; she'd never take the place of Nan or Dad or anyone like that ... I suppose I could put up with her ...

I hate to say it but I really do like her a lot.

Catherine: Oh, she's all right, but she kind of smells a bit worse. It's horrible. Every time she comes near you you've got kinda block your nose.

Michelle: Yeah - I'd love to be able to do a makeup or something to make her look nicer.

Sandra: I feel that Mum wouldn't like her. I just feel it.

Michelle: Mum - she'd sacrifice anything of herself, her clothes to make other people happy.

Sandra: She'd sacrifice anything to help him get on.

Michelle: Anyone ..

I suppose it's because we've had ... like everything's normal - and it's just so natural that we're together and I think we're all scared that it's going to change ... that it all gets smashed ... our security will be smashed ...

In this conversation Valerie's presence and her contribution to the family was uppermost in everyone's minds. Dora was a threat to that - and the thought of Dora replacing Valerie - and of Dora's children, was bound to cause grief. Michelle's comment - 'like everything's normal' caught me unawares. Never have words so aptly caught perception from the inside and contrasted that with an outsider's response. My thinking then, and now, is that this family have special qualities - perhaps developed through their suffering, but reinforced

by Kevin's spiritual awareness, and Michelle's maturity and strength of character.

Marg: Do you think Dad and Dora will be happy?

Michelle: Yeah, they will; they've got each other. They won't know and they won't want it to happen but when you're first married you're sort of like two lovers when they meet - just new in their relating. They'll want to be together more, so they'll leave us out - they won't want to but I know it's going to happen. I'm not worried, but like I just worry about it from Catherine and Sandra and Heidi's point of view - they're younger than me.

A few minutes later:

Michelle (quietly): I don't know, when I get tired and upset I suppose I'm upset because I haven't got a mother - I look at Aunt Christine and Uncle Chris. I go to talk to someone ... they've got a happy family ... Aunt Christine and Uncle Chris - they're really the best people in the whole world - I've got really close to them ...

Chris and Christine provide a backstop and don't hassle Michelle: their lifestyle is very routinised and pleasant ... not threatening, nor does Michelle have to take responsibility when there.

Three

On the Sunday after Quaker Meeting we all went to Kevin's parents for lunch. Kevin bought pies so it wouldn't be too much trouble for his mother. Sandra was already there and it was obvious she objected to her sisters intruding on her special time with her grandparents. Chris and Christine were also there.

After the introductions and pleasantries, Kevin announced his engagement. There was a stunned silence, followed by a telling question from Mrs White:

Mrs White: Not again. Who to? You do get yourself into trouble.

Kevin: Well it was leap year and she asked me.

Nan moved quickly on to remind Kevin that his father was going into hospital the following day to have his third cataract operation.

Later that week Mrs White phoned me to ask if she could talk with me about Kevin and the girls. I felt awkward, embarrassed and in an ethical dilemma. I said I would have to check this out with Kevin. He thought it might help if I did (his words). He explained that seeing I was there to observe the family, perhaps I could pass on some of that understanding.

In the course of that conversation between Mrs White and myself, Mrs White said how tired she had felt on Sunday and how stressed.

Mrs White: I didn't feel able to cope on Sunday .. I mean I'm just always there - well, that's what I've tried to be and that's how I want them (Kevin and the girls) to feel about it - I want them to feel I'm there at any time. I don't want them to feel - 'Oh, Nan's sick - we can't worry her' - 'cause that would upset me terribly. I mean I don't keep harping on about that.

Dad was going into hospital the next day, and he really needed a quiet day but I can't turn round and say I don't care. Like if Valerie was still here ... (she would have explained to Kevin not to trouble his parents). I've had two good sons. They're totally different but during these illnesses (Mr White's operations and Nan's blood pressure and car accident) I just couldn't have carried on without them. Kevin pops in once or twice a week just to see how we are ...

On the Sunday afternoon after the visit to his parents, Kevin drove us home, then went to collect Dora who was going into hospital that afternoon for an operation to have her tubes tied (Dora's family range in age from eight through to late twenties; she is forty plus). Kevin spent the afternoon with Dora, went to work Monday, Tuesday .. visiting the hospital to see Dora whenever he could between fares, lunchtimes, evenings ...

Mrs White phoned on the Tuesday to speak to me about the research: in the course of the conversation she talked

about visiting her husband. I had forgotten about Mr White's operation: so too had Kevin. He came home shortly after the phone call.

Kevin: I can see me being left out of heaven now - I forgot to see my father ... I guess I failed as a son.

Marg: Do you feel uncomfortable?

Kevin: Not really. I can't worry about her feelings. I just done my best for the last few days - that's all I could do. I'm disappointed that I didn't remember, but I've had a tremendous strain. I don't think it's going to hurt Dad if I don't see him. I don't think any damage has been done - the only damage now is what they think, but I can't help what they think ... Once I would have worried - but not now. I can't afford to.

Marg: I felt awful that I'd forgotten ..

Kevin: Yeah, I used to feel like that, and that used to be deadly. I used to suffer condemnation all the time. I can only do my best ... that's all I can ... I know I've done my best.

Marg: But in the meantime someone else has suffered ...

Kevin: Ah, they've suffered - if they like to think that's happened - if they've been robbed of our love. If they like to punish themselves in that way, fine. I could give them five seconds at the expense of Dora ...

Marg: People could say that's a copout - that you've got a responsibility towards your parents.

Kevin: At the moment, I don't think they particularly need me - they might think they do - they might like my support but at the moment I'm not able to give it. When Dora gets stronger, and is able to stand on her own feet, I can give them more ...

To me, I guess this is where the self comes into it ... it's a new relationship - at the moment I'm not altogether balanced ... I can't be expected to pay the price ...

He went to visit his father later that day. So did I.

Triptych: 3

His manner of expression doesn't translate into print.

Sellers (Peter) answers questions with physical enactments and standup impressions. He thinks with his body and voice as well as his mind.

Time, editorial, 3 March 1980
(brackets added)

Likewise Kevin. He is a big 'cuddly bear', one who noses into cupboards to 'sneak out' some bread for a sandwich, a bear that roars if he's tired, or intruded upon, or stressed. No-one - his daughters, his parents - doubt his capacity to love, nor the strength of that love; perhaps they find it harder to understand his 'thinking', his priorities.

Kevin: If you believe in your principles, you've got to be true to yourself.

... We're going to have to ride out this storm (engagement). Just basically believe in myself, believe in Michelle, in Dora ... this basic faith.

Ah they've suffered (his parents) - if they like to think that's happened ... if they've been robbed of our love ... if they like to punish themselves in that way ... fine.

... I just done my best for the last few days - that's all I could do.

In dream language you've got to be in the driving seat (each person, he means, in their own driving seat).

Responsibility is shared in this family, with Kevin and Michelle 'carrying' the load, Kevin as boss, the anchor, the authority, and Michelle as manager. Kevin emphasises that the family is a team:

There's no boss - we're a team ...

yet he knows he makes decisions about finances, about priorities, about discipline, and that power/right is acknowledged by the three girls.

Such decisions are made within the context of his strong religious beliefs/practice. Kevin tries to be aware of the present, rather than worry about the past or the future.

Kevin: You can't live in the past: each person's unique ... it's no use saying Valerie did this, Valerie did that ... we've all got our own ways of doing things.

Each day's a miniature lifetime. I accept that the only real meaning to life is what we're doing right now ...

Kevin lives this way and asks, expects, his family to live similarly. Prior to Valerie's illness, Kevin took many things for granted. Now he knows himself, 'warts and all', his weaknesses as well as his strengths.

Parenting, parentwork, parenthood

Life for the White family would have been very different had not Valerie had cancer, and died after six years of illness. Valerie is described by everyone as the practical one - the organiser of the family, but she was, too, the parent - to Kevin as well as their three daughters.

Kevin's trip to New Zealand and then his marriage to Valerie enabled him to embark on making his own decisions, but in many respects he transferred his dependency from his parents onto Valerie, and is now heavily dependent on Michelle, and his succession of women friends.

But Kevin had learned about parenting.

As a first parent I thought ... a baby was part of the mother's duty to look after ... (I was) a little better with Catherine ... I've had a close relationship with Sandra ever since she was a baby ... As a baby she was crying like hell and I tried everything - pretending to be good till I actually changed ... she knew I was pretending and she could feel from the heart as soon as I stopped ...

Valerie's input is still important, and because of the religious beliefs held by all four people, Valerie's presence

is real.

Michelle: ... I wouldn't like to have Dad dead, and Mum here ... I think I feel closer to Mum than Dad ... Like her spirit's still with us; like we can still talk to her ...

Sandra: ... It isn't as if she's nowhere. She's still here with us.

Kevin had described Valerie's greatest gift to the family as love - and that still pulls the family together in a solid, ongoing way. The notion of Dora and her children supplanting Valerie had a double difficulty: anyone moving in - with a different set of values, priorities, and lacking the shared experience of the past nine years, would be placed in an awkward situation. Add to that the sense of Valerie's presence and complications are multiplied.

Kevin's mother tries hard to be parent to Kevin as well as mother-cum-grandmother to Michelle, Catherine and Sandra but there are generation-gap problems, as well as Mrs White's health and that of her husband. Michelle also tries to be parent to Kevin, and to Catherine and Sandra. At times she becomes wistful when talking about her friends who have two parents, or about Uncle Chris and Auntie Christine who seem to Michelle

such a happy family and they've (their two children) got two parents ... they're really the best people in the world.

Parentwork

Sandra: I learnt to cook when I was seven ... Mum reckoned I'd make a good nurse for what I done for her but what I had to do for her I wouldn't want to do now.

Yet several times a week Sandra, aged 10, cooks dinner for four people, cleans up, irons her clothes - as if it were the everyday, ordinary thing to do, and it is - for the White family.

In day to day matters - getting up, having breakfast - going to work, to school - the routines are so established, so practicable, that the family can operate within their defined limits with only the usual rumbles of people living in close proximity, people getting tired.

All the ongoing housework - the buying of groceries, meat, the replacement of utensils .. is also routinised. Kevin handles the money in a less organised way, but it works.

*I take so much for shopping - I don't work it out
- what I've got left over I put in the bank.*

Valerie, from the time she first learned about the cancer, had set out to teach each member of the family to look after themselves, and the house.

The family have been through hell. Mrs White suggests the family couldn't have survived/carried on for much longer with the strain of both looking after Valerie and seeing her suffer. Kevin confirmed this.

Kevin: I was so scared to pick her up and there were no bones ... I was scared we'd reached our limit, it was getting to the stage where we couldn't handle it - you just couldn't grab her because it wasn't actually grabbing a solid person.

Arranging for dentist's visits, or holidays, or just managing to survive seem 'easy' after what the family went through: Michelle's common sense is what knits the routines and organisation together, and she seems to know intuitively when to press Kevin, and when to 'take over' his load.

Parenthood

Kevin is, essentially, a 'dreamer', not a pragmatist: when 'incidents' arise such as the one with Michelle in January, he gets 'thrown' and handles it in the only way he knows: directly, honestly, thinking with his body and mind .. that is, crying, hugging, rather than resorting to long, 'deep and

meaningful' discussions. His timing of the engagement and his and Dora's handling of it was not the most considerate. Michelle objected, Catherine not so much outwardly, but she, too, was obviously uncomfortable.

Michelle: I was shocked because I just thought Dad would tell me. I would have liked to have had a say ... to have known ...

The one area where Kevin really feels 'shaky' is that of sexuality: sensually he is comfortable - he hugs, kisses .. gets Sandra to walk on his back and shoulders when he is tired, but sexuality (including reproduction) is a different matter. Valerie taught the girls about periods, about their bodies. It may have been that she too was uncomfortable - certainly Kevin hints at difficulties.

It was probably my doing ... I couldn't understand women ...

... It's funny how you can love them without sex ... we still had it ... you don't know when to stop.

Kevin said Dora and he differed about the expression of their love.

Kevin: ... Dora is a lot freer than I am - she'd say she loved me in front of a crowd of people ... most women would leave it behind the bedroom door ... but she's very responsive and the whole family is from what I can see - the son grabbed his girlfriend's clothes and took them off (in front of other people).

Kevin had been asking Dora to sleep with him, but Dora said she believed in it for other people but not herself:

Kevin: She's got her problems with regard to that. She feels a tart about it. I finally got the message what this engagement meant to her. One piece of action speaks more than a thousand words. I pay the price, maybe, in a material sense, but it meant I was sincere.

Kevin told me that Dora had been worried about my moving in .. I was seen initially as a 'threat'. Kevin, too, was con-

cerned about this 'mature woman' sleeping on the floor of the dining room. Michelle's bedroom was in a porch the other side. The first morning Kevin yelled to wake her up. The second he put on the record of Dracula .. I woke at a quarter to seven to a loud blast of 'I want to suck your ooooo'.

Kevin talked, too, of sleeping with a number of women since Valerie's death:

I've had some experience over the last few years - making love with a person and her boyfriend and her son comes in. I had one woman go to the psychiatrist to sort herself out. Now I want to leave that behind me and sort myself out ...

For both Kevin and Michelle, the 'incident' in January proved painful. After Kevin's request at Quaker Meeting, he offered to give Michelle a Quaker pamphlet on sex - she said she would rather wait a couple of years. The announcement of her father's engagement to Dora, her dislike of Maria, emphasised the tensions of growing up for Michelle - of her part child, part woman, part mother, part daughter situation.

Catherine had started periods but refused to wear a bra or to talk about it. She felt generally uncomfortable about her body. Privacy (and this included 'body functions') was a matter for 'the girls to set their own standards' (Kevin), but Catherine could neither talk to her grandmother nor Aunt Christine nor her friend Frances about how she was feeling.

In this one area Kevin showed a reluctance to become involved. In all other areas Kevin had thought about his priorities, his wants, and needs, and the girls'. Doing what 'they' wanted him to do just did not figure high on Kevin's list of priorities - and this included, at times, his parents.

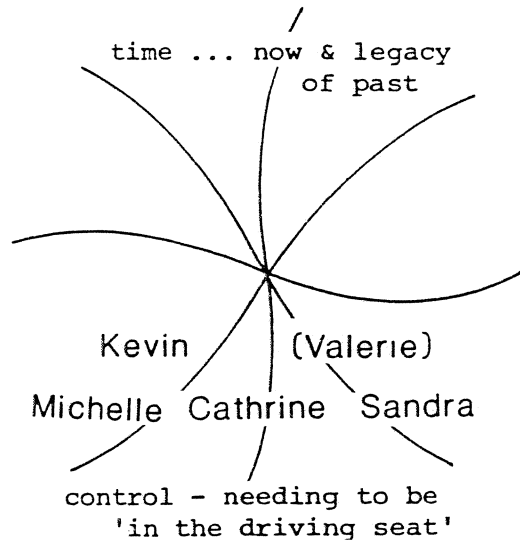
Some people are a lot fitter and stronger, in their system; not our family - we've got to recognise the limits of our family and we stay within those limits. We get a lot done - but under our terms.

Total social fact

Values
personal integrity
spirituality
awareness
caring
being in control

Significant Others:

Mr and Mrs White
Chris and Christine
(for Michelle)
Dora
Kevin's taxi passengers
Quaker friends



Priorities:

selves
health -
physical
mental
spiritual
maintenance
of routines
space
privacy
work - not
for the money
but for the
people Kevin
meets

Enabling Factors:

strength of each person
acceptance of self
Kevin
Michelle
Sandra
support of Mrs White
flexible work hours
autonomy
routines

Kevin: I'd hate to be a weekend parent ... I want my kids with me all the time.

You've first got to hear your wife's got cancer and ... then you - alter your way of life.

*Four levels of analysis**Descriptive*

As detailed.

Normative

Because of Valerie's illness this family were forced to work out their priorities. The children were young - seven, nine and eleven - when Valerie died, and she had already established routines of cleanliness, housekeeping and general 'caretaking' tasks. Because she was so ill there had been little time available for elaborate routines or habits: simplicity had been the rule, and remains so. Kevin, Michelle, Catherine and Sandra 'fit' the norms of the community where they live - at school, when they visit friends' houses, or shopping, but within the privacy of their own home they try to work out their standards which work for them.

Cognitive

Honesty, trust in oneself and in one's kids, in 'God' and a preparedness to search for 'the sense', to reach out to others, to learn, that is how Kevin survives, and sees himself surviving. Though Kevin spends a lot of his time analysing his dreams, mulling over 'things spiritual', he is not a theorist. In the words of the ARE leader ...

You're not an intellect by which you can intellectualise all the feelings that come to you, neither do you have to ...

Kevin's learning came through the illness:

Kevin: It was God's gift to me - the sickness - Valerie's gift to me in a sense that it made me grow up ... I was a very egotistical male - a very selfish male ... and it was only through experience I learnt to understand. I had to learn. I had to do it the hard way.

Michelle: *I reckon it matures you more ... 'cause you have to learn to cope with things before everybody else ... like I had to learn to cope with Dad.*

He acknowledges difficulties:

Kevin: *... what I like to be and what I am is two different things ...*

Work is important to Kevin - it provides the basic income, but is more satisfying because of the people he meets each day: school is important, within limits. To Kevin, he and his children are the important people.

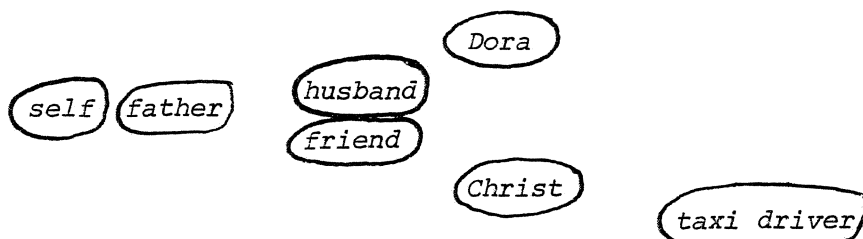
Explanatory

Health could be said to be the structuring principle in this family: much of the family's lifestyle is centred somehow on health - mental, physical, spiritual and emotional. For example, each person is prepared to go against the system and take care of their health.

Kevin: *I like us all to have a time of peace and quiet and regain ourselves, and know ourselves.*

Eggs in the basket

Kevin altered the eggs in the basket exercise: he shifted the self and father baskets all importantly to one side then tangled the others. No numbers were given by him.



Research comment

One of the things about this kind of research is that you don't have time to sort out what kinds of families are 'ideal' and you can't start asking awkward questions till you've established some kind of rapport - coincidences help though - and good luck. For example, I didn't know Valerie had died till I went to see Kevin. I had met him at Quaker Meeting, but only to say 'hi' to ... and been given a hug like everyone else on the few occasions I'd been.

Before the research period I was talking with Kevin: mentioned that Ana had been with me at the previous place (with Rob and Jenny: that was two weeks earlier). His immediate response: 'You can bring her here - we're used to change.' (I chose not to.)

From notes

Second day: I feel very relaxed .. feel that licence of being treated like a special guest. Michelle made a special effort with the meal the first night but given freedom of home and family too. Kevin showed me phone points in his bedroom - 'if you want any privacy ...'

Michelle invited me to go to the pictures on Saturday night with Catherine, a friend, and herself. Saw the film The Rose.

Third day: Boo boo this morning when I brought an Age⁶ into the house on my way home from walking with Sandra to school. My self coming into the house - a different world. It's okay⁷ - I recognised it as a blunder. It's a distancing thing ... have got time to filter back in. It was after that I started noticing the state of the kitchen - feeling 'unclean' ... my mind's still noting hands not being washed after toilet trips, etc.

Last night I said many things which had Kevin stumbling ... a few jokes we made and Kevin said he was

⁶ The Age is a morning newspaper in Melbourne.

⁷ I was surprised that I gave myself this reprieve!

going to wake up afterwards to understand them.

While I was there I invited a good friend from the University to come for a coffee - to help me 'see' through someone else's eyes. Two comments were made:

How can you say he is socially aware and keep his bedroom like that?

Do you ask about finances too?

I asked Michelle, Catherine and Sandra if they had noticed any changes while I was there.

Sandra: Dad's been a bit more generous with the Icy Poles.

Michelle: I reckon Dad's been explaining things.

Catherine: We've heard about things more.

Michelle: I wish we could have someone come and stay here all the time.

Marg: Why?

Michelle: I don't know.

Sandra: It makes it more interesting.

I had done the dishes: it was Sandra's turn.

Michelle: Margaret deserves a kiss for that one.

I got one.

Kevin: If you (Marg) were a self-condemning or condemning person you wouldn't last five minutes in this house. You wouldn't be able to relate. You'd be making all the fuss. You'd never be able to get inside. I can accept you and you can accept my way of life. You can't talk this language to every person 'cause they don't understand.

Another few days and you'll be out of my life. I like you - it's opened up a whole new world.

Last night:

Kevin: I'm glad you're going ... no more tape recorder - notes ... some relief, but behind that we can sense you're a human being.

You're a bugger, but I love you.

Afterwards (again from notes):

I grew in my time with this family. I still ache with the pain. I grew small when living in their home .. humbled .. the sense of humour, the 'taken-for-grantedness' of most things .. limitations, strengths, other people's wealth .. these were acknowledged, and life was tackled day by day.

Whatever we encounter we find a ground for; often we do this quite superficially, at times we go deeper, and seldom enough dare we approach right to the brink of the abysses of thought.

Versenyi, quoting Heidegger

in Elliston, 1978:147

... human beings transmit their way of coming to terms to one another and from generation to generation. Common understanding, common received notions, culture, tradition, habit, routine is what makes society possible.

Wolff, 1976:142

Interexistence

Part 3:1

The questions central to this work are: what does parenting mean? What do terms such as loving, caring, nurturing, mean? How do parenting relationships differ from other forms of relationship? What does it mean to be labelled a mother, father ..? Why is parenting so important for human being? Such questions troubled me, stirred me into doing the research. This thesis is the written account of that research.

To recap: all four chapters in Part 1 might be described as the foundation of the research project. In the first, I outlined the aims of the study, and the reasons for undertaking it. In the second, other people's work was discussed, and the difference between their research and this explored. The third chapter is the important one for this is the grounding for the research. The tools are laid out, a glossary of terms is presented, and an ontological framework - sufficient for my needs - developed. The phenomenological method, fundamental to the whole nature of the project, was spelt out. In the fourth chapter concentration is on the methodological aspects of the research.

In Part 2, six triptychs were presented. The aim of the 'field' research was to apprehend people in the everyday world, and this experience might be described as a journey of discovery. Little attention was given to analysis of the 'political system' or the 'educational system' .. except from the point of view of the people concerned. I attempted to get inside their situation, and 'look out'.

Part 3 is the crucial part of the thesis. If the first was the foundation, the second a discovery, then the third might be described as an exposition.

There are, as in Part 1, four chapters. The first focusses upon human-being-in-the-world, on interexistence, and parenting as a central process in that interexistence. C. Wright Mills' questions (see p. 18) are used to give direction to the search for an understanding of 'society', or more particularly, parenting-in-society. One of Mills' questions - 'Where does this society stand in human history?' - led me to explore, in the second half of this chapter, the history of parenting.

In the next chapter focus is on Australian society, past and present, on the particular features of this society, and a brief analysis is made of the institutional definitions of parenting.

The third chapter is the logical outcome of all the other chapters. It is the drawing together, or juxtaposition, of the people data and the structural data. Parenting is defined: the questions which fired the research are, at last, addressed.

Then, in the fourth chapter, a theory of parenting is developed. This includes an explanation of why parenting is as it is, and what it might be. The concept and praxis of parenting is considered against the dominant ideological background or framework of meaning¹ which suffuses this form of capitalist society.

The thesis has an epilogue: I have seized the opportunity to ponder, and it starts with Martin Luther King's words

I have a dream that one day ...

¹ See Giddens (1979:180).

Human-being-in-the-world

Merleau Ponty calls the intertwining of human relationships interexistence - interexistence which is 'incomplete, unfinished, conditional and always tentative' (Jung and Jung, 1977:39). There is ambiguity at the heart of this existence, ambiguity because of two central existential paradoxes. One, that each person is unique and universal. Human being is infinitely complex, never-the-same-as, always changing: each person's response to their selves, to others, to the social context, to the physical world is their own, yet influenced by 'the other'.

The second paradox is that people both 'accept' the world as it is, and constantly endeavour to change their involvement in, and relationship with 'it'. Put another way, people live in an already-existing material world but need always to work, to transform, that world.

The world, in this sense, is

... not what I think, but what I live through. I am open to the world, I have no doubt that I am in communication with it, but I do not possess it; it is inexhaustible.

Merleau Ponty, 1962:xvi-xvii

For centuries, philosophers have been grappling with this problem of ambiguity; how is an individual both unique and universal; how, why .. does society work? In this thesis, these questions are collapsed: we are society, society is us.² Ambiguity and paradox are accepted as being aspects of human praxis, for both are innate and both are ubiquitous. Human-being-in-the-world is continuously being structured, or more aptly, structuring via human labour: it is 'totality-in-process'.

² See Part 1:3 and the following pages as basis for this discussion.

The most common concept in discussion of social structuring is that of 'institutions': whether the analysis is a functionalist one or one of the varieties of Marxist analysis, 'institutions' are omnipresent, and therein lies a danger. 'Institutions' are so readily identified, or assumed to be part of everyday life as well as theoretical discourse, they take on a separate existence; 'they' become reified.

Institutions are not things; they do not exist as monuments, but rather as products, or as the ongoing process of people-working. Institutions are not static entities, nor structures independent of human existence. They are essential elements of human praxis ordering the social fabric.

In Gidden's words, institutions are

... practices deeply sedimented in time-space.

Giddens, 1979:80

Such practices do have an existential quality, for they can be seen to endure, to recur, to become routinised. Institutions are always grounded in the social material world and they become part of the 'taken-for-granted world'.

Berger defines institutions as

... procedures through which human conduct is patterned, compelled to go, in grooves deemed desirable by society.

Berger, 1966:104

Such grooves, such deeply-layered practices, enable social order and social control. For society to work, for human-being-in-the-world, some structure-ing is necessary: institutions provide that structure-ing. Institutions are, therefore, essentially about the ordering of power.

Here lies a potential dilemma: as Berger points out,

Society penetrates us as much as it envelops us ... The walls of our imprisonment were there before we appeared on the scene, but they are ever rebuilt by ourselves ... Our bondage to society is not so much established by conquest as by collusion ... We are betrayed into captivity with our own cooperation.

Berger, 1966:140-141

Because of the pervasiveness and steep-edness of institutional praxis, institutional grooves are perceived as 'legitimate', 'right', 'proper', 'normal' social structures, as the 'natural' way a society should be.

Because 'institutions' are seen to be external to the individual, and have qualities of permanence, historicity, moral authority .. they become binding strictures. If people become discontented, they often seek for alternative ways of behaving within the institutional framework rather than attempting to overturn 'it'. Seldom is the social constructing of institutional praxis realised, nor the temporality of the praxis acknowledged: nor do people feel they have real choice.

Therefore, through what Giddens terms the 'mobilisation of bias' (Giddens, 1979:89), the present ordering of society is seen as the only ordering, perhaps with a 'few improvements to be made'. That the ordering of society is lopsided, heavily weighted in favour of the few, disdainful of 'minority' groups such as women, ethnic groups, children, the elderly .. the poor is denied. Such blatant power manipulation is endorsed and defended, rather than redressed, or changed. For example: Aboriginals have had to fight hard for the right to exercise their own form of justice; lesbian parenting is seen as un-ordinary, if not threatening. At the same time, pronouncements are made about the rights of an individual, and strenuous efforts made to defend Man's autonomy and freedom.

Institutions create certainties, and taken seriously, certainties deaden the heart and shackle the imagination.

Illich, 1976: foreword

Human being suffers as a result.

We live institutions, as we live time:

We do not live 'in time' as if the latter were some independent, abstract flow external to our being. We 'live time' ...

Steiner, 1978:77

Our experience of time, of institutions, of the world, is initially through others. Via a specific parenting relationship an individual is 'thrown'³ into the world, thrown into a people context, institutional context, a particular space-time context. We are born into a world already-made.⁴

Via our parents, we are pinioned in a density of age, gender, geographical, cultural, historical .. factors. We learn the language of society from these people, and their importance cannot be overestimated. Their sense of self, competence, vision, familiarity with public institutions and discourse,⁵ proficiency with language .. and feelings about how they negotiate the world - all will affect the chances and growth of the new person; all will have a significant, not determining, impact on the dependent individual.

We are plummeted into this particular people context: how, when, where, if .. we get fed, clothed, mental and/or physical stimulation, exposure to different sorts of environ-

³ Thrownness - Geworfenheit: this is a Heideggerian concept. See Heidegger (1962).

⁴ See Marx: The Eighteenth Brumaire ... 'Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please ...' (1970:96). See also O'Neill (1978:213).

⁵ Discourse - term to be discussed shortly.

ment, to smells, tastes, touch .. all depends, in the initial stages, on these people. From them we inherit the world, including the language which we use to make sense of the world. We also inherit a sense-ing of where we belong in that world.

We learn what it is to be loved/loving, to be confused or bewildered, strong, brave, lazy, to be a failure .. to be male or female, to know what is acceptable, not-acceptable. We learn to understand and be understood; to communicate, to know - and we learn how to know, and what to know. We grow, absorb, act, react, change .. learn to conform or fit-in-the-world, or not-to-fit, via our parent/s.

You've got to be taught
before it's too late
to hate all the things
your relatives hate ...

Rodgers and Hammerstein
South Pacific, 1949

This people context is very important.

Sociologists may talk of this thrownness as social positioning. This concept has a hollow ring if viewed through the narrow lens of social class. Far, far wider are the implications of time and space: whether it be 1934 or 1984; whether one is born in the country or city - Australia or Brazil, India or Scotland; whether one lives in a large family in a small space or a small family in a large space ..

The one common bond shared by all people is the basic necessity of having to work ⁶ in order to live. How an individual works, how s/he is able to utilise her/his body, the material resources at her/his disposal - is able to participate in society, and the nature of that participation .. all this is coloured by the early years of parenting experience and the impact of these people on one's life - and, as an adult, the earlier experience influences how one behaves,

⁶ Work: see p. 101, Part 1:3.

especially if one becomes a parent.

The legacy of particular people, of parents, is hard to ignore or reject, for we carry our parents 'inside' us. Often we monitor our behaviour because of our perception, of what we recall, or consider 'they' thought.

Fatherless now, you must deal with the memory of a father. Often that memory is more potent than the living presence of a father, is an inner voice commanding, haranguing, yes-ing and no-ing - a binary code, yes no yes no yes no yes no ... At what point do you become yourself? Never, wholly, you are always partly him. That privileged position in your inner ear is his last 'perk' and no father has ever passed it by.

Barthelme, in Sennett,
1981:15

It's not only the things that we've inherited from our fathers and mothers that live in us, but all sorts of old dead ideas and old dead beliefs ... there must be ghosts all over the country - as countless as grains of sand ...

Ibsen, in Manning Clark,
1980:52

All experience is inextricably a part of, or embedded in, the wider institutional praxis or interexistence. To comprehend parenting praxis it is necessary to look at society in it's 'total' sense for only then can one grasp parenting-in-society. C. Wright Mills' questions serve to anchor this process.

What is the structure of this particular society as a whole? What are it's essential components, and how are they related to one another? How does it differ from other varieties of social order? Within it, what is the meaning of any particular feature (parenting) for its continuance and for its change?

Where does this society stand in human history? What are the mechanics by which it

is changing? What is its place within and its meaning for the development of humanity as a whole? How does any particular feature we are examining affect, and how is it affected by, the historical period in which it moves? And this period - what are its essential features? How does it differ from other periods? What are its characteristic ways of history-making?

What varieties of men and women now prevail in this society and in this period? And what varieties are coming to prevail? In what ways are they selected and formed, liberated and repressed, made sensitive and blunted? What kinds of 'human nature' are revealed in the conduct and character we observe in this society in this period? And what is the meaning for 'human nature' of each and every feature of the society we are examining?

C.W. Mills, [1959]1970:13
(brackets added)

I have but one lifetime, but the questions are fundamental ones - essentially fragwürdig.⁷ These questions are the intellectual pivots of social studies, according to C. Wright Mills.

I needed another tool, or sensitising concept (see Blumer, 1970:91) to enable me to wend my way through this maze.

The tool selected is that of 'bio-power'.⁸ This concept, developed by Michel Foucault, can be defined as:

... the increasing ordering in all realms under the guise of improving the welfare of the individual and the population.

Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982:xxii

Foucault's task is that of a diagnosis of power in society, rather than explanation, and particularly of the processes

⁷ See Part 1.3.

⁸ Alternatively called bio-technico-power, and bio-politics. See Foucault (1978); Hodges and Hussain (1979:88-89).

whereby an individual is constituted in modern thought and modern social practice. He claims that the

... body has become an essential component for the operation of power relations in modern society.

Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982:112

that the body is the

... place in which the most minute and local social practices are linked up with the large scale organisations of power.

1982:xxii

The concept of biopolitics is used here as an epistemological tool: it is one way of learning about society, a way which to me makes sense. Foucault stresses the dangers of trying to sum-up any particular aspects of society, and the futility of ever attempting to bring to clear light the historical/present social practices which are always forming the background/foreground of human-being-in-the-world.

I am using the tool because:

- a. It is an umbrella concept which enables me more fully to deal with the concepts of individual, self, body, intersubjectivity .. perceived as part of society. That is, to deal with the concepts as historical/social constructions of reality and not to deal with them only at the level of individual consciousness. Both the concept and praxis of parenting can be perceived, then, as social constructions, and not simply as a 'natural process'.
- b. Though I am acutely aware of the dangers of reification, I find this concept 'fits' my understanding of historical practices and change. It therefore helps me find a path through the often contradictory material of historiography and present day analysis.

Sociologists, particularly those working in the area of family sociology, have frequently been ahistorical in their research, or considered the 1950s and 1960s sufficiently retrospective for their study. Others have simplistically dichotomised pre-industrial family and post. Since the 1960s there has been a surge of interest and activity in the 'new social history'. This is the history of 'ordinary people' as contrasted with the records of the 'upper classes'. Though there has been a flurry of books on 'family history',⁹ still little has been written about parenting, though this may well be rectified, given the interest and current work in Britain¹⁰ and the support of bodies such as the Social Science Research Council for such research.

At the risk of pedantry, three more points prior to a discussion of the history of parenting.

History ... does invite grubbing for detail, but it also encourages a widening of one's view to embrace epochal pivotal events in the development of social structures.

C.W. Mills, [1959]1970:160

One can easily get bogged down 'grubbing for detail', in trying to be catholic in coverage, or sequential in time. Secondly, to venture into another discipline's territory is always hazardous. There are as many ways of 'doing history' as there are of 'doing sociology'. For example: Aries (1962) is a demographic historian; de Mause *et al.* (1974) use a psychoanalytic approach; Shorter (1976) uses modernisation theory; whilst others are eclectic - Pinchbeck and Hewitt (1969, 1973) and Stone (1981). As in any work, such bias affects the focus of the research and the interpretation.

⁹ See Laslett (1972, 1977); Stone (1977, 1981); de Mause (1974); Harris (1979).

¹⁰ Personal conversation with Martin Richards, of the Child Care and Development Group, Cambridge, England, in Christchurch, New Zealand, 19 September 1984.

One needs multi-focussing antennae in one's own discipline: in another, facile explanations or complexity or profundity can easily be misread. The most crucial problem, however, is that of vista. Most knowledge about 'family life' is knowledge about the gentry, the clergy, the literate .. gleaned from diaries, records, letters, novels, art .. Psychologists, historians, sociologists .. have sometimes failed to recognise the weighted nature of this material;¹¹ the term 'the family' appears time and time again in the material with no description, no contexting, no qualifications. The third point is that the vista is commonly and naively viewed through the lens of the present, so attitudes of the present are used as standards or measuring rods: there seems an in-built assumption that today is better than yesterday, and this is particularly blatant in works such as those by de Mause and Shorter.

Parenting in history

There are two main reasons for looking at the concept of parenting in history. First, it is necessary to demythologise the past.¹² All societies have an image of their past - sometimes this is passed from generation to generation via an oral tradition, for example in Maori society; mostly in the West it is recorded or reconstructed, perhaps re-written, revised. Always it is likely to be enhanced, biassed, written from a dominant ideological standpoint. Myths abound. A number of examples can be used to illustrate:

- a. Change, contrary to public opinion, has always been an essential aspect of 'family' life. As Anderson suggests

... almost no generation has got by without public debate over family crisis.

Anderson, 1979:54

¹¹ For example, see Aries (1962).

¹² See Anderson (1979:49-73).

He cites the example of the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 struggling with regulations for marriage and pre-marital sexual behaviour.

- b. Often, the high mobility of the population is presented as a contributing factor in the oscillating rates of breakdown of 'the family'. Laslett cites evidence from one English village in the seventeenth century to show that there was a two-thirds turnover of persons in a twelve year period.
- c. High infant mortality rates in the past have often been attributed to health and sanitary conditions. Two authors - Badinter and Stone - suggest otherwise.

It was not so much because children died like flies that mothers showed little interest in them, but rather because the mothers showed so little interest that the children died in such great numbers.

Badinter, 1981:60

The cruel truth ... may be that most parents in history have not been much involved with their children, and have not cared much about them. Hence the staggering infant mortality rates - between a quarter and a third were dead before the age of one - were caused ... by ignorance, poverty, and indifference. Most children in history have not been loved or hated, or both, by their parents: they have been neglected or ignored by them.

Stone, 1981:227-228

This is a controversial idea (see Mount, 1982, for a dismissal of this argument).

- d. Another modern conception of parenting is challenged by historical evidence. It was more normal, statistically, for a child to be part of a one-parent family in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries than in the twentieth. Death, rather than divorce, was the divider (see Laslett, 1977:162).

Secondly, it is important to see the contemporaneity of parenting praxis; to grasp how both the concept and praxis evolve in the midst of other social practices. To do justice to this comprehension of parenting praxis it would be necessary to detail major shifts in political power, in economic modes of production .. to describe the changing nature of the church/state nexus .. to do, in fact, an historical analysis of society. Obviously this is not a plausible proposition; instead a number of practices which have occurred throughout the centuries will be commented upon.

Throughout history a distinction has always been made between male and female persons, adult, and child. On the basis of that distinction, a number of social practices emerge, each defined and legitimated within a particular space-time context. For instance:

1 BC 'If ... you give birth to a child, if it is a boy let it live; if it is a girl, expose it.'

de Mause, 1974:26

Aries argues that boys, in the upper classes only, were the first to have their dress distinguished from adult dress, and education, initially for the clerics only, was first given to male children.

Male and female roles - husband and wife, son and daughter - have been built on this one distinction: always there has been a division of labour favouring males, and an institutionalisation of the differences. For example, British law was primarily concerned with property law until the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, with rules of inheritance such as primogeniture. Aries, however, writing of French society, states:

Starting in the fourteenth century, we see a slow and steady deterioration of the wife's position in the household. She

loses the right to take the place of the husband in his absence or insanity ... Finally, in the sixteenth century, the married woman is placed under a disability so that any acts she performs without the authority of her husband or the law are null and void.

Aries, 1962:356

In England during this period, and later, the church defined, sanctioned and legitimated patriarchal power, and this Puritanism dovetailed neatly with the royal command. Husbands and fathers were encouraged to become domestic monarchs responsible not only for order and discipline but the spiritual welfare of their wives and children.

Central to Puritan religious thought was the notion of original sin so children were seen as needing to be broken in, like animals, or their will had to be buckled. Punishment was a necessary aspect of this discipline.

If thou smite him with a rod, thou shalt deliver his soul from Hell.

Stone, 1977:175

Legislation was passed requiring all heads of families to instruct their children in the catechism and the principles of religion, but this affected only those able to spend time in such activity: for most people survival was a more essential daily labour.

The concept of childhood changed in the eighteenth century and became glorified in the works of Rousseau: the child came to be viewed as innocent, rather than evil or weak.

This is the age of innocence ... the age when one can forgive anything, the age when hatred is unknown, when nothing can distress; the golden age of human life ...

in Aries, 1962:110

A number of principles became important for those with time

and space to pursue such erstwhile matters. The first was that children should never be left alone, yet this was accompanied by another warning - children should not be left too long in the company of servants. Who, then, should become responsible for the 'watching-of-children': women were the 'obvious' caretakers.

It was still expected that children should become accustomed to strict discipline in early childhood, and be modest about their bodies, retiring rather than precocious. Generally speaking, the eighteenth century saw a more permissive era for the church had loosened its hold on the mores of society, yet in the nineteenth century the authoritative stance returned with a vengeance, for some. Wesleyanism was a strict code:

Break their wills betimes. Begin this work before they can run alone, before they can speak plain ... Whatever pain it costs, break the will if you would not damn the child ... Break his will now, and his soul shall live, and he will probably bless you to all eternity.

You should teach your children that they must always obey you; that your word must never be questioned; your commands never neglected ... Those whom we cease to respect we often cease to love. Do not lose your children's affection by over-indulgence.

cited in Calder, 1976:86

The tension between this conception of childhood and the inherited 'childhood is a time of innocence' view meant ambiguity. That is reflected in the second quote. The author is advocating a blind respect and obedience, yet acknowledging a more subtle element in the relationship between parent and child. That ambiguity is still present:

Hopefully ... our children ... won't go off and stop loving or caring for us.

Strahan triptych

Laing captures the modern day dilemma in these words:

It is our duty to bring up our children to love,
honour and obey us.

If they don't, they must be punished,
otherwise we would not be doing our duty.

Laing, 1971:3

Both parents are implicated in the 'we' used by Laing but for the past hundred or so years increasing attention has been devoted by the 'experts' to the 'mother' role.¹³ Child-rearing manuals first appeared in the thirteenth century. In 1671 in La Civilite Nouvelle, parents were advised how to set about punishing children, when to start teaching them letters .. how a child should retire at night. Again, these circulated only amongst the literary elite and today, such books, and there are more appearing each year, try to reach a wider audience but would seem to be gobbled up primarily by the 'middle class wife' and 'mother'.

Another distinction which has been made throughout history and is only slowly giving way in our society is that between legitimate and illegitimate children. Blackstone, a considered legal 'expert', wrote in his commentaries in the mid-eighteenth century ...

Children are of two sorts ... legitimate
and spurious or bastards.

in Pinchbeck and Hewitt, 1973:362

Earlier, in a court in Lancashire (1601), magistrates' records show that

Jane Sotworth ... spinster, swears that
Richard Garstange ... is the father of
Alice, her bastard daughter. She is to

¹³ See page 531.

have charge of the child for two years, provided she does not beg, and Richard is then to take charge until it is twelve years old. He shall give Jane a cow and 6 shillings in money. Both he and she shall this day be whipped ...

Laslett, 1965:133

The only aspect missing from the above example of 'institutional intervention' is that of access. The law is shown to be empowered to deal with such instances of ex-nuptial birth; to control - 'provided she does not beg' - and to punish.

Echoes of that seventeenth century example sound today. Women giving birth to an ex-nuptial child are still required to request maintenance from the putative father: a father is expected to support his child: until recently, a woman was considered the best parent for a younger child, and many women giving birth 'outside wedlock' would attest to verbal whippings.¹⁴

Traditionally, an ex-nuptial child has been regarded as filius nullius (the child of no-one) and suffered gross discrimination in law and from the community.

Harper, 1982:11

Infanticide has been a common practice throughout history, perceived by many as a solution to illegitimacy. de Mause claims that in Anglo-Saxon England

... the legal presumption was that infants who died had been murdered if not proved otherwise (and) ... by the eighteenth century, there is no question that there was a high incidence of infanticide in every country in Europe.

de Mause, 1974:29

Pinchbeck and Hewitt (1969:201) suggest, however, that until

¹⁴ See McAlpine triptych.

the sixteenth century, 'bastardy had not been thought any great shame', even though an illegitimate child had no legal rights, no obligations to his/her parents, and unless the child was baptised, no name. The subsequent marriage of the child's parent/s did not alter the status of the child.

... the guiding principle of English law was 'once a bastard always a bastard'.

Pinchbeck and Hewitt, 1969:202

For those unable to care for a child, infanticide or abandonment may have been the only perceived solution. Legislation introduced in the sixteenth century was designed not to provide for the welfare of the child/ren, but for the exposure of those responsible for bringing children ex-nuptially into the world, if they could not provide for them. Foundling homes were set up and filled, quickly. Married women having difficulty also placed their children in such homes, and in France, especially, the practice of wet-nursing served as a form of infanticide for so many of the babies placed out died.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Britain a series of Poor Law Acts and Amendments were passed. These were designed to operate on the lowest possible funding, and their success was measured accordingly, but they were a 'bottom-line' provision by the state for the care of the 'less fortunate'.

The ... Poor Law continued in its policy of not seeking out the children for whom such care was needed; its purpose being only to relieve a need when actually required to do so ...

Pinchbeck and Hewitt, 1973:499

A precedent had been set in Roman times, and written into the Theodosian Code:

315-329 AD. A law shall be written on bronze or waxed tablets or on linen cloth, and posted throughout all the municipalities of Italy, to restrain the hands of parents

from infanticide ... if any parent should report that he had offspring which on account of poverty he is unable to rear, there shall be no delay in issuing food and clothing ...

in Lyman, 1974:84

The underpinnings of the welfare state began before this century in such acceptance of care by the state.

By the nineteenth century in Britain education for all children, rich and poor, had come into existence but it was very different in kind and quality. In earlier centuries, most children, regardless of class, spent time away from their parent/s in some form of apprenticeship.

... a majority of them left home ... between the ages of seven and fourteen, to act as servants in other people's houses, to serve apprenticeships, or to go to boarding school.

Stone, 1981:218

This was education at its most base: children in the founding homes were expected to go out to work, and John Locke, philosopher of the seventeenth century, wrote:

... the children of the poor must work for some part of the day when they reached the age of three.

Laslett, 1965:3

Aries suggests that the reason parents and children did not form a 'profound existential' relationship (1962:368) was attributable to the apprenticeship system. Stone considers the lack of a strong relationship, as we understand it, was caused by four factors: the frequency of infants being reared away from their mothers - either because of wet-nursing, or death, or abandonment; the high death rate; the practice of tight swaddling of infants which he suggests distanced the infant from its surroundings; and fourthly, the fierce religious injunction of 'breaking the child's will'. He claims

that these four factors led to

... a 'psychic numbing' which created an adult world of emotional cripples, whose primary responses to others were at best a calculating indifference and at worst a mixture of suspicion and hostility, tyranny and submission, alienation and rage.

Stone, 1981:220

The concept of human being is always embedded in a particular social milieu. Males, by this time, were viewed as having three stages of growth - infancy, childhood and adulthood; whereas for girls there remained but two - infancy and adulthood. As the concept of 'the male child' changed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, so too the concept of the parent and his/her function. Parents were encouraged to take an interest in their children's education, and the apprenticing-out system ceased to be so popular as clerics and parents sought more control over their sons: boarding schools became considered a 'right' environment for the inculcation of discipline for boys. Stone proffers one explanation for this change (he is talking of a century earlier):

The threat of religious, intellectual and political chaos triggered off by the Reformation induced moral theologians ... to agree that the only hope of preserving social order was to concentrate on the right disciplining and education of children.

Stone, 1977:174

Another explanation for the advent of mass schooling was the changing economic circumstances which required subservience to poor working conditions; the acceptance of orders from an unknown boss rather than a locally based power source. Social control is still a theme running through the literature, and suggested as the underlying premise of the educational system.

Education for girls did not eventuate, apart from edu-

cation for motherhood which was channelled through increasing numbers of women's magazines and parenthood manuals, until the late eighteenth century, and in parts of the world is still non-existent.

As children became increasingly the focus of attention, so too did pressure on adult women to become 'good' mothers. The image of motherhood became once more embodied in religious platitudes, in art, and enshrined in law. Augustine had said:

Because the mother loves to nourish her little one, she does not on that account want him to remain little. She holds him in her lap, fondles him with her hands, soothes him with caresses, feeds him with her milk, does everything for the little one ...

in Lyman, 1974:89

In the nineteenth century, the reality was starkly different for millions of mothers. Many women were required to work full time in mills, workshops and factories, and the care they could arrange for their children was usually grossly inadequate. Infant mortality rates rose: some children starved to death, others died from being fed the wrong food.

... many more were the victims of the reckless use of the narcotics - opium, laudanum, morphia - which were the major ingredients of Godfrey's cordial ...

Whenever mothers of young children were fully employed, whether in the field, the cottage or the factory, the administration of drugs to keep children quiet was, and as far as we know always had been, a common phenomenon.

Pinchbeck and Hewitt, 1973:406

Instances of babies being given the drug when only three or four weeks old are cited, and

... Mr Brown, the coroner of Nottingham, states that he knows Godfrey's Cordial is given on the day of birth.

Pinchbeck and Hewitt, 1973:406

The position of women and children became a matter of increasing concern in the nineteenth century, but seldom was the woman viewed in her own right, as an individual. She was perceived primarily in relation to her husband, and to her children, or the absence of .. Gradually 'the mother' was seduced into being the 'moulder' of her child/ren, but the father remained absolute sovereign in the household.

A century earlier, Blackstone had spelt out the duties of a father:

... the power of the parent over the child is derived from ... their duty; this authority being given them partly to enable the parent the more effectively to perform his duty, and partly as a recompense for his care and trouble in the faithful discharge of it. 'These duties, three in all ... the duty of maintenance, a principle of natural law, since they had brought the children into the world; the duty of protection, alone a natural duty, but rather permitted than enjoined by law; and the duty of providing an education suitable to the child's station in life.

Pinchbeck and Hewitt, 1973:366-367.

In 1839 in England the Infant Custody Act was conferred: this gave

... an absolute discretionary power with regard to the custody of a young child up to seven years of age on the application of the mother.

1973:369

This was the first time the authority of the male parent was

challenged. Today many custody disputes still centre on the definition of male and female rights, and the nature of the responsibilities owed to each other and the child/ren.

Last century, fatherhood was increasingly defined in social terms, especially by legal statutes and by the state: motherhood was defined, reified, deified as a natural process. Both were shored up by religious dogma, and state proclamations. An adult woman's role was considered to be naturally a dual one: that of wife and mother.

The home ... which is (your husband's) paradise, is your handiwork, your pride, your castle, your very very own, your actual self, a part of you inseparable. It is your heart and brain translated into the arrangement of your daily life ... To the mother belongs the privilege of planting in the hearts of her children those seeds of life which, nurtured and fostered, will bear the fruits of earnest and useful lives.

in Burns and Goodnow, 1979:27

The success of this ideological conception of the divisioning of labour might be measured by the pervasiveness of that dichotomy of role functioning, and the centrality of belief in that divisioning (see Mathews triptych and Montgomery triptych for examples).

In the twentieth century a number of child-rearing experts have reinforced that 'role' praxis. Two in particular have attracted strong followings in different periods: Truby King and Dr Spock. Both directed their attention primarily at 'the mother'.

Truby King's interest was in lowering infant mortality rates, especially of the 'poor'. He worked out a rigid scheme of four-hourly feeding: many women complained of sore breasts, waiting for the clock to tick round, but such was his hold on people that few dared to challenge his system. As Dally comments, King believed so strongly in the importance of hygiene, he paid little attention to intuition or 'mother

love.'

It is interesting to speculate why a man whose main work had been on infants reared in poverty and ignorance became the nursery guru of the British middle classes. The ... answer must be that his ideas caught the spirit of the time. People wanted to know exactly what to do with babies.

Dally, 1982:81

Sixty years later Parent Effectiveness Training (PET) and Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (STEP) programmes have had a more diluted but similar impact, for the same reasons. 'Experts' in many fields - medicine, particularly obstetrics, welfare, education, religious training .. increasingly foisted their line of knowledge, dogma, and practices onto mothers. Parents, suggests Lasch (1979), have become so confused by the plethora of opinions and advice they have lost the ability to follow their own sense-ing .. but have come to rely on such advice to tell them what to do.

Dr Spock burst on a mothers' world that was tired of ... Truby King and he hit just the right note. 'Trust Yourself'... 'You know more than you think you do' ... 'Don't be overawed by what the experts say ...

in Dally, 1982:83

But by then there were experts: Plunket nurses in New Zealand, public health nurses elsewhere; psychologists, social workers, paediatricians .. and Freud's legacy and his disciples.

Freud was the first to teach, in the modern era, the importance of the early years on later maturity. Wordsworth had written about this earlier, but western society fastens onto experts, not poets. Freud's work has been diluted, abused, misread, misinterpreted .. but had a major impact on thinking about relationships between parents and their children. He remains, however, accessible primarily to the learned. Bowlby's impact was more far-reaching.

Bowlby's research was on children in institutions, and he found that many of these children were suffering from 'maternal deprivation'. People, including government officials, health personnel, 'mothering' bodies, grasped hold of this idea and used it to their own ends. Bowlby was talking about the effects of institutionalisation, not only about maternal deprivation, yet the emphasis on bonding which was one of his key concepts, and on the close contact necessary between a mother and child in the early stages of development, haunts much of the literature and practices today. The guilt about taking on paid employment when one's baby is young, the non-provision of child care facilities, the non-recognition of the need for support and basic physical help remain rooted in Bowlby's works - or rather a misreading of his work.

Today there is much talk in child care circles about 'bonding', the affective ties that develop between an infant and whoever cares for him. These bonds are known to be of profound importance in his development. As a result, some people behave as though bonding was the only aspect of childhood that matters.

Dally, 1982:89

There have been countless other people both nationally and internationally who have contributed styles or fashions of parenting, made breakthroughs in particular areas of parent/child relationships. For example, people have slavishly followed royalty in their fashions of dress for their children, and in naming; in Australia as more and more mixing of ethnic groups has occurred some of the practices of one culture have been adopted by another; the introduction of domestic science courses into schools has been another major factor, providing a superb channel for dictating fashions and standards of housekeeping and childrearing.

Two world wars, the increasing knowledge and implementation of health procedures, especially diet and sanitation, led to a decrease in infant mortality rates, and 'safer' child

birth¹⁵ and childrearing. Dally's words provide startling evidence of the rapidity of change in one area of parenting praxis:

... until the 1930s every woman embarking on a pregnancy knew her life was in danger.

Dally, 1982:31

Nowhere can change be more clearly seen than in the areas of artificial insemination and in vitro fertilisation. These procedures have opened up exciting possibilities and hope for many infertile couples: they enable a 'natural' process to be accomplished. Yet such processes are very expensive. It is difficult to weigh priorities of money and professional resources, and such processes cut across societal beliefs: religious, legal, social .. The law, for instance, is unable yet to deal with the status of the multiple fathers involved: who is the child's father? Should children conceived by these processes be told the full truth? Should records be kept? The centrality of the belief in biological reproduction, the sanctity of procreation or the 'naturalness' of conception and pregnancy is considered to be at risk. Foucault's conception of bio-power is seen in such practices in its fullest sense. The cloning of another human being would be the ultimate conceptualisation of bio-technico-power.

All these changes have affected not only the physical aspects of parenting praxis, but the thinking, knowing, understanding and feeling about parenting. Few people would relish the idea of being told that what they do as people, as parents, is, in large part, prescribed and parametered.

People know what they do; they frequently know why they do what they do; but what

¹⁵ See Oakley (1979); Ehrenreich and English (1979) for discussion of the process of childbirth and social practices.

they don't know is what what they do
does (or does not).

Foucault, in Dreyfus and Rabinow,
1982:187
(brackets added)

Yet the miracle of human being is that no system, no institution, no social practice, no 'outside' force can ever completely determine or define who or what a person is. I-am-me.

To conclude this chapter I want briefly to detail a number of connections between 'individuals' and 'society'. I am using a modified form of structuralism, believing that

... structural description reveals relations that could not otherwise be revealed.

Foucault, 1972:201

The main reason for doing this is to emphasise, in an unusual form, the nature of interexistence and the contemporaneity of parenting praxis. At different times and in different places these connections would be variously defined, sanctioned, and legitimated. I do not feel confident enough to produce causal explanations for the interconnections in society, but consider these to be of sufficient importance to be laid bare.

<u>Description</u>	<u>Legal Status</u>	←—————→		<u>Perception</u>
male adult	married	husband	father	paid worker provider protector
female adult	married	wife/ housekeeper	mother	unpaid worker nurturer caretaker
male adult	unmarried	bachelor	putative father	liable for maintenance: has to seek access/custody through the legal system
female adult	unmarried	spinster	single parent	entitled to support from the state

At an even more general level of abstraction:

DescriptionPerception

body male	active sexual progenitor
body female	passive sensual earth mother

Institutions affecting 'body' include legal, religious, economic, health, political, educational; a 'body-self' becomes a subject; an adult male body-self is the key implement of labour - the means of production. An adult female body(non)-self is the key means of reproduction. An adult male self is expected to be confident and competent: an adult female is expected to be dependent and docile.

Man in daily life considers himself as the centre of the social world which he groups around himself in layers of various degrees of intimacy and anonymity.

Schutz, 1962:37

One of the biggest coups of this century rests in this assertion. In a later chapter I will be taking up the ideological concept of individualism, but a number of points are necessary at this stage to draw together this discussion of inter-existence.

That an individual considers him/her self to be at the centre of his/her universe, unique and apart from all others, is referred to as the 'divide and conquer' principle. We are taught to believe in the autonomy of the self but what is meant is the autonomy of the subject. Foucault refers to this as a supreme strategy of power.

The key to the technology of the self is the belief that one can, with the help of experts, tell the truth about oneself. It is a central tenet not only in psychiatric sciences and medicine, but also in the law, in education, in love.

Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982:175

The irony is that we are all society: society is all of us. There is no such entity as an autonomous self, except in defi-

nition. Parenting praxis, however, is predicated on the belief in the development of an independent self. A baby, by definition, is dependent on an-other for food, shelter .. and emotional, social warmth. The other, commonly the woman, is not expected to be dependent on the baby; financially she is considered able to be dependent on her male partner, and in his absence on the state; her emotional and social needs are to be met by whom? If a male partner and/or father, is present, he is expected to be in-dependent: his emotional and social needs are met by whom? Much of the angst in society stems from this gap between perception and practice.

What varieties of men and women now prevail in this society and in this period? And what varieties are coming to prevail? In what ways are they selected and formed, liberated and repressed, made sensitive and blunted?

C.W. Mills, [1959]1970:13

Again in the next chapter, these questions of C.W. Mills about the structure of a society, about the 'kinds of human nature', anchor the discussion: likewise Foucault's concept of bio-technico-power serves as a sensitising, organising device. Parenting is a crucial process in the formation of human-being-in-the-world. It is necessary to un-cover both the concept and praxis of parenting in the specific time-space context of Australian society.

The entire man is, so to speak, to be seen in the cradle of the child. The growth of nations presents something analogous to this; they all bear some marks of their origin; and the circumstances which accompanied their birth and contributed to their rise, affect the whole term of their being.

*Tocqueville, in Dixon,
1976:62*

... most of the essentials of capitalist social relations were in fact constructed (or reconstructed) by the first few generations of settlers.

Connell and Irving, 1980:xii

Parenting in Australian Society

Part 3:2

This chapter is divided into three sections. In each, focus is on significant happenings, developments, ideas .. which bear on parenting-in-society, and which serve to give a peculiarly Australian flavour to the social practices.

The first part focusses on aspects of Australian history; the second on contemporary Australia; the third on institutional praxis, and particularly on legal praxis. There is also a fourth part which is more impressionistic. It is an idiosyncratic perspective or vista on Australia as I 'sense' it after living in the country for nine and a half years. It is through this prism that this work has been done (see Appendix D).

History

Australia is an old-new country, inhabited for centuries by Aborigines but settled in the late eighteenth century by British convicts and their masters. The First Fleet sailed to Australia in 1787. Those arriving at the port in New South Wales came mostly from the crowded cities in Britain. They found the space overwhelming, the land harsh and unwel-

coming, the climate torrid. It was to become a

broken, cold and unnatural form of
society ...

Manning Clark, in Dixon,
1976:115

Amongst the tasks of the first Governor were the setting up of the settlement at Botany Bay: the cultivation of land and the use of convicts distributed for that purpose; the exploration of the coast; and the procurement of women from the islands 'to offset the great disproportion of female convicts to males' (Manning Clark, 1963:22). Governor Phillip was also instructed to 'open an intercourse with the Aborigines, and to cultivate their affection', but he failed in this task. Aborigines neither obliged by presenting their land to the newcomers nor in offering their services as the bottom rung in the employment ladder. Violence was used to control them, as with the convicts; public flogging was common, and the death sentence a constant threat.

Tension was rife, but exacerbated in 1791 with the arrival of Irish convicts, and a number of priests. Phillip, along with his fellow officers and civic officials, believed in the rightness of British institutions and, whilst privately subscribing to a contemptuous view of religion, believed in it as

... a means to promote the subordination
of the lower orders ...

Manning Clark, 1963:21

The Irish neither believed in the Protestant religion, nor in the Anglo-Saxon institutions: bitter struggles became commonplace, and continued to bubble through to the twentieth century. They emerge as a central debate in the area of education through to this day.

One of the most significant factors in the new settlement was the population imbalance: in the First Fleet there were

600 male convicts and 200 female convicts plus 250 civil staff (Gandevia, 1978:13). Male convicts were set to building shops, houses, fences, roads .. and were able to be emancipated for good behaviour. Women became domestic servants or whores; they had little choice. Sexual exploitation became the norm; marriages were rare and convict marriages officially frowned upon. In 1806 only 395 of the 1,430 women in New South Wales were married (Burns and Goodnow, 1979:20).

... convicts ... showed little disposition for family life. Contemporary observers were 'all but unanimous that the convicts ... were generally speaking a demoralised, dissolute, drunken and lazy ... set of men and women.'

Burns and Goodnow, 1979:19

'Family life' was not encouraged: people were treated according to their status - free man or convict. Most were without kin - mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters .. and thousands of miles from anything at all familiar. Male domination was enforced - officers and civilians first, and their families, then male convicts, then - last - women. Manning Clark talks of the complete absence of romantic love in the folklore of the early decades in the convict settlement and later the 'bush' environment (Manning Clark, 1980:53): it is barely surprising. Leisure time was spent 'whoring, drinking, gambling'. Births were numerous. Within seven years of the First Fleet's arrival, seventeen percent of the population were young children or infants (Burns and Goodnow, 1979:20).

In the next decades a number of Female Factories were set up: these served both as a prison and a place for 'unbespoken women', and as a 'confinement centre' for pregnant convicts. Some of the Factories served to worsen the situation for the inmates: in one, at Parramatta, any man, emancipist or free settler, could visit and select a wife.

(the eligible women) are turned out, and they all stand up as you would place so many soldiers, or so many cattle ... in a fair; they are all ranked up ... The

convict goes up and looks at the women,
and if he sees a lady that takes his
fancy ...

in Summers, 1975:282

In other Factories, infant mortality rates were higher than in the colony.¹ There were no other facilities available in the settlement for women giving birth except in the Factories, or, for the wives of free settlers and officers, in their homes. Convict women with a child/ren had little chance of employment. Children were sometimes abandoned, sometimes they remained in the Factories with their mothers, or were supported by state aid,² or lived with their mother and whoever she was living with. These children were sometimes called 'cornstalks' because they were so much more upright in their physical stance than their parents.

And moral stance. Chaplains and officials in various settlements despaired of reforming the convicts and became increasingly concerned with the children.

... a second generation heir to their
parents' 'profligate infamy' was not to
be borne.

Burns and Goodnow, 1979:21

In a letter to Governor Bligh in 1805 official permission was given to intervene:

... you will feel the peculiar necessity
that the Government should interfere on
behalf of the rising generation, and by
the assertion of authority as well as en-

¹ See Gandevia (1978), Tears Often Shed, for a detailed account of child health and welfare in Australia from 1788 on.

² In the early 1800s this figure was put at approximately 25 percent of children. See Gandevia (1978:55).

couragement, endeavour to educate them
in religious as well as industrious habits.

1979:22

Within a decade of the beginnings of the colony approximately half the children were in schools, including two, three and four year olds in some instances. This was partly influenced by the thinking of John Locke who popularised the idea that a child was almost infinitely educable. Yet the needs for child labour in Britain were so extreme that the ideal of schooling remained a dream, not a reality, for a much longer period.

So many children were abandoned that a number of Male and Female Orphan Schools were established. A pattern was set in the running of these that lasts through to this day in the area of social services: they were joint ventures - government was involved and had a controlling interest especially in budget matters, but private charities ran them.

Before the 1830s very few free settlers made their way to Australia: Summers suggests those that did were interested only in making a quick fortune from the land.

Such immigrants saw little advantage in altering the role of women. They wanted to employ men 'with no encumbrances' so they would not have to provide rations for unproductive women and children.

Summers, 1975:279

Fortunes were made not initially in agriculture, for farms took time to establish, but in sealing, fishing, property speculation, and then in wool and mining. These are what Dixson describes as 'robber industries' - industries which take from the land, from nature, and give little in return. She draws an analogy with male exploitation, believing that the robbing of land, the raping of the land, can be compared with the male raping and plundering of women.

D.H. Lawrence, a century or so later, draws a similar

conclusion.

Australia is like a poor prostitute and the Australian just bullies her to get what he can out of her and then treats her like dirt.

in King, 1978:99

Dixson argues that the hostility shown to women in Australia - Anglo-Saxon Australia - is in part due to this historical period.

If we could peel back the layers congealed into Australia's misogyny, I think we'd find a stubborn early layer linked with our early robber industries: 'work and love' - Freud's famous twins - are inseparable.

Dixson, 1976:23

Attitudes between men and women remained exploitative: being treated primarily as status-people - as convicts, or emancipated, in order of one's hierarchical position within the military or civic establishment, did little to encourage positive attitudes between people. Not till the 1840s and 1850s did the pattern change, and then the 'bourgeois family' was increasingly propagated as being the respectable form of family: women, as wives and mothers, became, in Summer's words, 'God's Police', entrusted with the moral guardianship of both husband and children.

In Britain about this time a host of books appeared

... which sought to establish the precise place of women in society and to set out the exact duties of the wife and mother of a family.

Summers, 1975:307

These ideas filtered through to the colony and met with a mixed response. Women of the 'upper classes' - wives of officers and 'selected settlers', spent their time mimicking the English gentry; they employed private tutors for their sons,

visited, wrote letters, held balls, garden parties, and played at being 'ladies'.

Increasing numbers of working class families accepted government assisted passages from 1832 onwards; they emigrated, enticed on by the dream of owning their own cottage, a privacy unheard of in Britain. Wages were believed to be high, and were by British standards. This meant that a man could support his wife and family, and the woman could, ideally, spend her time cleaning her own whole house, and caring for her children who had a much greater chance of survival in Australia than in the slums in Britain. The bourgeois lifestyle could become their own. ³

But scores of men remained single: the image of the 'wild colonial boy' was built up round these men.

The single men do not want wives, and the responsibilities and encumbrances of family life. They prefer working hard - working like slaves - four or five days, and 'larking' the rest of the week.

in Summers, 1975:306

To rectify this situation a society was formed in England in 1862. This was called The Female Middle-Class Emigration Society, but it failed, for men still did not want to marry.

The gold rushes of the 1850s and 1860s meant a flood of men racing to make their fortunes, often leaving behind women and children in the cities. Prostitution became a way of life for large numbers, particularly in Sydney; one of the most concerning factors was the young age of many of the girls (see Dixson, 1976:104-105).

Increasingly the 'nuclear' family became the model to be admired and adopted, and women 'disappeared into domesti-

³ This remained, for many, but a dream. See Connell and Irving (1980:126).

city'. As women became closeted inside the family, their opportunities outside it were sharply reduced, and thereby their chance to achieve, or be considered 'a success'. From then (the middle of the century) on, suggest Connell and Irving,

Sexual restraint and marriage were equated with the dignity of womanhood. The connection of women with cultural conservatism and instinctual repression, characteristic of bourgeois culture, was established.

Connell and Irving, 1980:65

Over a century later, Adler ⁴ coined the term 'matriduxy' to describe what he saw as the situation in Australian families he researched. The adult woman is the coordinator in such families; the emotional backbone, the reference point .. yet it was not a matriarchal situation, for

Adler ... found none of the traditional allocation of social power ... that occurs in a matriarchy.

Burns and Goodnow, 1979:57

The pattern was set in the nineteenth century.

By the 1860s the lack of parental guidance and education among working class children was recognised as a major problem of social control.

Connell and Irving, 1980:126

Working-class mothers often had to work to supplement their husband's uncertain income; many found their way into service in 'bourgeois' homes. Some women were deserted or widowed, and found work in factories. So too the children - in brick-yards and leatherwork, clothing and tobacco factories. The

⁴ Adler (1965).

ideals of political and social stability, obedience, repentance, moral reform, ostensibly those belonging to the Church of England but infusing state ideology no longer seemed plausible, nor did they meet the growing needs of capitalism.

Early in the century a number of small private academies had been set up to train children from the 'upper classes': these were to cater for children whose parents wanted a school where their sons and daughters ⁵ would not have to sit alongside the children of convict parents.

In centres where only one teacher was available, a canvas tarpaulin was sometimes strung across the classroom to divide the convict children from those of fee-paying parents.

Burns and Goodnow, 1979:46

Further schools were set up, for example King's School in Parramatta,

... to train an Anglican colonial elite in the skills of community leadership ...

1979:46

There was (is?) this strong class differentiation in the education system: Protestant schools educated the bourgeois; Catholic schools the working classes. In 1844 and 1867 Royal Commissions reported that the ideal of compulsory schooling was failing in its present form. Free state education was introduced, but argument between the two warring religious groups was so fierce that the state system of education was affected from the beginning. Neither side would trust the other and the state officials entering the fray chose to walk a middle line.

⁵ Suzanne Strahan: *I want them to go to state schools to see that people who do not go to private schools are also nice people ...* (Strahan triptych).

... the sectarian controversy contributed to both centralisation and conformity. It also contributed to the timidity and that air of taboo that rapidly surrounds all controversial subjects, for as agreement between the contending groups was impossible, the education departments taught a history, an ethics, and a religion that were so vague and pallid as not to encourage the interest of the boys and girls in the great questions of life. This shying away from the ... questions ... occurred at a time when two quite different views of the nature of man and the meaning of life were taking shape.

Manning Clark, 1963:149

Put simplistically, these were the religious view of life contrasted with the rationalist view. The gold rushes had brought large numbers of Chinese people to Australia. 'Right-minded' people were endeavouring to work out both the direction of economic development and the kinds of people who should participate in that development. What was certain was that education was chosen as the means of social control: whether church- or state-run, education was sexist, and stratified. Education for girls was for motherhood: ⁶ for boys considered as training for the workforce, and their allotted part in it.

The media enforced the message:

... though we do want a higher standard of female education it is not in order to fit us for professions, but that we may better perform those home duties that are undoubtedly a woman's work.

Ladies Column in The Australasian,
27 April 1872, in Summers, 1975:317

In the late 1890s kindergartens were established in the inner suburbs of Sydney in a further move to educate for motherhood. They were designed to compensate for the presumed inadequacies

⁶ See Summers (1975:317-341).

of the family lives of working class children and

... to instil middle-class attitudes to child care and family living ...

Summers, 1975:336

Motherhood was beginning to gain its almost 'deified' status: recognition had been given to the need for education for this 'natural process'; this included teaching mothers how to care for their children's emotional, social, and, particularly, health needs. Changing attitudes to children were reflected in the increasing attention given to child protection and labour laws, and underpinned by the recognition that individuals were not solely responsible for their lot: that poor circumstances and inadequate habits may be due to social oppression rather than perceived as individual sins. The government gradually accepted the responsibility

... not only to clothe, feed and educate children but also a moral obligation to provide them with an appropriate background for becoming respectable, useful and independent members of society ...

Gandevia, 1978:123

It was in their interests to have health subjects.

The period from 1890 to 1930 has been described as the Golden Age of child welfare legislation. Legislation was brought down to regulate matters of custody, adoption, employment of minors, neglect and protection, guardianship, relief, child vagrancy, education and truancy, smoking and attendance at places of amusement, pensions for widowed mothers, and child endowment.

Burns and Goodnow, 1979:49

Most of this legislation and activity was designed to help the children of the poor, and these were children of poor women - deserted or widowed or single parents. Employment possibilities were extremely limited, and so too child care facilities.

Everyone agreed that something should be done for the children of destitute lone mothers, both for their own sake and to prevent them turning out to be a burden on the community. But what? It proved difficult to force absconding fathers back into the home, although a good deal of legislation was enacted with that aim in mind.

Burns and Goodnow, 1979:51
(emphasis added)

The notion of the male being the breadwinner and the woman being dependent for herself and her children had become firmly embedded in the Australian ethos.

Yet the piecemeal attempts to rectify the situation were but that: via the legislation, attempts were being made to deal with an underlying paradox. In the history of Australia there had always been a significant number of people living 'outside' the traditional family pattern, yet the nation

... had evolved schools, job opportunities and a wage system structured round the idea that the husband should be the sole breadwinner and that the mother's place was in the home ...

Burns and Goodnow, 1979:51

This was legitimated, endorsed, entrenched by a judgment handed down in 1907 by Justice Higgins. This is known as the Harvester Award and enshrined the concept of a family wage which would be paid to the breadwinner, the adult male in the family. Higgins stated that this wage should be sufficient for an unskilled labourer, his wife and three children to live in frugal comfort. In 1919 a Royal Commission into the basic wage accepted this concept and women's wages were set at 54 percent of the male wage. This judgment caused problems in the fight for equal pay and is still in existence as an idea, a value and, one suspects, a practice. ⁷

⁷ See Macarthy (1976) for a discussion of the implications in the Harvester case.

Men and women were hereby legislated as being different, and as having quite separate realms of expertise and work-place. The fact that men can withhold all or some of their money was not considered.⁸ Nor the apparent contradiction of increasing intervention in family praxis on the one hand, especially of 'experts', contrasted with the bounded privacy of family life which the judgment implied.

In 1884 the Australian Health Society had published an account of its meetings and declared aims. It stressed that it was important to

... secure the cooperation of the home-ruler, be she mother, wife or daughter, by interesting her personally in the work of sanitary reform.

in Reiger, 1982:75

Considerable improvements in medical practices, particularly in obstetrics, were taking place round this period, though these, suggest critics, focussed almost exclusively on the technical aspects of pregnancy and childbirth rather than on any 'human' empathy. Also there was an increasing awareness of 'good nurturing' and child-rearing practices and the mother was deliberately seduced and constructed as the link between the 'experts' and the child. The bourgeois mother became the point of contact between doctor and family.

She took on a new role as ally of the family doctor, and the relationship between her and the doctor was the same as that between the doctor and his subordinates ... the man of knowledge, the doctor prescribed, while his ally carried out his instructions.

Hodges and Hussain, 1979:96

⁸ Jenny Montgomery: *I hate having to justify every cent I spend, seeing Rob doesn't have to justify it to himself* (Montgomery triptych, p. 349).

The depression of the 1890s had led to considerable suffering for many families in Australia, and the birth rate dropped. Australia had made it economically impossible for large families to survive. Infant mortality rates rose, except in South Australia, and practices of birth control and abortion were used to avert more babies. This horrified 'the experts, who deemed a high birth rate essential to national greatness' (Summers, 1975:320). Between 1891 and 1900 one quarter of all first births were 'illegitimate', while a further quarter were born within nine months of marriage. This seemingly was not frowned upon, but the use of contraceptives by married women was. The President of the Medical Society in Victoria in 1907 said:

... when a wife defiles the marriage bed with devices and equipment of the brothel, and interferes with nature's mandate by cold-blooded preventives and safeguards; when she consults her almanac, and refuses to admit the approaches of her husband except at stated times ... Can a home with such an environment be a happy one?

in Summers, 1975:321-2

Married women carried the moral stewardship of the country on their shoulders, but the needs of a high birth rate and men's sexual needs must be met, somehow!

In 1921 there was a Minister for Motherhood in New South Wales. Childrearing advice emanating from such offices was primarily about practical matters but in the next decades this became infused with 'scientific knowledge', particularly concentrating on the development of the individual child; his/her stages of growth and tasks to be accomplished at each stage; the physical, emotional, social, psychological needs of each child .. and on the best environment for the fulfilment of such needs. Women's needs were seldom taken into consideration: they were (are?) presumed 'fulfilled' in caring for others.

The clothes are washed, the house is clean.
 I find my pen and start to write.
 Something like hatred forks between
 My child and me. She kicks her good
 new well-selected toys with spite
 around the room, and whines for food.

....
 Night now ...
 Day's trivial angers cease.
 All is required, until one wins,
 at last, this hour. I start to write.
 My husband calls me, rich in peace,
 to bed. Now deathless verse, good night.
 The pulse of song grows faint, and dies.
 Out of their pit the furies rise.

Gwen Harwood, in B. Roberts, 1981:97

People living outside urban areas faced special problems. Seldom were material services - running water, electricity, sewage .. satisfactory, nor were such health, educational or welfare services as accessible as those being developed in the cities. Then, as now, the problem with such services was that those who utilised them benefited most. Those who could not make use of them were either living too far away, or did not know of their existence or relevance.

In coal-mining areas and some rural areas, women formed auxiliaries or groups in order to get a better deal for themselves and those close to them.⁹ Attitudes deeply entrenched between male and female, and the practical necessity of ekeing out a living spelt hardship, however, for many people.

In a poem called 'The Shearer's Wife', Louis Esson draws attention to the long day of toil.

Before the glare o' dawn I rise
 To milk the sleepy cows, an' shake
 The droving dust from tired eyes.
 I set the rabbit traps, then bake
 The children's bread.
 There's hay to stook, an' beans to hoe ...

⁹ For examples, see Windshuttle (1980).

I patch an' darn, now evening comes,
 An' tired I am with labour sore,
 Tired of the bush, the cows, the gums ...

in Keesing, 1977:47

Women, regardless of time spent in paid labour or in work 'outside' the house were/are still expected to be responsible for both housekeeping and 'the children'. Motherhood, it has been said, introduces a woman to the 24 hour a day shift, on a seven day a week roster.

With the definition of a child-as-a-resource-of-the-state, and this awareness grew towards the end of the nineteenth century but fully bloomed in the early part of this century, so too did legislation designed to define, monitor and sanction practices concerning the child-as-a-resource. Developments in areas such as medicine, education, psychology and environmental concerns were harnessed to this end, and an intertwining network of institutional processes served dramatically to improve both the health and welfare of most children in the Australian community (see next section).

The introduction of Maternity Allowances and Child Endowment¹⁰ in particular served as practicable examples of state interest and concern. Both were designed to provide a minimum guarantee of financial security for a child. Implicit in such payments is the recognition of the economic cost of having a child, and that the mother is the channel of state intervention in 'families'.

Government intervention, or rather government interest in the definition and practice of family praxis, had begun within ten years of the colony's beginning - or before, if one takes into account the population structure of the new colony. Like an octopus, tentacles crept into all sorts of

¹⁰ That is, the Maternity Allowance Act 1912; though various States had Child Endowment Acts prior to 1941 it was not a matter of national legislation until that time. See Roe (1976).

areas. These policies - blatant or concealed, deliberate or 'byproducts' of other practices - economic, religious, legal - directly impinged on people's lives; they were/are about the ordering of power. People were/are defined and treated as - in their status positions - as male and female, wives or husbands, as mothers, or male children, rather than as people.

If you want educated, trained, healthy and loyal workers, the State must step in ... the modern State cannot afford to leave ... these things to individual families because they do a lousy job of it.

Edgar, 1980b:8

Each week she hauls the family foodstuffs from the other end of town. 'It's this way,' she explained. 'Dad and the kids call me Mum, and everyone else our end of town from the doctor to the dustman calls me Nellie. Uptown no one knows me and the tradespeople call me Madam like any other lady.'

Australian Woman's Mirror,
15 April 1953, in Keesing, 1977:131

Contemporary Australia

There is a glut of information and opinion about Australia. Academics in many disciplines, journalists, novelists .. all have difficulty in trying to capture the complexity and ambience of a country spread over such a vast geographical space.

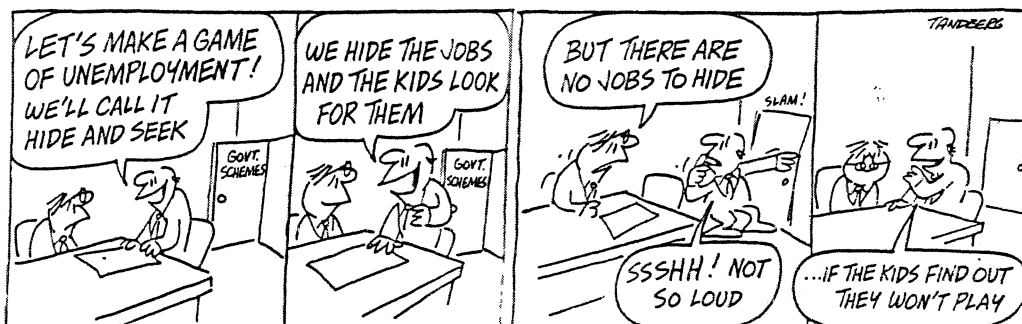
The reality of what goes on among the millions of people on the Australian continent is immensely different from the reality of ink on paper. To get from one to the other, a writer must select, compress, simplify, distort.

Connell, 1974:40

And risk stereotyping, simplistic comment.

Australia is inhabited by a diversity of peoples: Greek, Turkish, Italian, Spanish, Lebanese, Maltese, South American, Vietnamese, Chinese, Indian, Polish, Hungarian, Irish, English, Scottish .. Some people identify with a State rather than Australia; people jest that it takes an overseas trip to bring out an 'Australian identification'. As a country it is deeply imprinted by its past; as noted in the previous pages, attitudes to human beings, to males and females, to authority, were formed in the early decades of the first settlement. So too the structure and direction of economic development, and the accompanying social stratification which capitalism necessarily invokes. The scars remain: the treatment then, of Aborigines - harsh and unjust as it was, is still a matter of reckoning. The dependence brought about by colonialism still bites, though some would suggest that Australia, once a daughter of the British Empire, is now but a foster child of the United States.

Headlines on the evening news programmes and in the daily papers 'inform' the public about the rise and fall of inflation and consumer costs; debates are held in both State and Commonwealth parliaments about the wage freeze, about tax increases, union disputes, and in the pub. These are all problems shared by other countries but the language used, the kind of heat generated, and the ways in which the problems are defined, dealt with, resolved or shelved .. reflect a peculiarly Australian character.



Australia has an image of being a democratic country - an open society, where 'anyone can make it if they try'; where everyone can buy their own home, and have access to higher education, if they want it. 'Egalitarian' used to be a common descriptive term but the meaning has changed, subtly, and now Australia is considered 'middle class': 'the family' is seen as central in that image.

Yet the late 1970s and early 1980s have seen a blurring of that image, and in reality. Unemployment figures have rocketed, and people in a cross-section of trades and professions as well as the 'unskilled' have lost positions previously thought secure. Each year a high proportion of school leavers have been unable to get jobs, and a number of band-aid unemployment schemes have been introduced. Mortgages became increasingly difficult to obtain, and to finance, and interest rates became prohibitively high, though the situation is always changing.

Awareness of child abuse became a matter of public concern in the early 1970s and this too gave pause for a stock-taking: the gap between the ideal of loving parents and the reality of violence was a harsh contradiction. So too the rising divorce rate .. Yet the image of the 'Australian way of life' remains barely tarnished.

It is plain that the mass of the people accept the socio-economic system of capitalism as the normal and natural condition of life; alternatives are seen as exotic, alien, and often threatening. Their chief hopes are for private fulfilment, in a family context, and personal success in work, sex, and social relations. In a limited sense capitalism delivers the goods, in the shape of a home, a living wage, and a supply of consumer goods and entertainments - though the unions have a constant struggle to maintain the workers' share of the cake ...

Connell, in Dwyer, 1977:28

In 1964, Horne published a book called The Lucky Country: he was damning with faint praise a country which has survived, in his opinion, by good luck rather than good management, yet the phrase 'the lucky country', became a popular catchcry or image of Australia. It is commonly interpreted as meaning 'aren't we lucky to have all these resources, this space .. to be so removed from riots, from the nuclear threat ..'

People have always lived in poverty in this country. Food was short in the early days, and still is, for some:

A bloke is supposed to be able to support his wife, and for someone else to have to give her food, that hurt.

The Age, 20 January 1983

The media tends to individualise hard luck stories, the commercial television networks especially playing on the 'sympathy chords' with pictures of elderly pensioners sitting alone in their flat, or a single mother and her two preschool children sitting gazing out the window of their Housing-Commission-high-rise-flat. Thousands in Australia, especially those dependent on pensions, or tertiary students, live below the poverty line,¹¹ but debate about the reasons for this situation is deflected; questions about the assumptions on which such a society as Australia exist get ignored. To expose the inequality in society, to acknowledge such injustice, would necessitate a massive cover-up, or a restructuring of society. This would be both painful and injurious to those who have a vested interest in the status quo. The political system, by its design, also ensures short-term planning rather than long-term strategies are desirable; this further impedes a recognition of the true nature of inequality.

¹¹ A concept accepted in Australia during the Henderson inquiry: see Henderson *et al.* (1970); Troy (1981).

In the early 1970s John Berry, a Canadian academic visiting Australia accused Australians of being sexist, racist, militaristic, and anti-intellectual. His comments aroused a storm of protest, and sometimes, recognition. I believe all these elements are present in Australian praxis.

Sexist language is burnt into the vocabulary in this country: girls may be referred to as surfie chicks, dolls, birds, the bitch, moll .. married women are often referred to by their husbands as 'the Mrs', the cook, cheese and kisses (Mrs), or 'Mum'. Any woman, regardless of age, may be called a girl, or love. Men are given nicknames, or referred to affectionately as 'the old bastard', or mate.

Women, as reflected in these terms, are identified strongly with sexual activity and/or 'family'. However, for men, suggests Summers, family is largely

... part of an assumed background. It is just one stopping place in their landscape of experience.

Summers, 1975:32

In 1958 Kathleen Fitzpatrick summed up what is to me one of the most poignant, painful aspects of being in Australia: she said that

... women have a legal right to do almost anything, but they are in fact hedged in with invisible barriers which keep them, as it were, on the outer of our national life.

in Summers, 1975:20

Little has changed. ¹²

Berry's second accusation also has an historical base. Aboriginals were deliberately exterminated in Tasmania; no

¹² See pages following.

policy could be more racist. The Chinese who flocked to this country during the gold rush years reputedly had a hard time, as have 'dark-skinned' peoples ever since.

For the first half of this century there was a White Australia immigration policy. Quotes from these days sound out the prejudice, but labels such as wops, wogs, frogs, chows, ching .. attest to the existence of such feelings today. Billy Hughes claimed in a pre-election campaign in 1901 ...

Our chief plank is, of course, a white Australia. There is no compromise about that. The industrious coloured brother has to go and remain away.

King, 1978:66

A Victorian clergyman, campaigning in the same election:

... a noble ideal of a White Australia, a snow-white Australia ... Let us be pure spotless and let there be no attempt to blend a superior with an inferior race.

in King, 1978:66

More than three million migrants have entered Australia since the second world war. They were encouraged for one reason: their labour. Australia wanted their muscle power but not their souls, nor customs, nor symbols .. only in recent decades has there been recognition of their rights, as people. It was assumed such people would assimilate; debate about assimilation and/or integration, and/or pluralism and/or multiculturalism has continued for years.¹³ Official policy may state movement towards a recognition of cultural diversity, but at the grass roots level years of ingrained prejudice and fear may take years of un-learning. As with New Zealanders growing up in the 1930s and 1940s, England was commonly referred to as 'home', though 'poms' have not met with a warm welcome at times either.

¹³ See Martin (1978); Martin (1981).

The label of militaristic is not such a 'sticking' one: the Vietnam days in Australia were strong ones for anti-militaristic action. Australia, like New Zealand, is 'removed' by physical factors from the turmoil and nuclear protests in Europe, though there is a groundswell of protest starting to make itself heard. There is almost a 'surreal' attitude towards war: loud noises when the defence budget is announced or a ship is to be purchased; a strong surge of emotionalism and patriotism on 25 April each year,¹⁴ and an air of 'it won't happen to us' for much of the rest of the time.

A student in a second year university political science tutorial asked, in 1982, 'What's Watergate?'¹⁵ This sense of living in the NOW, living right-here, is one aspect of Berry's fourth accusation.

Australians are accused of being anti-intellectual; of not wanting to explore, to delve. Eugene Kamenka¹⁶ described Australia as a Methodist country, a country anxious

... not to stress anything that was divisive. A country that is utilitarian, practical-minded.

'Tall poppies get cut down' is a saying often heard in conversation. People who challenge, whether it be in politics, education, religion, in academia .. whether it be in words or action or art .. all are liable to be ridiculed, ostracised, attacked if their ideas or questions are too provocative, too different, too threatening.

One of the feeblest props for an inadequate self-system is the attitude of disparaging others ... If you are a molehill then, by God, there shall be no mountains. In a

¹⁴ ANZAC day remembrance of wars fought by Australian and New Zealand services.

¹⁵ Monash University, 1982.

¹⁶ Australian Broadcasting Corporation interview, 15 May 1983.

good many ways one can read the whole state of a person's self-respect from his disparagement of others.

Sullivan, in Conway, 1978:144

And a country's.

Passmore ¹⁷ said that what this country lacks is imagination, vision. People who claim such vision, or try to develop their imagination and creativity are inviting sanction especially if they be children, women, or members of a minority group. Such people are jiggling the status quo, and it is as if 'this' is so fragile as to disallow any quiver or minor shake.

D.H. Lawrence was extreme in his condemnation of this deification of the established world. His words find echoes in many of the novels, texts, commentaries on contemporary Australia.

This is the most democratic place I have ever been in, And the more I see of democracy the more I dislike it. It just brings everything down to the mere vulgar level of wages and prices ... You never knew anything so nothing ... They have good wages, they wear smart boots and the girls all have silk stockings ... That's what the life in a new country does to you: makes you so material, so outward that your real inner life and your inner self dies out and you clatter around like so many mechanical animals.

in Manning Clark, 1980:5

Berry might well have added the characteristic of being materialistic. ¹⁸ Again this has historical roots.

¹⁷ Australian Broadcasting Corporation interview, 8 May 1983.

¹⁸ See Part 3:14.

In a convict society, material possessions were the symbol of the free man. Since then they have represented a handrail for white Australians' passage through a haunted continent. It is a desperate, touching, attempt to grasp human meaning from out of the abyss of Time.

Blazey, in King, 1978:41

Strong words with a core of truth. Australians do seem pre-occupied with gathering unto their three bedroomed homes a large number of possessions. Videos and microwaves and kitchen whizzes and computers sell well in Australia; so do cars and overseas holidays and the latest in gadgetry - home tools, garden tools, kitchen tools.

The connections between people, and people and 'things', I am less sure about in Australian society. I am 'grasping for meaning' yet I cannot locate the source of meaning/s which give rise to an Australian weltanschauung or society ethos.

Again D.H. Lawrence is vehement in his attack, but his words 'ring':

The bulk of Australians don't care about Australia ... because they care about nothing at all, neither in earth below or heaven above ... And they live in defiance, a sort of slovenly defiance of care of any sort, human or inhuman, good or bad ... It seems to me they think it manly ... not to care, not to think, not to attend to life at all, but just tramp blankly from moment to moment ...

in Conway, 1971:252-253

Many writers have talked about the Australian talent for indifference (see King, 1978; Manning Clark, 1980); perhaps a-difference is a preferable term. Such writers talk of non-involvement in politics, in attitudes to work; a lack of interest or empathy for any one outside one's immediate circle, or for anyone who is 'different', except if they threaten. Colloquialisms carry this a-difference: she'll be right,

mate; bugger you Jack, I'm alright; Dinkum, she's for real; any bloke can do it, if they'd only try ...

Women are traditionally the human beings considered responsible for the nurturing, the emotion in society; perhaps because of their power-lessness this image of a-difference has been able to remain. Increasingly poetry, books, art, is flooding the market in Australia from women and this tells of a different reality, but the public reality is that of mateship - and a-difference.

Mateship is not the same as friendship; it is a characteristic of males only, and is essentially practical. A mate will do anything for you - loan you his lawnmower, help paint the house, drive his mate's sheila to the hospital, mend the neighbour's car. Seldom, it seems, do mates share a 'deep' friendship: intimacy appears skin deep, a matter to be wary of, and outward signs of friendship - apart from hefty slaps on the back, scorned and considered embarrassing.¹⁹ Obviously this is exaggeration, as talking in generalities always is, but I am still trying to address C.W. Mills' questions:

What varieties of men and women now prevail ... in what ways are they ... made sensitive and blunted ..

I am struck by the suspicion between friends; power, particularly in hierarchical set-ups, intrudes and makes cooperative sharing always-at-risk; friendships between males are sometimes met with raised eyebrows, and those between a male and a female greeted with suspicion: 'you don't really believe there's nothing sexual in it, do you?'

Listen to the silences, the unasked questions, the blanks ... Listen to the voices of the women and the voices of the men; observe the space men allow themselves, physically and verbally ...

¹⁹ See Appendix E. Also O'Connor (1981).

Look at the faces of the silent, and of
those who speak.

Rich, 1980:243

The bourgeois state is a tranquilizer
pill with lethal side-effects.

Cooper, 1971:35

Via our parents, we are pinioned in a density of age, gender, geographical, cultural, historical .. factors (Part 3:1, page 449). From them we inherit the world, and learn how to live in that concrete material world. Whether one is rich or struggling, in control of one's life or running hard just to keep up .. the cultural heritage and milieu will affect us to the core of our being. Also influential and transforming will be the resources we are able to draw upon - people, knowledge, language, wealth .. and our first access to these resources is in the context of 'family'.

In the next part, focus is not on generalities in contemporary Australia, but on institutional praxis and parenting: again the selection system is arbitrary. I have chosen to concentrate on the state, on the legal system, on education, health and the media .. and I deal with them in 'separate' sections, a travesty of reality.

The State ²⁰ and Parenting Praxis

One of the defining factors in parenting praxis in the twentieth century is that of state intervention. Increasingly the state has taken upon itself the major responsibility for providing health services, education, income security provision, and to a lesser extent child care, and housing. Increasingly, individuals/families became/become dependent on such service provision. Initially perceived as 'charity', state intervention is now commonly seen as a right, in the dual sense; the right of the state to intervene, and the right of the individual/family to be provided for and supported.

There have always been/will always be contradictions inherent in such institutional practices. In no more literal sense can there be ambiguity about the ownership and control of (the future) means of production. The contradictions can be simplistically dichotomised:

individual	....	state
person	....	subject/citizen
family person	....	state family citizen
right	....	duty, obligation
benefit	....	cost
care	....	control
autonomy	....	dependence

Always there is a thin dividing-line between state intrusion, seen in a negative light, and state intervention, perceived as inevitable and 'natural'.

The exercise of power can produce as much acceptance as may be wished for ... In itself the exercise of power is not violence; nor is it a consent which, implicitly, is renewable ... it incites, it induces, it seduces, it makes easier

²⁰ State defined as the body politic - includes government and political machinery.

or more difficult; in the extreme it
constrains or forbids absolutely ...

Foucault, 1982:220

The ordering of power relations has increasingly been weighted
on the side of the state and not the individual:

Power relations are rooted in the system
of social networks ... (such) relations
have been progressively governmentalised
... elaborated, rationalised, and central-
ised in the form of, or under the auspices
of, state institutions.

Foucault, 1982:224
(brackets added)

We (and we is used to imply multiple ownership) ²¹ now assume
that each child will have access to health care; will have
a compulsory education, and protection from physical and
severe emotional abuse: that all people should have adequate
shelter, access to public transport, and facilities such as
sewage, water supplies, electricity .. and to services such
as libraries, post offices, telephones. Such taken-for-granted
material conditions are of recent origin and are not available
to most people in the world. The social construction of these
services, especially the state support network, is now seen
as a necessary and inevitable concrete reality. The quality
of our lives is substantially improved by the provision of
such services (see Appendix F) and the knowledge that the
state will help us out. We are, however, in debt or beholden
to the state because of these services, and become correspond-
ingly power-less as a result. We fail to see the extent of
our seduction.

Embedded in state praxis are conceptions of human beings,
of male-ness and female-ness, of 'family' .. though there is
no unified or adopted family policy in Australia such policy

²¹ See Part 1:3.

seeps through every pore of state praxis.²² Each decision made in the Family Court, each social service introduced, cut, modified, ignored .. is based on beliefs and values which form part of the 'mischance' family policy operating in Australia.

What we have discovered ... is that Australia's policy makers frequently hold views similar to those shown on television.

Edgar, The Age, 25 May 1983

Further:

Families portrayed on television in our sample had a traditional conservative aura to them with middle-class males in white-collar jobs and fulltime housewife spouses. In reality only 25 percent of families with children under eighteen follow this pattern.

Direct state intervention in families targets particular family members, or people-in-roles - mothers, single mothers, or widows, or unmarried fathers, or the 'child'. Two striking examples of this targeting illustrate the contradictions and care for the family-as-a-unit-of-roles rather than for individuals.

If in a traditional family, five people are unemployed, four are likely to receive the unemployment benefit, but the fifth will not because she is a married woman and dependent on her husband. Her sons/daughters will do so.

A second example. Because families are considered 'private', the place where they live is also considered 'private' (the idea of an Englishman's home is his castle transported to Australia). Work goes on in that context twenty four hours a day, seven days a week, potentially, yet the worker (commonly the adult woman) is not insured as with industrial accident

²² See Troy (1981:10). The danger is that people are persuaded to accept that unequal treatment is equitable.

compensation in other workplaces (see Kingston, 1981).

Because there is no houseworkers union, conditions of employment, and minimum standards of work-place are seldom examined, except in extreme circumstances. Women suffer most from this 'non'-policy.

The family, motherhood, children, the home, the right to privacy and a house of one's own, are unassailable points of the democratic consensus ...

Edgar, 1980b:5-6

but

parents should be taught how to educate our future citizens; it cannot be left to chance, and we cannot assume parental competence.

1980b:14

Such (soft) functionalist thinking blurs the issues of individual-state relations, but underlies the importance of this notion of ubiquitous state control. Questions about control for whom, for what .. clarification of Commonwealth power vis a vis state or local body power .. thinking about alternative goals and means becomes less important than implementing such action.

In the area of child welfare, for instance, Chisholm argues that two conflicting models of control are in operation. One he describes as the 'criminal justice model', which sees a child as

... a dangerous and deliberate law breaker, and responds with punishment in the hope of achieving the aims of retribution, protection of society by the temporary incapacitation of the offender (in an institution), and the deterrence of both that child and other children from committing further offences.

The 'social welfare' model sees both offending and non-offending children as victims of circumstances (whether personal, familial or social) ... and (sees) the need for intervention to 'help' or 'treat' the child.

Chisholm, 1979:213

Another point made by Chisholm succinctly captures the impact of these contradictory or mischance policies of the state:

The child welfare system is an important factor, not only in our response to ... problems, but in our definition of them.

1979:216

As 'suburban neurosis' was first seen as a problem belonging to women rather than the society's structure, so, too, claims Chisholm, such problems as truancy: these are blamed on the child, and seldom is the question raised about the adequacy of the education system to meet his/her needs; as with other institutional praxis ..

Implicit in state praxis is a concept of what is 'normal' and by corollary what is not-normal; what is acceptable .. and what is deviant. If behaviour can be classified as being a 'problem', then an enticing array of 'experts' ²³ can be brought into supposedly effect change in that behaviour; the person concerned, or the 'family', school, business .. can be persuaded, perhaps, to become 'ordinary' again. In Foucault's sense-ing

... 'ordinary' implies ... a state of being which is shapeless, unremarkable, bland ...

in Sennett, 1981:92

23 See p. 531.

In Heidegger's terms - inauthentic.

In a submission to the Royal Commission on Human Relationships (RCHR), a leading welfare agency said:

The underlying premise of so many proposals is the need to fit people's needs into systems rather than to change or modify systems ... In a country rich in material resources and technical skills, we should not accept the future as being predetermined. A wide range of choices as to future societies is available to Australians.

RCHR, Vol. 4:17

In another submission, the comment was more trenchant:

Planning appears to have been confused with control, with erosion of individual and group liberties.

RCHR, Vol. 4:25

Certainly state control of 'family', especially through education, health services and the legal system, interrupts, intrudes, infuses what people do, can do .. in their private lives. Bertrand Russell once predicted that

... the socialisation of reproduction - the supercession of the family by the state - would 'make sex love itself more trivial', encourage 'a certain triviality in all personal relations', and 'make it far more difficult to take an interest in anything after one's own death.'

in Lasch, 1980:187

The professionalisation of parenting, of child-rearing, of 'family life', has led to increasing numbers of people enrolling for parent education classes, seeking help at counselling centres, and losing confidence in themselves as parents.

You seemed to feel you ought to love us all the time. But there is no human relationship where you love the other person at every moment.

Rich, 1977:23

Criticism of this professionalisation reflects the current ambiguity and confusion:

Modern social policies ... are predicated on the supposition that they are in the best interests of the child, family ... Yet all too often, implementation of such policies reveals conceptual confusion and professional bias, and the pursuit of sectional political interests.

Brous, Green and Jaggs, 1980:38

In the United States, a Carnegie Report on 'family' in 1977 took issue

with the conventional assumption of parental incompetence ... They recognise that many of the agencies ostensibly ministering to the family have undermined the family instead.

Lasch, 1980:226

Parenting praxis and family life would be vastly different without state support: ²⁴ in fact, the state has been described as a 'sort of milch-cow' (Edgar, 1980b:15). The irony and catastrophe of state intervention is the growing loss of credibility in the state in both its ability to provide services which meet the needs of people, and its financial ability to do so. An emptying coffer, a re-ordering of priorities - defence over social welfare, or capital works over education .. leads to a growing uncertainty not only about the state's ability to perform but its preparedness to do so. And the question of people's dependency on the state has to be addressed and thought through.

24 See Appendix F.

In Britain in 1981 a study was made into child poverty.²⁵ The conservative estimate made by the researcher, John Pichaud, was that 2.4 million children were living in poverty in Britain.

Britain has a similar 'welfare blanket' to Australia; both countries subscribe to the principle of 'in the best interests of the child'. One is led, then, to question in whose interest has state intervention been up till now, and to wonder if present practices are inadequate or mis-targeted or simply not sufficient in coverage - financial or scope. The Institute of Family Studies in Australia is undertaking a similar study so 'answers' should become available shortly.

Hopefully such inquiries, such storm clouds, will lead to an examination of what is happening, and why. The assumptions underlying the present service policies and provisions need to be uncovered. There is an inbuilt contradiction between intervention which is primarily for social control and the concept of individual rights: failing to acknowledge that contradiction will not solve the present chaos.

Tocqueville foresaw last century what might happen, given the advent of 'welfare statism'.

... it is likely that a kind of well-meaning materialism ... is going to be established in the world, one which will not corrupt the soul but noiselessly unbend its springs of action.

in Sennett, 1981:118

People find it difficult to 'speak' if confidence in themselves has been diligently sapped, and those dependent on the state cannot/do not exude a bubbling desire to try and change a system on which they are increasingly dependent.

²⁵ The Age, 2 April 1983.

The Law and Parenting Praxis

On page one of this thesis the following sentence appears:

These (parenting) relationships are commonly considered so crucial ... so they are defined, monitored and sanctioned by societal institutions ...

In no other institution are these processes so explicitly spelt out as in law, yet law is but a tool.

Law is one of the tools through which policy decisions are made about children. It is a powerful and complex tool, capable of doing harm in clumsy hands.

Chisholm, 1980a:226

Too frequently there is attributed to law and its agents a magical power - a power to do what is far beyond its means. While the law may claim to establish relationships, it can in fact do little more than give them recognition and provide an opportunity for them to develop ... It may be able to destroy human relationships; but it does not have the power to compel them.

Goldstein, Freud and Solnit,
1973:49-50

Law, as with other institutional praxis, is essentially about the ordering of power yet there nestles about 'the law', the legal system, about legislation .. an aura of objectivity, and a belief in its omnipotence. For example, if the law says a relationship is terminated, then it is, as in adoption law.

Section 33(1):

- (a) the adopted child becomes a child of the adopter or adopters ... as if the child had been born to the adopter or adopters in lawful wedlock;
- (b) the adopted child ceases to be a child of any person who was a parent (whether

natural or adoptive) ... and any such person ceases to be a parent of the child ...

Australian Capital Territory Law ²⁶

Many people exist regardless of the law: such people live as if the law only intervenes 'when something goes wrong' - in matters of divorce, custody disputes, or children in need of care. Other people live 'outside' the protective aspects of law, though the law is wakening to people in such situations as in de facto relationships; to the claims of unmarried fathers. ²⁷

The relationship of law and 'family' is a complex one riddled with ambiguity and paradox, but mostly evolving on a double axis; the relationship of a husband and wife in marriage, ²⁸ and that of a parent and his/her child/ren. Marriage has been a central aspect to family law for over one hundred years, but that is slowly changing. However, most areas of family law still concern the distribution of power along these axes.

Areas of family law include:

definition of status: of an adult; child;
 husband; wife; father; mother.
 guardianship and custody of children, including questions of access.
 birth outside marriage.
 fertility control: contraception, abortion, sterilisation, artificial insemination, in vitro fertilisation.
 adoption and foster care.

²⁶ Contained in Australian National University Faculty of Law Handbook, 1979.

²⁷ See p. 513.

²⁸ See page 512.

family property and financial provision;
 social security for disrupted families.
 'informal' domestic arrangements - for ex-
 ample de facto relationships, Aboriginal
 adoption.
 welfare of family members - domestic vio-
 lence, including rape, child abuse, incest;
 children in need of care ..
 duties of parents in regard to medical pro-
 tection, education ..
 state intervention in family relationships.

The legal system undergirds the whole institution of 'family'.
 One major criticism is that it is primarily middle class ²⁹
 in context and definition: until recently it has also been
 Anglo-Saxon in its 'thinking', though efforts are being made
 to acknowledge the pluralistic nature of Australian society. ³⁰

Family law is conservative law, carrying as its heritage
 centuries of contradictions based on assumptions about human
 beings. Family law thus perpetuates and legitimates inequal-
 ity.

In law, the individual is not seen primarily as an in-
 dividual but as a status-individual, that is, in relation to
 another status-individual: husband to wife; parent to child;
 adoptee to adoptive parent or natural parent .. The law
 finds it hard to deal with strong emotion - hate, love,
 apathy ... for its praxis is channeled into, and petrified in,
 'objective' words and such rigid status categories; hence the
 conundrums involved in using a 'rational' tool to deal with
 the 'ir-rational' problems of being human.

29 'middle-class' - people who 'are not at the centre of
 things, but have enough authority or autonomy such that
 they are not just "told what to do".' (Chamberlain, 1983:
 xi).

30 See for example Family Law in Australia: a Report of the
 Joint Select Committee on the Family Law Act (1980:127-128).

Three basic assumptions underly family law: the centrality of marriage to family praxis; the 'mother' principle; and the notion that biological parentage automatically confers rights, except when these are legislated away, as in adoption, or the parents are not married.

First, marriage.

The primary reason for its (marriage) evolution as a social institution ... is in order that children begotten of the husband and born of the wife will be recognised by society as the family of that husband and wife. Marriage would appear to be a product of the recognition actual or instinctive of participation by the male in the process of conception.

in Family Law Handbook,
Australian National University, 1978:33

One of the consequences of this thinking is that husbands and/or fathers are seen as being necessary to legitimise a child; only recently has the status of a child born out of wedlock not been considered a handicap,³¹ yet in the Declaration of the Rights of a Child (UN), Principle 1 says:

The child shall enjoy ... these rights without distinction or discrimination on account of race, colour, sex ... birth or other status.

Secondly, the 'mother' principle. The official policy in the Family Law Courts of Australia is that both parents have an equal right to seek custody in the event of a marriage being dissolved. A decision will then be made on individual merit. One of the more glaring lapses in that policy was contained in a judgment delivered in the NSW Court of Appeal in 1976. A statement was made in which the judge chose to dispense with the evidence of a psychologist and a psychiatrist,

³¹ See p. 362, Part 3:1.

the Court preferring to rely on

... the common knowledge possessed by all citizens of the ordinary human nature of mothers; which includes an awareness that young children are best off with both parents, but if the parents have separated, they are better off with their mother. The bond between a child and a good mother ... expresses itself in an unrelenting and self-sacrificing fondness ... Fathers and stepmothers may seek to emulate it and on occasions do so with tolerable success. But the mother's attachment is biologically determined by deep genetic forces which can never apply to them.

in Burns and Goodnow, 1979:192

This judgment did arouse a lot of comment both within the legal profession and outside; one of the key questions that it gives rise to: how is it that 'deep genetic forces' only apply to 'good mothers'? How does one account for 'bad mothers'?

Another legitimated inequality and contradiction: if a woman gives birth to a child outside wedlock she is the parent: often 'the father' has to fight for access to have the right to be named, for basic rights accorded to him, if he were married, are given to the mother of his child.

Chisholm, in a telling article, writes of Peter who had lived with Mary in a de facto relationship for eight years. The relationship broke up while Mary was pregnant. Peter, after the birth, elected to go to court when Mary refused him access to their child. He also wanted:

to be publicly recorded as his son's father
to have continuing contact with his son
to be in a position if Mary was unable to
care for her son that he could take over.

Chisholm concluded the article by saying:

It is time the law stopped protecting children against people like Peter.

Chisholm, 1980c:282

This was put in more formal language by Eeklaar:

It appears that a father's efforts to maintain contact with his legitimate children count towards a discharge of his 'obligations'; but those of a putative father are selfish and pleasure seeking ... It is not regarded in the child's interest if their mother attempts to conceal an earlier failed marriage: yet it is in their interests if she disguises (perhaps even from them) their origin ...

in Burns and Goodnow, 1979:204

The difficulties involved in trying to decide between a child and his/her parents and between parents can be recognised as traumatic: we ask the courts to play god and then criticise their judgments. But the assumptions on which the legal system sits, and the inconsistencies, the contradictions, must be revealed. The 'mother principle' is still a living principle in society. But in cases before the Family Law Court it was revealed that:

a large proportion of fathers are content to allow the mother to have custody of the children;

where the matter is fully defended there is an increasing tendency for custody to be awarded to the father;

the status quo, that is to say the existing placement of the children, was infrequently disturbed by order of the court.

in Family Law in Australia,
Vol. 1, 1980:44

The absurdity of continuing with the 'mother principle' as a myth³² whilst saying each parent has equal access or custody

³² 'Myth' used in an anthropological sense - a charter of reality.

rights is shown in the following lengthy quote: I do not know the details of this case, but am using the story to illustrate so brazenly the kinds of tangles caused in parenting situations by the law. I am certain similar stories could be told in Australia and New Zealand.

A Point of Personal Privilege

You've never met my three lovely daughters - Laura, Bebo, and Lulie - but, as a stranger turned friend, you could walk them down to the corner candy store for a soda, take them out to dinner, have them stay overnight with your children, come over to help them with their homework, or have them just drop by to visit.

As their father, I have none of these rights.

Although the letter of the custody law gives each parent equal rights in divorce, the court has done everything possible, under law, to make me an ex-father as well as an ex-husband, all in the name of 'what's best for the children', a doctrine no one has been able to define legally or psychologically.

I've never lived more than five minutes - a few New York city blocks - away from my children since my separation and divorce, but, as far as the court was concerned, it would have made little difference if I had moved to the suburbs or to California.

When my children want help with their homework, they have to call me on the phone. They can't stroll down to my house to do their studying, even though a babysitter is the only person with them two or three nights a week. When we're stumped, the children come down to my car at 7.30 the next morning, before we leave for school, to work out the remaining problems. In the eyes of the court it is more important for them to be at home, near their beds, than to be with their father.

When their mother is away for a week or two for an emergency or on vacation, the children are sent to live with friends or relatives, not their father, although I am able to care for them and they ask to stay with me. During one of these vacations the rigid rules for visitation forced me to see the children on Thursday night, take

them to my former wife's relatives after dinner, pick them up at 8.00 the next morning to take them to school, and pick them up from school later that day to begin our alternate weekend in the country.

On another occasion, I had to invent a reason to be in the vicinity where two of my daughters were staying so that I could join them for dinner. Both the children were left with the feeling that I was 'sneaking by' to see them.

There is no logic behind these arrangements, but if I were to rebel and violate the schedule of Thursday after school until 8.00 and alternate weekends, I might have to appear before a judge like a criminal and face the prospect of spending even less time with my children. The court has put a wall around the children that strangers can penetrate but that excludes their father. It is easy to become paranoid in such a situation, but my case is not unique. In many ways, I'm better off than most ex-fathers.

Roman and Haddad, 1978:1-2

Thirdly, biological parentage automatically confers rights. This is one of the most deeply embedded social constructions of parenting praxis; the ultimate challenge to it is when the state, through its welfare and legal arms, obtains a court order to remove a child/ren from the parents 'ownership'.

Biological parents are credited with an invariable, instinctively based positive tie to the child ... This so-called blood-tie gives them first right to the possession of the child. This claim ... is confirmed by a birth certificate.

Goldstein, Freud and Solnit,
1973:16-17

That 'positive tie' is often sorely tested. One of the most difficult, sensitive areas of law-parenting praxis is family violence. 'Good parents' don't abuse their children: good husbands don't beat their wives; fathers never sleep with their daughters - it's unthinkable .. so go the fables in our society, yet the family is slowly being recognised as the most

violent institution in society. ³³

Parents, by virtue of being parents, have for centuries been considered able to deal with their children 'as they deem fit' as long as they do not exceed certain limits. Physical punishment blurs easily into physical abuse and the debates over mandatory reporting of suspicion of such abuse illustrate clearly the sensitivity of feeling and confusion about the issue. One wonders often, if the child's feelings are being considered, or the parent's, or the adult who is suspicious. Respect for the privacy of the individual, 'the family' .. has led to a child's death. South Australia was the first State in Australia to make reporting mandatory in 1969; it is still not a uniform law in this country.

Incest is now openly talked about as a topic on talk-back shows, in forums at conferences, in magazines, and people report with wary astonishment the surmised high incidence of incest. Even so, the questioning of basic assumptions - are some parents not able, not willing, not competent, to care for their own children? Should some people be sterilised? Should children be able to walk out on their parents? Such questions are deflected, ignored, remain unasked for the assumptions buried in Goldstein, Freud and Solnit's comments are too embedded in our human-being praxis.

In Newcastle, New South Wales, I worked both at the Teachers' College ³⁴ and as a Family Liaison Teacher in a secondary school. In this latter position I was presented with ten 'cases' of incest in my first week and I was told by one of the third year students at College that in his first fifteen rugby team at secondary school,

³³ See especially RCHR, Vol. 4, Sections 9, 10, 11 and 12; and O'Donnell and Craney (1982).

³⁴ 1974, 1975.

... it was more normal to have intercourse with your sister, the first time, 'cause then you did not make a fool of yourself with a stranger.

David Campbell, 1974

I had to try and 'think myself inside' their way of thinking before I could deal with the situation.

Enshrined in the law are ways of thinking, behaving, beliefs about what a 'family' should be like, what they should do, should not do, and about what various members in the family should do in their respective status positions.

In 1961 the Marriage Act was introduced in Australia: this replaced nine separate systems of State and Territory law with one Federal law. This Act was replaced in 1975 with the Family Law Act. This was hailed as a radical piece of legislation by many. However, Section 43 of that Act contains the following principles for the Courts:

- (a) the need to preserve and protect the institution of marriage as the union of a man and a woman to the exclusion of all others voluntarily entered into for life;
- (b) the need to give the widest possible protection and assistance to the family as the natural and fundamental group unit of society, particularly while it is responsible for the care and education of dependent children.

The presumed 'natural and fundamental unit' includes a power structuring which is biased sometimes for the woman - as in the instance that if 'she' has no male on whom to rely for financial support the state will render assistance; mostly for the male - as in the inequitable distribution of labour.

Until 1983 the Family Law Courts could deal only with married people and their 'natural' born children or adopted children; they could not deal with stepchildren, or ex-nuptial children, or with a child born to one adult and not the other;

these remained State matters. Implicit and explicit was a distinction between one form of family and all others.

Law is essentially about the ordering of power, and one of the chief tools it uses is the concept of 'rights'. The concept is an ambiguous one, fraught with multiple interpretations, open to abuse and lobbying, and to intellectual definition and discussion rather than practicable action. The concept carries both a descriptive and normative meaning: what is, and what should be. ³⁵

At the centre of western ideology ³⁶ is the concept of an individual and his/her rights as being sacrosanct. In a family situation rarely can all individuals be satisfied that their individual rights are being met, for rights are always rights-in-relation to an-other, and often (usually?) these conflict. A child, by definition, is a dependent person, and since 1925 in British law (and Australia followed the British example), the rights of a child have been considered paramount to an adult's in any custody dispute. The phrase, 'in the best interests of the child', captures this injunction. Often the courts have considerable difficulty in working out what a child should do, and what would serve his/her best interests. A number of cases illustrate this confusion. ³⁷

Many arguments have been put forward for the logic of this injunction: most centre round the inability of the child to present his/her own case, and pivot on his/her dependency and vulnerability. One has to wonder how much the notion of a child being a future product of the state entered its conception (see Greer, 1984:1-5 especially). And how realistic it is that a child's interests should be paramount if those of the adult/s caring for the child are not being met with

³⁵ For a discussion of the concept see Evans (1973), Dickens (1981).

³⁶ See Part 3:4.

³⁷ For instance, Barnett v. Barnett (1973); Epperson v. Dampney (1976); Foster and Foster (1977).

equal consideration? It seems that childhood has been reified, perhaps also deified, as a status position. The reality is often quite different.

One further telling point: though the best interests of the child are supposedly the principle in family law in Australia, there is no such principle written in to the child welfare legislation, nor is there recognition that a child's wishes may be considered. Chisholm suggests it is only official rhetoric to claim that welfare legislation operates in the child's best interests.

The welfare departments do not seem too embarrassed by the apparent lack of evidence that children are, in fact, benefited by the system.

Chisholm, 1979:135

On pages 504 and 505 of this chapter two conflicting models of child welfare legislation were presented as being in operation in this country. How one gets dealt with by officialdom in a court situation is likely to be influenced by a number of factors: whether one lives in the city or a rural town; whether one is represented by a legal aid officer or solicitor; whether one's parents attend court; age, gender .. and previous appearances. BUT it is also likely to be affected by one's name (illustrating ethnic identity and social class), one's dress, one's parents' address.

In 1979, in a Victorian country Court, a magistrate said:

This boy does not need to be placed on supervision. He comes from a good home. His parents live in ... (and he named one of the 'better' suburbs in the town). 38

Supervision had been recommended in this instance.

38 Information given to me by a senior welfare officer, Ballarat, 1979.

Legal praxis is deeply-layered in western society; it is a necessary and vital aspect of human-being-in-the-world but serves to veil its 'mobilisation of bias' and the inequalities which rest right at the heart of its praxis. In Foucault's words, discourse

... transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it.

Foucault, 1978:101

Law is a discourse in society which is able to be turned-upon-itself. Though inequality exists, is channeled, assumed, practised .. such inequalities, once revealed, can be rectified or challenged through the very same system: redress is one strength of this institutional praxis. Law is/can be one of the 'mechanics' by which to change society.

Society expects and children need appropriate schooling to equip them to fulfil a productive role in the economy and to subscribe to the prevailing social norms and values.

Skilbeck, 1980:174

It appears that those agents of the state responsible for policies and programmes which affect children have done little to foster the development of skills that allow for the growth of autonomous persons, and that promote the freedom which fosters motivation and self-esteem.

Brous, Green and Jaggs, 1980:39

'The answer to all our national problems comes down to a single word: education ...'

Lyndon Johnson, in Haralambos, 1980:179

Education and Parenting Praxis

Children are born/adopted into families who, according to their various resources - the adult/s own education, financial means, residential area, occupational status, knowledge of 'the system' - are able to prepare and equip them for the schooling process. But education is far wider than schooling; the whole means of learning-the-world, what we learn, how we learn, how comfortable we become, and how proficient with the language is the matter of education. Contradictions are inherent in this praxis: liberal beliefs about individual autonomy centre on the individual's growing capacity for self-responsibility, but society requires individuals to become subjects; education is the key process of subject-ion. Education is the name, the concept, of institutional ordering which covers the learning processes in society. Education is a tutelage system; it straddles the concepts of the individual and the state: education guards, girds individuals for the state.

Human beings learn very early how to behave, how not to behave; how to be polite, 'right-thinking', how to please and placate .. or they become identified as 'problem children', or, in the case of parents who wish to be included, to inter-

vene, to understand the more formal education practices such as schooling, 'problem parents'.

In a book Making the Difference, a critical work on Australian education, the authors subtitle a section - The Pleasures of Mutual Ignorance. In it they write of the difficulties involved in having parents, children and teachers really participating in the education process. They talk, for example, of the frustrations of one token opportunity given to parents, the parent-teacher interview, but stress these are important.

It's a way for parents to show they care;
and that really is crucial in everybody's
thinking about schools.

Connell, Ashenden, Kessler,
et al., 1982:55

The schooling system in Australia was set up for reasons of social control ³⁹ not for the free development of individuals. Families were seen as having an important influence on children, albeit a negative one. In some respects, that attitude persists, especially with 'working-class' kids. The school system is built around an examination system which favours those who 'think with pens in their hands', that is, the middle class.

People who are poor and disadvantaged are victims of a societal confidence trick. They have been encouraged to believe that a major goal of schooling is to increase equality while, in reality, schools reflect society's intention to maintain the present unequal distribution of status and power. Because the myth of equal opportunity has been so widely accepted by Australians the nature of unequal outcomes has been largely ignored. Thus, failure to succeed in the competition is generally viewed as being the fault of the individual rather than

³⁹ See page 482.

as the inevitable way our society is structured.

The Poverty Commission,
in Dwyer, 1977:43

What is 'caught is usually more important than what is taught' in learning: as well as the perpetuated and legitimated inequality of social stratification, of social class, sexism pervades every aspect of education in its formal guise.

Education for girls was initially for motherhood; in today's society 'girls' are told they can do anything, yet subtle and blatant messages teach them otherwise. Even within the educational hierarchy - administrative and professional - men far outnumber women in senior positions, yet the 'system' tells women there is equal opportunity. Women have been encouraged to acquire an education yet prevented from using their skills or qualifications, and their talents atrophy or become submerged because of the wasteland so many find themselves forced to occupy. Women who want to contribute in a demanding paid work situation, especially those who wish to advance 'up the career ladder' often have to sacrifice, in the words of the cliché, a family or career, or further study. Thomas Mann's daughter, Elizabeth, was sent at eighteen to a psychiatrist.

'You must choose between your art and fulfilment as a woman,' the analyst told her, 'between music and family life'. 'Why?' she asked. 'Why must I choose? No one said to Toscanini or Bach or my father that they must choose.'

Olsen, 1980:31

One of the increasingly common dilemmas facing a partner (usually the woman) comes about when the other partner wants/is forced to move to another town, state, country. A question encountered in various guises in job interviews - 'who will look after the children when they get sick?'⁴⁰ is still

⁴⁰ See Lumley (1982:343-4); also Dorothy E. Smith (1979).

common. Such questions sound naive, or 'justifiable', but they impinge on people's lives, and their job chances. The underlying issues of male and female inequality remain covered up.

Education is supposedly about creativity, the growth of the 'whole individual', yet children in schools are continually 'normalised' - pulled into line by the tedium of a curriculum designed by middle class 'experts', by teachers who need to have some form of order, by the expectations of parents, the school, the community. 'We must educate so children are prepared for the technological revolution' is a catchcry heard in the media, at educational conferences, seen in the literature; but the workforce requires manual labourers, people prepared to do jobs day in, day out; society requires an unpaid home educating force - and women, it is presumed, will fill this 'role'. Not necessarily because women are 'born to it', but

... it's just that if she doesn't do it,
no one else will.

Sydney Anglican Diocese,
in Dixon, 1976:49

'We must educate people for leisure' is another catch cry, yet women with young children seldom have leisure time for they are usually responsible for the care and supervision of children during that time designated as 'leisure'. 'I'll ask Joe to look after the kids' is not simply a caricature of real life; it happens. Traditional definitions of work and leisure are male-defined.

Education, and schooling in particular, has changed markedly in the twentieth century. Improvements can be seen in the growing professionalisation of teaching, and this includes training, standards of classroom education .. factors such as class size; the availability and quality of teaching aids, and the dramatic increase in special education services - for children with hearing or sight difficulties; physical coordina-

tion or speech or communication traumas; psychological testing is available to any child if he or she is not achieving, and counselling is available in most secondary schools.⁴¹ Access to these services is supposedly open to all, except for acknowledged rural or remote area difficulties, yet 'consumers' tend to be 'middle-class'. There is an underlying tension or contradiction too, in the professional-child-parent relationship. Parents tend to be the unequal partners.

In our health, welfare and education systems the development of effectiveness in the practitioner is often the dominant issue - not mastery for the child.

Brous, Green and Jaggs, 1980:40

In times of economic crisis such services are the first to be hit by cuts in government spending which causes many a sceptic to wonder if the child's interests are paramount.

Parent education is a burgeoning field: though the education system is designed to produce autonomous adults, these same adults may need assistance.

Parents make every conceivable effort to do the best for their children but frequently they are misguided in their actions and use approaches which serve only to aggravate the situation.

Balson, 1981:ix

Thus writes the author of a book entitled Becoming Better Parents. Balson might be considered the 'benign father' of early childhood education in Melbourne.

A way to become a better parent nowadays is to enrol for one of the many parent education courses available: for example, Parent Education Courses (PET) are designed to 'foster trusting cooperative family relationships'; alterna-

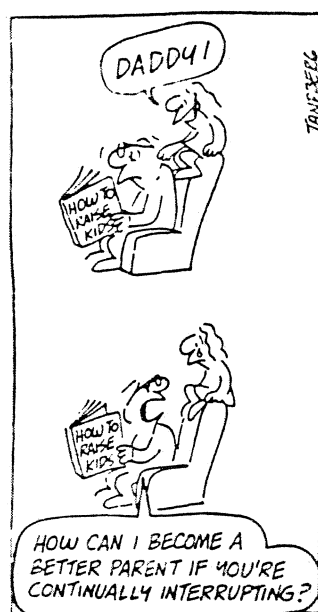
⁴¹ See next section on health and parenting praxis.

tives are Systematic Training for Effective Parenting courses (STEP) or ones run by parent centres, family therapists, churches .. Such courses can give people a model or a number of concrete steps to adopt; they may provide reference points, or simply the assurance that the problems or frustrations they are experiencing are shared. Seldom do such courses or those teaching them question the underlying structural arrangements of 'family': they teach people-in-roles about parent education.

Balson makes some surprisingly naive statements:

While parents have a responsibility and an obligation to provide guidance and leadership for their children, they do not have the right to impose their beliefs and values on their children.

Balson, 1981:4



But all education teaches, and imposes, the language of a community, including the beliefs, values and priorities of society. Education teaches what is right, natural, abnormal, peculiar, distasteful .. and what is to be cherished. And the silences speak louder than words. The fierce debates over

the introduction of human relationship courses into secondary schools speak not only about the content and introduction of such courses, but about the kinds of people we are or want to be. In C. Wright Mills' words, people are 'selected and formed, liberated and repressed, made sensitive and blunted', especially through the educational praxis in society. That such a discourse is sexist and stratified, middle class in design and execution means that many are blunted; normalisation seems the goal, rather than the development of creative individuals.

Traditions and past practice ... no longer provide adequate guide-posts ... Schooling appears to many commentators to have many of the features of a protected social orthodoxy. Like all other social processes it must meet challenges, to its assumptions, structures and policies and its relationships with other social institutions.

Skilbeck, 1980:187

The improved health and quality of life of children in the Western world is one of the striking characteristics of the twentieth century.

Hetzel and Vimpani, 1980:138

Health and Parenting Praxis

Parents in Australia and the western world now expect their children to live to adulthood. Affirmative action programmes designed to intervene in infant and childhood care have reduced the infant mortality rates and changed the nature of the disorders and health problems of children.

The major health problems facing Australian children today are not the infectious diseases of the past but developmental difficulties, congenital defects, behaviour problems, accidents and nutritional disorders ...

Hetzel and Vimpani, 1980:138

Even at the turn of the century parents, according to Summers, were killing their children by giving them overdoses of medicines.

'Mother's Friend' and other 'soothing syrups' contained chloroform and opium and as the Royal Commission on Secret Drugs, Cures and Foods reported that 15,000 babies died each year in New South Wales from these formulas, 'it is reasonable to assume that many of the deaths were deliberate'.

Summers, 1975:320-321

Health habits change, and so, too, thinking about what constitutes good health. Foucault's concept of bio-politics serves well to illustrate the social construction of 'the body' for what is fashionable in one decade is no longer considered fitting the next; what is considered the only way to diet, or to feed babies, or to perform heart surgery, has been superseded within a short space of time. Matters of 'the body' - health, sexuality, sensuality; body image and management .. are carefully orchestrated in a space-time context.

One of the most marked areas of change has been in the care of infants: the Infant Welfare Movement begun in the early 1900s has provided through the years much-needed support and advice to thousands of 'mothers and babies'. Attention was specifically addressed to 'mothers' and this targeting continues.⁴²

Screening programmes introduced into the health care system have helped locate difficulties and removed much of the risk, especially during pregnancy and birth, in the newborn period and in later years of childhood. Increasing awareness of what constitutes health care has enabled the general standard of health to improve, yet there remain yawning gaps in knowledge and in treatment of 'the whole person'.⁴³

I tried to express milk. Rachel couldn't tolerate what they were giving her. I just squirted it into the shower. Nobody really supported me. If I'd known of Nursing Mothers ... I was too sick and under the weather to even think of alternatives ... I accepted what they did and dished out to me.

McAlpine triptych

Individuals are seen as being responsible for what happens to their body, yet society presents conflicting messages about what is health, sexual, sensual .. and emphasises, particularly in the media, the body-beautiful of young people; the male image is one of a handsome, tanned athlete, and the female image a willowy, tanned, 'sexy' creature. Perhaps as a result, anorexia nervosa and bulimia 'patient' numbers have soared in the 1970s and 1980s; so too have the memberships of weight-watchers clubs, fitness clubs, and aerobic dance centres.

Parents (mainly mothers) get caught up in this contradictory array of images: stress is placed on 'the mother' to feed her family a well-balanced diet and to ensure not only

⁴² See p.467.

⁴³ See RCHR, Vol. 3. Also Ehrenreich and English (1979).

the physical health of her family, but the emotional and social health as well.

Enter what Donzelot calls the 'psy' network of experts: he contrasts these experts with those operating in the 'wardship complex'. Both he sees as concerning themselves with the policing or governing of the 'family' ⁴⁴ praxis.

As 'psy' experts he includes psychologists, psychiatrists,

... also marriage guidance and indeed all other forms of counselling which dispense advice to men and women on contraception, child upbringing, careers, personal problems ...

Hodges and Hussain, 1979:111

Such experts, according to Donzelot, traverse an individual/social cleavage by actively involving the individual in changing their own behaviour to 'fit' the social norms. In contrast, 'experts' operating in the wardship complex, for example, social workers, intervene in an investigative sense, and seek to 'normalise' often by using their (potential) power in threats to withdraw financial assistance, or to remove a child, or to place one member of the family, or the family, on supervision. Such 'experts' emphasise role-performance, and work on people 'from the outside-in', whereas 'psy' experts work on changing a person from within.

At the centre of this intervention and ordering of power are societal beliefs about what an adult should/should not do; how a male/female should react. One of the key issues in health care, as in other forms of institutional praxis, is that we are confused in our perception of human-being-in-the-world, and refrain from examining too closely the contradictions embedded in the assumptions and practices we use to work in the world.

⁴⁴ See Donzelot (1979); Hodges and Hussain (1979).

For example, stereotypes influence people in their perception of 'the other'; 'experts' are no exception.

A group of us were asked in a first year sociology class in 1969 ⁴⁵ if people could be ranked according to their surname. We did 'loudly protest' and promptly proceeded to rank people accordingly: a double-barrelled Anglo-Saxon surname at the top, a Maori name further down. A group of medical students at Monash in 1978 repeated the exercise, and acknowledged they would treat Mrs Curtis-Armstrong differently from Mrs Marneros.

Further, is the concept of a healthy adult that of a healthy male, or female? There would seem to be differing views of what constitutes a 'healthy' adult, in both a physical and emotional sense. These differences are reflected in the media.

⁴⁵ Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand.

The Media and Parenting Praxis

In 1978 a series of advertisements were played on a number of radio stations; the script was obtained from the advertising agency, and the promotion of the family image can be clearly seen, not only in the words of the advertisement but accompanying directions.

CADBURY SCHWEPPE'S PTY LTD
30-SECONDS RADIO
Roses Job No. R 3931

George Patterson Pty Ltd,
394 La Trobe St, Melbourne
10 March 1978

SEX: SWEET LUSH RICH MUSIC UNDER

LOVING FEMALE VOICE Family is ... the dishes all finished
the homework all done
Family is .. I've got them all home again
everybody just lying round.

Family is sharing the evening
Sharing the laughter, the talk, the TV
Cadbury Roses are perfect for sharing
Just as long as I can keep
all the Nut Whirls for me.

WARM MALE VOICE People can feel very strongly about Cadbury Roses
Chocolates. But with fourteen different delicious
chocolate covered centres in every box, there's
sure to be plenty for everyone. And remember,
Easter (Christmas/Mother's Day) is coming.

FEMALE VOICE OVER MUSIC EVEN SWEETER
Just as long as I can keep
all the Nut Whirls for me.

The language used in the media, particularly on radio and television, is telling: female sexuality is exploited by body image and the use of women usually as decor accompaniments, or as support to the action-involved male.

TV commercials are an affront to men, women and children. Grownup men buy powerful cars, drink lots of beer, kiss girls who are pretty enough, thin enough or fragrant enough to warrant it ... grownup women diet for love and approval, serve tough meat and have their husbands rush out the door despite the pathetic plea 'It's your favourite pudding'.

The media reinforces status-people, not human beings, and thus serves to perpetuate a particular image or functional view of society.

There is a strong case to support the view that the media are not only reinforcing out-moded attitudes, but actually hindering the process of social change.

RCHR, Vol. 5:43

It is hard to avoid media input, for television commercials and programmes are shown in shop windows; radios blare from cars and throughout the night; newspapers, magazines, become part of one's way of life, and it is so, so easy to forget the edited, biased nature of the content.

The inauthenticity of the media blurs or alters our perception of everyday life; it can act as a sponge, and soak up time, energy, and emotion. The portrayals of 'family life' on television show women in a bad light; they dramatise violence, sexual battles, and rarely show people living in 'ordinary' situations. Most of the television homes or apartments are 'flash', and often have maids/butlers 'in-built'. Blended families have become common as television families, soo too single-parent comedy shows such as Me and My Girl. Complexity means, or so it appears in television shows, that one of the adults is in love with two people .. not that the bills have piled up all at once, or the washing machine has broken down and the cat had to be taken to the vet and the school concert started half an hour ago: these are the real life dramas and tragic comedies of 'family life'.

Interexistence .. and Parenting Praxis

In the preceding pages attention has been given, albeit in an artificially divided way, to various 'forms' of institutional praxis and parenting. My aim in doing this was to illustrate how parenting is intricately, inherently .. bound in with other 'forms' of institutional praxis .. and how human-being-in-the-world is contemporaneous - defined, monitored and sanctioned in particular people-space-time contexts.

C. Wright Mills' questions were used to anchor the discussion: answers were not sought, for finite answers can never be used on 'human being'. The magic of being alive is being able to change, to discover for one's self .. illumination was therefore more the goal; or, in phenomenological language, what I was endeavouring to do was to un-cover some aspects of interexistence, and reveal the characteristics or peculiar nature of that.

We are society, society is us, and both the concept of parenting and parenting praxis emerge within that interexistence: to uncover parenting it was/is therefore necessary to comprehend as-much-as-one-can of that interexistence.

Gloria: When expecting Mat ... I never discussed having the baby ... yet from the moment he was born I felt marvellous. I just felt that I'd done something no one else had ever done before.

Rick: I wasn't there. I couldn't bear to see Gloria suffer.

Parenting: Concept and Praxis

Part 3:3

The task in this chapter is to un-cover ¹ the concept and praxis of parenting: words, sentences, lists, models .. will prove such inadequate tools for parenting is beyond words; inside words, word-less .. it exists as hugs, sighs, looks, touches .. caring for another through sickness, holidays, daily, weekly, yearly monotony, excitement, travail. It means sharing bad patches, a joke, laughter, celebration .. juggling time and energy; racing to get to school concerts or a football game .. watching the first faltering attempts at feeding, riding a scooter, a bike; making scones, absorbing the hurt from little scratches and open wounds; coping with mum's depression, dad's frustration, and everyone's tiredness, anger, pain .. telephoning, supporting, writing notes saying 'I love you' but having to phrase it so the message is received, not rejected, not embarrassing, but clear. It means visiting when you don't want to, staying home when you want to go out .. listening, not-hearing, looking and not-seeing .. flying interstate, to the other side of the world, just to be there .. stewing because a letter hasn't come or mum, dad, older sister .. didn't get a job, promotion, has been made redundant, failed an exam, or cheering, when their news comes through. It means exploding with love, pride, pleasure .. and feeling bitter, angry, left out, guilty .. all at the same time .. liking and loving and hating and rushing and wanting to scream, bite one's lip in absolute frustration and rage; feeling impotent, sorry, sad, useless .. It is being confined, con-

¹ See Part 1:3 for a discussion of phenomenology, and discussion of un-covering.

firmed, being caught within a people jail, within habits, routines, duties. It is having one's time, peace, space, way of life interrupted, again, and again, and again. It is being broke - financially, emotionally .. being in debt, in obligation, being ignored, sorry. It demands hard work, commitment .. just to survive, to keep going .. with exhaustion, rewards, humility, confusion, sorrow .. joy, a few of the penalties and gifts on the way. It involves being nice, being patient, bored, making amends, building bridges .. bumbling attempts at making a fancy dress, feeding unexpected visitors, working out which way the nappy goes, and why the baby is crying, again. It means struggling to keep perspective, suffering through the first heartache .. arranging for one's mother to go into hospital, a son to an institution. It means using one language for adults, another for children, and changing it for different children. It demands sacrifice, intensity of involvement, embroilment .. a readiness to be trampled on, to be misunderstood, ignored .. to give, receive, to learn, forget, forgive, be still, to be ...

Parenting is demanding, involving, imprisoning, gruelling, enabling .. it may stretch people to their limits, and beyond. It can empower people to

grow
risk
challenge
care
be ..

It can squelch.

Parenting defies simplistic disclosure, can never be reduced to a series of statements, or conceptual analysis; in part it can be described or mirrored at the level of experience, but parenting is more than experience; it exists as a concept and as praxis. One can draw an analogy with music.

To the majority of human beings, music brings moments of experience as complete, as penetrating as any they can register ... we know what music is. We know it in the mind's echoing maze and in the marrow of our bones. We are aware of its history. We assign to it an immensity of meaning. This is absolutely key. Music means ... there is no way whatever to paraphrase this meaning ... 'What, then, is music?' asks the fictive questioner from another planet. We would sing a tune or strum a piece and say, unhesitatingly, 'this is music.' If he asked next, 'What does it mean?' the answer would be there, overwhelmingly, in us, but exceedingly difficult to articulate externally. Asked just this question of one of his compositions, Schumann played it again. In music, being and meaning are inextricable. They deny paraphrase. But they are, and our experience of this 'essentiality' is as certain as any human awareness.

Steiner, 1978:46-47

We know what parenting is; we assign to it an immensity of meaning. We live parenting, and this experience of 'essentiality' is as certain as any in human awareness. Parenting is of crucial importance for human being, not only in child-rearing years but in adulthood; whether an adult has children of his/her own 'we carry our parents' imprint from conception to death,'² so all are involved.

There are some nearly-universal aspects of parenting: a social act of conception,³ pregnancy, birth, and a long period of dependence - physical, social .. involving a child and his/her parent/s; dramatic growth, physical, emotional, mental .. of the child, especially in infancy and early childhood .. and in our society, compulsory education for all children, guaranteed minimum standards of housing, child care, financial support .. plus for many a relationship through the adulthood of both 'parent' and 'child'. These are shared by

² See page 1 of the thesis.

³ AID and IVF conception involve more than two people.

most parent/s and their child/ren but how these aspects are viewed, lived, experienced is unique to the people concerned.

A letter written by George and Edna Mercer to their daughter and son (not addressed to either of their partners) illustrates this uniqueness plus the sensibilities of power, intrusion ..

December 1983

Dear Rae and Melvyn

Our finances have been under review ... and we are assuming that you folk are finding money as much a problem as everybody else. Well, you are big people now or should I say grown up and we don't want to take over your lives and problems in any way (we have enough of our own thank you very much!).

But we do remember what it's like to have a shortfall of funds and without ANY CONNECTION WHATEVER to any sums you may feel you owe or don't owe we have decided to send the enclosed cheque - a straight unsolicited gift without any strings attached ..

Naturally if any time you want help, advice or assistance you know we are here with a listening ear - but this is in no way connected to such a situation - we just thought and talked about it and decided this is what we wanted to do. So here's the cheque - end of story. Just stay happy people.

Our love
George and Edna
Mum and Dad

Claire (37) also captures the uniqueness/universality/duality in a letter she wrote about Christine, her daughter:

... there is a magical quality inside her which is hers alone - which she can build on and which gives her the potential to be an extraordinary person, both in terms of sensitivity, awareness and in terms of her own inner strength. (I need to stress) to my child that she is very special - not only to me as a mother but to humankind, as a person.

September 1981

Parenting is a hinge in family praxis. Definitions of 'family' are many and varied. There are legal definitions, administrative ones, demographic and statistical concepts, sociological, psychological, biological, medical .. and personal ones. Many are simplistic or exclusive in their wording; many assume a two-adult family structure - with a male as husband, and father, a female as wife, and mother. 'Family' is an ambivalent concept - used, abused - but concentration in this thesis is on the parent-child axis for a very definite, stronger reason. Adult partners can separate, divorce, join other families, form other families .. but a parent-child relationship carries inside itself meaning which cannot be dislodged, severed, exorcised. Parents and their child/ren may lose contact; they cannot legally get divorced, nor rid themselves of the human learning which occurs in such relationships. We learn the world via our parent/s: that is why the specific people relationship is unique, vital, crucial.

'Via our parents we are pinioned in a density of age, gender, geographical, cultural, historical .. factors. We learn the language of the society from these people.' .. Via a specific parenting relationship an individual is 'thrown' into the world, thrown into a people context, a particular space-time, context.⁴ We learn the particular culture of people:

... culture embodies not simply symbols through which we find expression but the underlying code in terms of which we decipher the world, the meaning we place on experience; the way we evaluate and organise our perceptions and translate them into action; what we regard as relevant to our personal lives.

Branson and Miller, 1979:29
(emphasis added)

Learning is so rapid, so gross, especially in the early years of life, and much of this cultural code is 'caught, not

⁴ See pages 446-450, Part 3:1.

taught'. Personal idiosyncracies, differences in the material surrounds - housing, community, local resources available and use of these, employment conditions and the parent/s response to these .. all will have a compounding effect on the new individual.

There was a child went forth every day
 And the first object he look'd upon, that object he
 became
 And that object became part of him for the day or a
 certain part of the day,
 Or for many years or stretching cycles of years ...

His own parents, he that had father'd him and she that
 had conceiv'd him in her womb and birth'd him,
 They gave this child more of themselves than that,
 They gave him afterward every day, they became part of
 him.

Walt Whitman, [1855]1968:21

In this chapter I am presenting six basic statements about parenting, concept and praxis.

1. That parenting can never be fully grasped for it is beyond words .. and defies simplistic disclosure;
2. That there are some nearly-universal aspects of parenting, yet even these take on a particular character as they are worked at in a specific parent-child relationship;
3. That parenting is a hinge in family praxis and crucial to human being.
4. That parenting is a total process, and people live it as such.
5. That parenting praxis might be best viewed, in Donzelot's term, as an 'intersection' of social processes.
6. That the concept of parenting excludes human being in its formulation.

A number of models will be used which will enable the holding-together of a variety of terms. I cannot generalise from the people data, nor any data. That was not a goal of the research. I am endeavouring to reveal parenting, as I see it. ⁵

⁵ I note, again, the slant towards Anglo-Saxon families; the

In the first model, focus is on the child's world in the years between birth and late adolescence. The importance of the model is that it shows some of the myriad 'things' we learn in childhood in a specific context: mostly these are absorbed, not deliberately taught, but the environment can enable, or thwart, or limit, or encourage .. and we carry the legacy from the people environment through to maturity. A parent/s attitudes towards our first steps, to accidents, to hugs and cuddles, to neighbours, towards 'grandpa and grandma', to the teacher, plumber, doctor .. 'rubs off'. The definition of ourselves as human beings .. whether we feel confident, assertive, in control, important, and when .. how we cope with change - in our bodies, relationships with other people, jobs .. our attitude to being male, female, heterosexual or homosexual, all is coloured by, infused with our knowing, consciousness, learning from within that parent-child relationship. Our thinking about ourselves, and our place in the world, is 'caught' inside that relationship: how we see ourselves in relation to the adults-who-are our parents, others in the family, authority .. is affected.

We first learn about power in that context; power enabling, constraining, stifling, encouraging, possessing, usurping ..

They were my parents
 I depended on them
 for warmth, security, love -
 I grew up. I married,
 had children, I depended
 upon them -
 I never learnt to stand alone.

Gwen Wesson, 1975:29

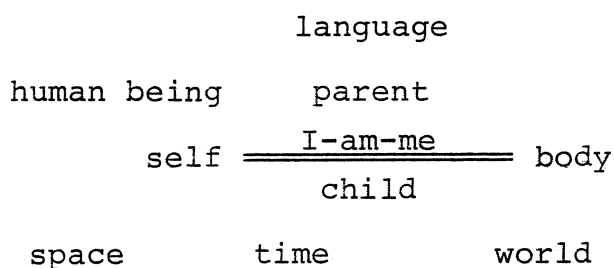
There is no word in the English language for an adult child.

'small' numbers of people involved, and the middle class bias which percolates through the research despite the wearing of phenomenological un-blinkers, and the conscientious attempt at bracketing all key concepts .. This is but one interpretation.

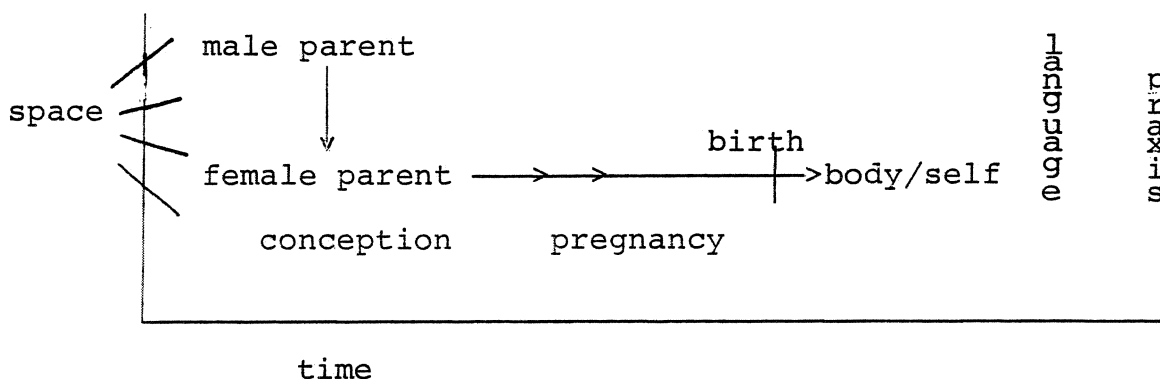
'My parents are dead. I am no longer a child', said David Midgley, aged 49, Melbourne, 1978. And Dorothy Jones, aged 72, in Newcastle, 1977, said 'I am an only child.'

The twisting lines in the model below illustrate the alive-ness of human being, and the interconnectedness of all aspects. These are separated only for pragmatic reasons. The key to understanding the model rests in the two central terms - self and body: I am arguing that the child learns, grows as a human being in a particular space, time, people context - as a human-being-in-the-world, and does so by learning the language of that world.

A simplified version of the model is:



This is predicated on an existential base:



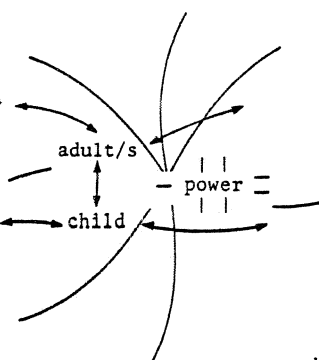
Model: parenting is crucial for human being

human being
 sense of: learning about growing - physically, mentally, socially, spiritually .. what it means to be alive, to die - about being unique, to be human being ..

language
 learning how to speak, to communicate, be understood by those close, those outside: learning the cultural code
 learning body language, worded language, gender language, family languages .. what is acceptable/not .. + who to .. Peergroup language, television language, legal - adopted, step ..

self	I-am-me	body
------	---------	------

I-am-me/not me; learning to identify feelings - approval, anger, love, frustration, hate, boredom; feeling safe, secure; a sense of failure, success, glowing .. finding out what is important - why - to whom - when where I stand in relation to Mum/Dad/brothers/sisters/aunts/uncles/grandparents/neighbours/teachers/friends/kids-in-general .. the world
 Who am I? Why am I? Where am I? What am I? How am I? How am I connected to ... what it means to be alone, lonely: to belong, to be loved, to love, give, take ...



physical
 crying, crawling, walking, exploring location and use of mouth, eyes, ears, tongue, arms, legs, head ..
 how to get attention, food, how to feed oneself, reject food: communicate pain, discomfort, pleasure ..
 how to look after oneself: go to the toilet, clean one's teeth, dress, ride a bike, swing, climb trees, hide, make faces in the mirror, stand still, blow bubbles ..

sexual
 about 'private parts', penis, 'balls', vagina, womb, breasts, 'bums', about masturbation, intercourse, expectations, rules .. about conception, pregnancy, birth ..

sensual
 about touching, where, when to touch, where not to touch, who not to touch, about cuddling, withdrawing, shaking with fright, feeling excited, shouting, running for joy, feeling smothered, naked .. scared, abused

space
 own body - cuddled-up, stretched, comfortable, clumsy, in control, in contact: housing space: own bed/room/private space
 neighbourhood - negotiating streets, transport, to and from school
 'free' space - parks, country, beach ... space.
 Private space - of parent/s, other adults, other 'families'
 comparative space - other people's big houses, small cars ...

time
 routines, flexibility, rigidity, need to be on time .. clock time, regularity, television time, holiday time ..

world
 physical, geographical, space: historical context, inherited legacy of culture, institutions .. sense of 'the world', town, city, state, country ..

Mead has consistently pointed out that the western family is unique in it's emphasis on the tremendous responsibility of the biological parents for their children's development.

As children, we believe in the world
around us as we never shall again.

Shattuck, 1974:113

One of the central ambiguities inherent in parenting is that a child grows-in-a-relationship with another human being. Because of the professionalisation of child care attention is focussed not on the relationship but on the child. 'In the best interests of the child' became a legal and psychological rule of thumb in the 1970s but seldom does one hear the phrase - in the best interests of the parent, the mother .. The justification for this belief is the rapidity of children's growth, the immediacy of their needs, and their vulnerability.

Children need one now (and remember, in our society, the family must often try to be the center for love and health the outside world is not). The very fact that these are real needs, that one feels them as one's own (love, not duty); that there is no one else responsible for these needs, gives them primacy.

Olsen, 1980:18-19

Human being has great difficulty in comprehending human being, human growth.

The body grows and decays, yet at any given moment people act as though their organic state is fixed: they are children or they are adults. The sense of being a creature in a continual state of metamorphosis is ... a difficult human insight; psychologically we are more secure if we imagine our present condition to be the essence of ourselves.

Sennett, 1981:141

The model on page 544 is patently simplistic for it concentrates on the child's needs, learning, growth .. but they are always to be looked at in juxtaposition to another's needs, learning, growth .. and as a swirling mass of ever-changing social process.

As the concept of the child changed in the eighteenth and

nineteenth centuries, ⁶ so too did the notion of who was to look after the child, as 'special in his/her own right', and as a future worker for the state. Increasing intervention - particularly the state via the legal, health, educational institutions .. defined the male parent as the legal guardian and financial supporter of the child. The mother, the female parent, became increasingly tied to the child through a web of legislation, social norms, practices. Her self-hood was/is seen to be non-important, as the child's growing self was/is seen to become more important. Language is an indicator of this status, and a tool in perpetuating such a definition. Artists, sculptors, poets .. for years have portrayed as a 'universal dyad' mother and child; not a woman and child, nor a mother and her son/daughter, but 'mother and child'. That image has become reified, deified. The child is, ideally, to be treated as a growing individual, but people in relation to that child are defined by their status as parent/s. Their growth is perceived as secondary to the child's.

In educational, medical, psychological, child development .. praxis, the concept of a life cycle for the growth of an individual is assumed; an infant is born, becomes a preschooler, child, adolescent, young adult; enters middle age, then old age. ⁷ Such models serve to define the broad parameters of human growth but they too can become reified, and frequently human beings are subsumed analytically, locked into a pattern which may foreclose or exclude 'alternative' lifestyles. Women, in such life cycle models, are 'assumed' to mature, marry and bear children; at least, that is considered the 'normal' path. Women are then defined by those 'roles' - as wives or mothers: for example, 'I pronounce you man and wife', and that identification is part of the everyday world, not only a possession of the 'expert'.

⁶ See pages 455-470, Part 3:1.

⁷ See Rapoport *et al.* (1977) for a review of parenting literature, especially the concept of lifecycle.

Motherhood, in the sense of an intense, reciprocal relationship with a particular child, or children, is one part of female process; it is not an identity for all time.

Rich, 1979:37

We are many selves, contemporaneously; we are our past for we carry the legacy of our parent/s and our growing up into the present. To singularly define a person whether as a lesbian or teacher or housewife or student or as a mother is to risk stultifying that human being, and to foreclose on their potential growth; to become deaf to their needs, to fail to see them as a human being.

In western society the social-economic-political structuring is patriarchal⁸ and one of the main strengths or forces of that structuring, that ordering of power relations, is the deeply embedded societal belief that a woman is primarily to be defined-in-relation-to-another; as a wife or mother. The power from within, the power to be ones-self is deflected, and usurped; women are trained to nurture, to care for others' needs. The sad irony and poignant contradiction is that the less confident, less 'whole' a person is able to be, the less nurturing she/he can be.

Cooper once said:

'Bringing up a child' in practice is more like bringing down a person.

Cooper, 1972:13

How can a role-person bring up a person?

This is one key aspect of what Marx called alienation, Heidegger inauthenticity. It is inauthentic to live one's life according to 'they' rules.

⁸ See next chapter for definition/discussion.

Inauthenticity constructs and then assumes a world in which one's own values do not count.

Ruddick, 1982:84

Examples from the people data readily spring to mind:

Suzanne: As far as I'm concerned the way that Mum does things is the best and that's the way I do things.

I am not allowed to leave Jane in the house when I go to collect Becky ...

... when I go to the shop I feel as if I'm more useful than just as a mother.

and the tension:

I'm afraid I feel me is fairly important.

Strahan triptych

Jenny: I clean up when people are coming - I worry what they think of me.

Rob doesn't give many clues to what's going on in his brain - he's decision maker but occasionally I get to put a piece in ... I feel safer if I've got a good reason, but unless (I have) I'm not taken any notice of ...

I was hoping I'd be allowed to (get pregnant) when Rob got the job.

Montgomery triptych

For all the women - Suzanne Strahan, Lucy Mathews, Diana McAlpine, Ann Saunders .. their definition of themselves was linked to their definition as wives, or daughters, or mothers, as an ex-wife. For Kevin White this was less important: Kevin saw himself in the driving-seat.

The 'bringing up of a self' is one of the main tasks of parenting praxis, but it is fraught with difficulties, and riddled with contradictions. Ruddick claims that

'In a very immediate and day to day way women live for change' ... Most obviously those who care for children must change in response to changing reality ... Change requires a kind of learning in which what one learns cannot be applied exactly, often not even by analogy, to a new situation.

Ruddick, 1982:83

This is opposite to scientific thinking, and to educational learning, where a process of 'steps' can be followed exactly. 'Selves' twist and turn, grow, make mistakes, plunge in new directions, down side alleys, into relationships which leave them and others around them reeling. In the parenting context there are a number of 'selves' embroiled, each trying to make themselves heard, needed, wanted .. endeavouring to carve out space for them-selves.

Except for a woman-mother-wife ..

In my mother's dreams are many mansions and none include the house she has occupied for thirty years. Neither the house nor her body expressed her. She was embarrassed by both and always covering up flaws.

in Gibbs and Tilson, 1982:8

Women are generally means to the enterprises of others ... They hold only a piece of the action, sometimes a piece essential to the action, but they are not at its center ... What is required is a subordination of attentiveness to self and a focus on others, the lack of development of an independent project ... A housewife, holding in place the simultaneous and divergent schedules and activities of a family, depends upon a diffuse and open organisation of consciousness available to the various strands, which are coordinated only in her head and by her work and do not coordinate otherwise in the world.

D.E. Smith, 1979:152

This is contrary to a belief in individualism;⁹ and differs

⁹ See Part 3:4.

markedly from Schutz's concept of the null point. In his philosophy, the individual or 'wide awake-man'

... is primarily interested in that sector of the world of his everyday life which is within his scope and which is centred in space and time around himself ... Relatively to my body I group the elements of my surroundings under the categories of right and left, before and behind, above and below, near and far ...

Schutz, 1962:222

But women are continuously paying attention to the other: mediating, supplying material needs, 'attending' the other (nurturing), and they do not do so, unless from a very strong sense of self-being, from the 'null point';¹⁰ they do so as role-people. Women are taught to care for others, to nurture, to anticipate, to tend others.

The task of attention goes on all the time and at apparently empty and everyday moments we are 'looking', making those little peering efforts of imagination which have such important cumulative results.

Murdoch, in Ruddick, 1982:87

Attention is defined in this context as an intellectual capacity connected with love, a 'special knowledge of the individual' (Ruddick, 1982:87). Women are expected to 'attend' - men to be 'attended'. Both miss on knowing, experiencing, the joy and laughter and satisfaction and sense of fulfilment of giving and receiving.

In one of the convoluted ironies we have organised in our society, adults can rarely 'be themselves', yet are asked, in parenting situations, to bring up another self. Men and women, when they enter the world of science, or business, or academia, or the factory floor, are supposedly to focus not on themselves, their consciousness, their bodies, but on 'object-

¹⁰ See D.E. Smith (1979), especially pp. 155-163.

ive matters'. Further, men in parenting situations are defined as 'secondary':

I wanted to jump right in confident and competent, and be a father who thoroughly enjoyed taking care of his baby. I wanted to cut all the American (Australian) father bullshit out of me in one slice. But overcoming basic cultural habits isn't that easy or dramatic.

Steinberg, 1977:18
(brackets added)

And women, defined as 'primary' parents, are expected to nurture or attend to others. Parenting is crucial for human being, but as it is conceived and organised in western society, it is inherently riddled with contradictions, and we all suffer as a result.

Parenting is a total social process ... From early days in the research process I have used the concept of a 'total social fact'; ¹¹ when Jan Pouver used the concept in relation to the Vogelkop society in New Guinea he claimed for it an ontological status. I was not so bold, initially, and used the concept as a tool. Now I too give it ontological status, for people do perceive of 'different and diverse things as going together'. Parenting is a complex process embracing legal and educational and spiritual and historical and emotional and social and cultural and physical and linguistic .. dimensions. The particular shape and form of parenting praxis which emerges is defined by the juggling of a host of factors - personal, and historical, and gender, and age .. The weighting of factors, processes, priorities .. is largely idiosyncratic. For example: Kevin and Michelle and Catherine and Sandra White reorganised their lives because of Valerie's illness and death; and they constantly pause, to make sure they are in control rather than caught in the hurly-burly.

A revised total social fact model can now be presented;

¹¹ See pages 123-125, Part 1:4.

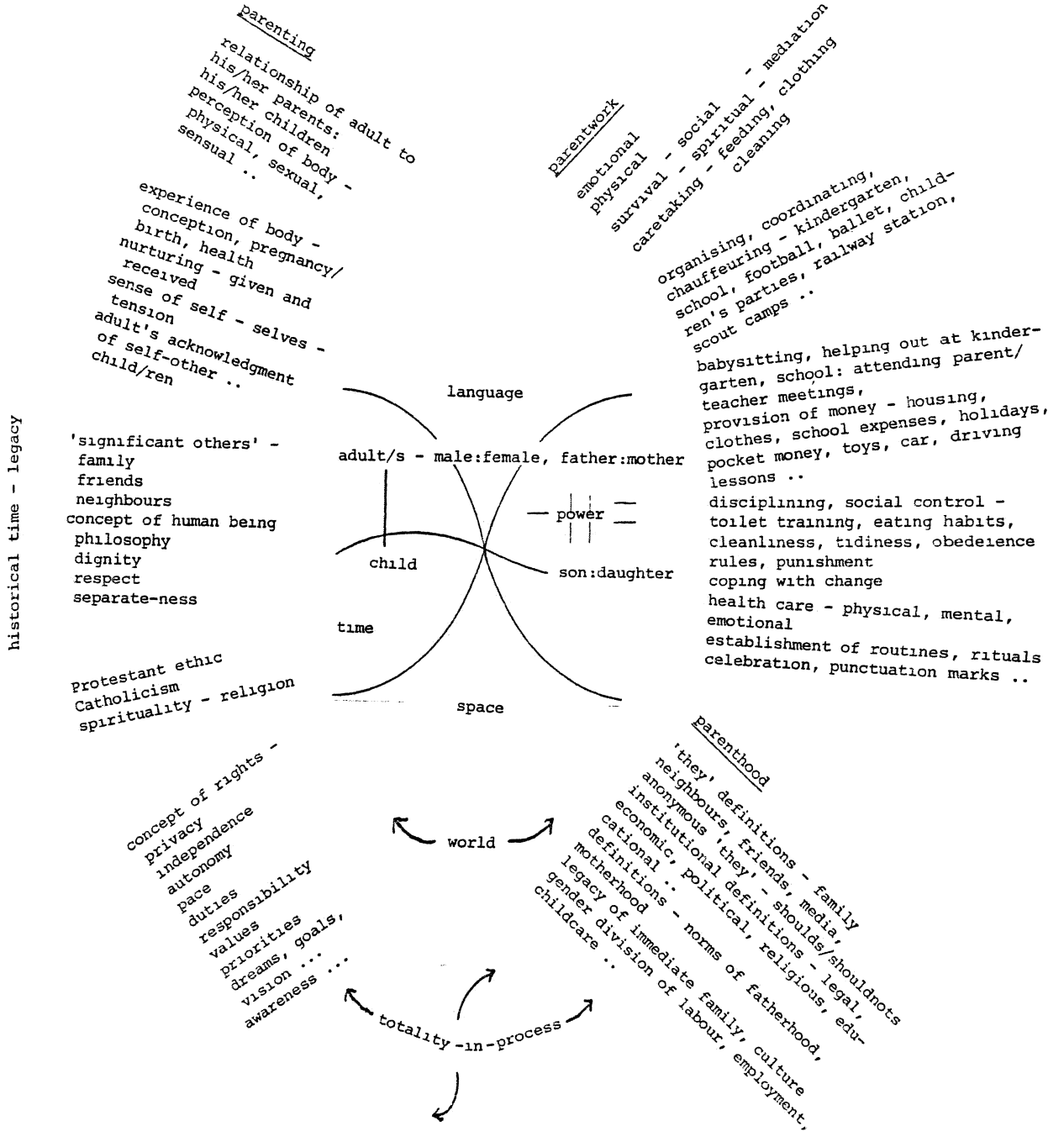
in this I am trying to capture any/all aspects of parenting praxis which have emerged during the course of the research. To make sense of the wealth of data I have organised the words in parenting, parentwork, parenthood, 'divisions'.¹²

Following the presentation of the model a number of quotes are used to illustrate how 'naturally' people now connect legal, educational .. praxis with parenting praxis, yet this is of relatively recent origin,¹³ and there are still many children throughout the world sent out to work rather than attending school. Parents in this country assume their child can attend school, be protected .. that custody battles will be fought in the courts and not before a religious tribunal. A deja vu feeling penetrates the consciousness when one sees these factors laid down on paper, but that does not deny the 'essence' nor truth (un-concealment) of this model which does demonstrate some aspects of parenting praxis in contemporary society.

¹² See Part 1:2.

¹³ See pages 455-473 (Part 3:2).

Model: Parenting as a total social process
(or total social fact)



affected by age, gender, social class ...

One could cite endless examples of 'connectedness' but the following are chosen to illustrate the seemingly taken-for-granted relationship between people and various 'institutions'.

I met Phillip and Sally towards the end of the research period. They have four children, three girls, all of whom are in tertiary institutions and living mostly away from home. Their fourth child, David, is 16. He was born with a misshapen head, and at ten weeks had an operation to 'un-fuse something' in the cranium. He had a massive coronary at three; spasticity started soon after that. Phillip and Sally were so concerned with the lack of treatment at the Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne, that they took him home, and told the doctor they were not satisfied with their son's treatment. Sally said she thinks their professional background - Sally is a teacher, Phillip then a solicitor but now a Judge, and one of Sally's brothers is a doctor - gave them the confidence to take him home. Apart from brief stays in an institution David lives at home: he cannot walk without support, has to be fed, changed, looked after like a baby.

Phillip: It's our choice he isn't in an institution.

Sally: There are places I wouldn't put him even for short term care. If we go out one of the girls usually looks after him ... if we're asked at a party how many children we have if it's somebody we're not going to see we say 'three girls' because otherwise they ask, if we say a son - 'what school's he at, what does he do'... and it's so boring.

Phillip: Like it's telling someone I have pancreas trouble.

Phillip and Sally have the resources, financial, physical, emotional .. to survive with little help from outside the family, yet they assume, rightly so, that institutions are there if they need them. Again, this is of recent origin.

Likewise with Beth: their family needed outside help, and presumed they would get it. There were nine children in

Beth's family.

Beth: We were very poor. We lived in a house which had been condemned for so long. It wasn't till six of us were in hospital with diphtheria ... that anything was done about it. We were shifted to a Housing Commission house.

The family was Catholic and all the children went to the local Catholic school.

One day one of the nuns sent for Mum to come up to the school because Rosemary had gone to school with a coloured ribbon ... The nun was angry with Mum but Mum had walked the two miles and she was angry too. She told the nun she didn't have any other ribbons ... On Sundays the girls would walk to Mass and then Mum and the younger ones would meet them halfway ... and the ribbons would be changed over. You had to look right.

We've all stayed Labor voters, following on from Dad: 'There's only one way for a worker to vote otherwise you're a traitor to your class' he would say.

Beth had a child out-of-wedlock when she was in her late teens.

I went into a private hospital and kept it hidden from everybody. Didn't even apply for the Benefits for we didn't want anyone in government departments finding out ... it was incredibly hidden ... I'd signed the papers (for adoption) and finished with it all; about a month later I got a bill from the hospital because Wendy had been sick for some weeks after I left and I hadn't known about it. The bill was rather a blow, but it was the fact that she'd been sick and I hadn't known about it. I think I would have taken her if I'd known. ¹⁴

Diana McAlpine talked about her parents wanting only four children:

But they were Catholic - and see they couldn't do anything about it ... There was nothing they could do short of stopping fucking.

¹⁴ Beth and Wendy have now made contact through Jig-Saw, a voluntary organisation working in the area of locating adoptees and their biological parents.

and about growing up with nine brothers and sisters:

... we didn't have enough beds and we shared beds and we had a lot of sex play together and experimenting. The boys were fucking when they were about thirteen, or so they told me, but I wasn't interested. We were Catholics, you know ... We knew that was wrong!

McAlpine triptych

Bob Simpson had just resigned an academic job when I met him: he and his second wife Lara and Fraser, their son, were returning to the United States for Bob wanted to be near his two daughters from his first marriage. He had no guarantee of a teaching position, nor does he like Chicago where his first wife and daughters live.

Bob: I would like joint custody if that's possible. I can see them every other weekend after summer. I hope to increase the time as it's very minimal .. But their mother I think, will want to keep control of them - a legal control ... I've never fought (custody) because I've always had this sort of snob .. or what have you - that I don't need to have control or custody or legal rights ... all I need is my relationship with them and I can overcome in person ... in many ways she's still holding my children from me.

Power 'battles' figure prominently in parenting praxis. Lisa, 11, wrote a note to her mother.

*To Mum,
I was just trying to be helpful, for your information.
If you don't want me to be helpful I won't be.
I will not be sociable or friendly either.
I hate you and I won't be back inside until teatime.
Yours awfully
from a person who doesn't like you
Lisa.
PS I hate Kirsten too.*

Melbourne, 1981.

And Laing writes about relationships between fathers and sons.

A son should respect his father
 He should not have to be taught to respect
 his father
 It is something that is natural
 That's how I've brought up my son anyway.

Of course a father must be worthy of respect
 He can forfeit a son's respect
 But I hope that my son will respect me, if
 only for leaving him free to respect me or not.

Laing, 1971:4

Parenting might be viewed, described, lived as a complex process, or as a 'total social fact', and the particular shape or form parenting praxis takes is dependent upon the persons concerned and their labour.

When I began writing this thesis I had assumed that the arguments, the major insights of the research would emerge in this chapter: that parenting praxis, for instance, would be discovered to be a mingling of individual habits and institutional practices, of idiosyncratic personal/family ways of behaving and cultural/ideological fashions. That is, that 'family' would be able to be viewed as a semi-autonomous institution, and that differences between private and public definitions of praxis would be easily discerned. That idea, along with a host of others, has gone by the board.

Instead, I am slowly starting to grasp 'family' and parenting praxis as a hinge in family praxis, as a juncture, a convergence, or central intersection in interexistence. This idea is Donzelot's.

... the family is less of an institution
 or organism, than the point of intersec-
 tion of different social practices ...

Hodges and Hussain, 1979:90

Donzelot claims that the intervention in families is brought about because of their inability to reproduce the social order. Such intervention therefore serves not only to keep families in line

... but to transform them and constitute them.

Hodges and Hussain, 1979:90

Such interventions do not emanate from one source though they might now be regarded as falling within the governing of the state.

... the state, whose function is the taking of everything under its wing, the bringing into being of general surveillance, the principle of regulation and, to a certain extent also, the distribution of all power relations in a given social ensemble.

Foucault, 1982:223

Nor are such interventions the result of coherent or unified strategies. ¹⁵

For instance, policies, measures and practices associated with the maintenance of the health of the population may ... arise from a number of different sources - the army, the factory inspectorate, the medical establishment, the school, the emigration and immigration administration ... (from) a hybrid domain composed of policies formulated by public agencies as well as private institutions.

Hodges and Hussain, 1979:91
(brackets added)

like pharmaceutical companies, space research agencies, religious institutions ..

The state has considerable difficulty in reconciling the notion of intervention in families because of the deeply embedded belief in the private/public dichotomy, yet for centuries the church and legal systems .. have been 'interfering' in the lives of human beings, especially 'parent and child'

¹⁵ See pages 502-508 (Part 3:2).

(see pages 501-508, Part 3:1).

The danger of conceiving of 'families' as points of intersections is that one can see more clearly how the targeting of such 'policies, measures, practices' is often not on human beings but on role-persons. People are treated as parts-of-families - as mothers, or fathers, or as an ex-nuptial child, rather than 'whole' people.

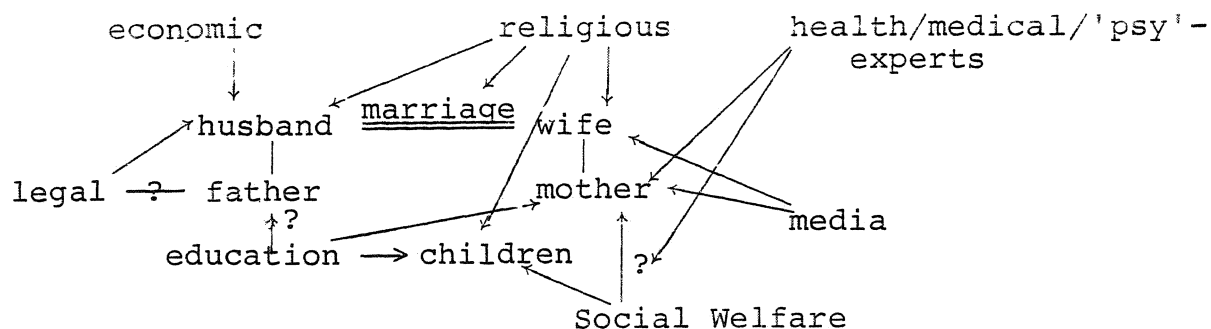
Though state coordinated policies and practices serve to provide financial support - benefits and pensions, and a financial safety net for some families; a guaranteed mechanism for the processing of complaints and grievances, and the dissolution of marriage contracts .. compulsory education for periods of ten plus years for all children in this country; 'cheap' rental housing and subsidised loans, health services - there is an essential contradiction between a belief in the autonomy of the individual, and 'the family' and these interventions. People get bewildered, disillusioned by needing to rely on 'the state', being dependent on it and yet having no control over 'it' and not being important or treated with dignity 'in it'.

It is very hard to be assertive, to argue one's case to, for instance, a social worker at the Social Welfare Department, if one knows that problems with one's kids, or partner .. might lead to an investigation. It is difficult to explain to a school principal that the treatment Timothy is getting does not seem fair, for she/he has the power to 'target' that child. Or to insist on holding one's baby in a hospital.

*Ann: I didn't hold Shaun until he was 4½ weeks old ...
The first two weeks ... he was in a humidicrib and
I was allowed to go into the prem ward to look at
him - I wasn't allowed to touch him! They wouldn't
allow me in if they were feeding him because he was
being tubefed. I didn't feel like a mother.*

Saunders triptych

Again a model can be used to illustrate the notion of intersection.



The power of being human is diffused if diverted solely to role or status-persons. All mothers do not think alike, act alike .. nor adoptees or single fathers or siblings or 'family men' or women or .. nor do people at a certain age or life cycle stage living in a certain area or lifestyle or .. Donzelot's conception is a useful tool in showing the convergence of social practices, policies, for at the very core of the most 'private' institution in society - the 'family - these social practices serve to define, monitor and sanction much of what goes on: such praxis rests on a conceptual base.

In an academic sense 'concepts' are but tools of thought: verbal umbrellas which enable a range of ideas to be held together.¹⁶ In the everyday world, of which academia is a part, concepts can become laden with meaning and deeply embedded in the 'collective unconscious' or 'societal psyche'. Reification of such concepts is a constant danger: ideas, beliefs .. become 'transformed' into material practices .. and the social construction of these ideas .. and concepts are forgotten. Parenting is one such concept; the genealogy of the concept, the contemporaneity of the ideas .. and the bias of the assumptions which give the concept its force are ignored. Particularly for parenting, for this is perceived not as a concept but as a 'natural' process.

¹⁶ See page 74, Part 1:3.

Throughout this thesis attention has been given to the ideas, beliefs, thinking, which give shape and substance to the concept of parenting. The task now is to strip the concept of parenting to the core; this will of necessity involve repeating some of the ideas expressed earlier in this chapter, but this is considered an essential process if the assumptions underlying the concept are to be exposed.

The most basic assumption is that the act of conception, pregnancy and birth - that is the process of biological parenthood - provides

... an invariable, instinctively-based positive tie to the child ... This so-called blood-tie gives them first right to possession of the child.

Goldstein, Freud and Solnit,
1973:16-17 (see page 516)

Parents are presumed to care yet that caring is only allowed to be put into practice in certain circumstances: if the biological parents are married then all is well; if not married, the father may have difficulty in even seeing his child.¹⁷ His consent is not normally required for a child to be placed for adoption yet if a couple have been married and then choose to separate or divorce both partners are said, within the Family Law Act, to have equal right of custody.

Other forms of parenting, adoption, foster, AID and IVF, are not seen as 'natural processes' so are entangled and confused in legal praxis, medical .. yet an adopted child, in law, is said 'to become as your borne child'. One person defined adoption as 'society's way of coping with nature's insufficiencies.'¹⁸ Special committees have now been set up to examine the legal, medical, ethical .. implications of AID and IVF. Their task is to examine questions such as: in whose interests are such practices carried out? Who is the

¹⁷ See pages 513-516, Part 3:2.

¹⁸ Harry Oxley, personal conversation, Sydney 1975(6?).

'rightful' father of a child born ..? Who is the legal father? Should records be kept, and identities revealed ..? The assumption that parents care for the child remains firm, regardless of the conception or 'entry into membership': other policies and practices cannot be taken for granted.

A baby born to a married couple by in vitro fertilisation may be baptised, said the Auckland Presbytery last evening.

Report in The Christchurch Press
10 October 1984

Language perpetuates and reflects the difficulties in family situations outside the 'normal' context: no word has yet been accepted for partners in a de facto relationship; controversy surrounds such terms as natural mother/biological father; single mother/lone father; dual career family, blended family; step-children is 'acceptable' as a label, but 'step-family' is not.

Parenting is presumed to best take place within a nuclear family situation; that is, a family composed of a father, mother and children. The stress on this being the 'normal' family, the 'natural' family, can be demonstrated in a number of ways, especially in the media, but it is institutionalised within the law where the use of marriage as a yardstick for decisions relating to children is normal practice. So too, in state praxis: for example, where pensions are granted to women 'denied' the economic support of their husbands. Men are not granted the same 'privilege'.

The nuclear family model rests on an assumption of a gender dichotomy of labour, and this in turn rests on assumptions about human being, about male-ness and female-ness. One of the sad, diminishing aspects of the marked gender divisioning in our society is that it leads to an exaggeration of differences, and a denial of similarities. Men are defined as being the providers, the protectors of women and children, and as strong, 'objective' survivors, and women as needing support, concerned with the mediation of others' needs, and as passive. Human needs are often left untended.

Clive James, talking of his son-in-law, Colin:

He was never part of the family; never seemed interested. Perhaps unwilling, unable to cope ...

Saunders triptych

Rick Butler: My sister and brother-in-law split up. He worked seven days a week for years - all for his family but now they've split up. His kids can't appreciate what he's done and as a result he's lost contact with them physically and mentally .. they've withdrawn; they think Dad's an ogre.

Children grow very quickly into patterned sex-roles for the education system reinforces behaviour which is 'right/wrong for girls and boys'; ¹⁹ gender identities are deeply embedded in our consciousness. That women 'think' of myriads of different things, and can coordinate tasks on several different levels at once is 'taken-for-granted'; that they can 'hear' a child cry or can sense what is troubling little Christy or big Hugh .. is also presumed. Women are said to be 'natural mothers' and their needs are seen as complementary to their children's needs. Women are expected to find fulfilment in parenting, so the tracts go from early in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. ²⁰ This idea ripples through the magazines, story-books, conversations today.

Because parenting is seen as a natural process for women, parenting work is not defined as work: leisure is an alien concept for parents (read mothers) of young children who constantly ask ... a drink of juice please; or change my pants, Mummy; or Mum, please take me to the library, I've got this project due in tomorrow. With the Strahans, the Mathews, and Montgomery families, and with Ann Saunders when she had been living with Colin .. babysitting arrangements were always made by the women, and the menfolk would be asked if they would look after the children if the women were going out. Work and leisure are male concepts from the world of paid work: the

¹⁹ See Sharpe (1976); Nicholson (1977); Sampson (1981).

²⁰ See page 460 (Part 3:2).

concept of the 'normal' family rests on that unequal division-
ing of human labour.

Men, women and children suffer from this rigidity; people who want to 'role-swap' find their decisions questioned.²¹ Women find themselves becoming defensive about wanting a child, and wanting more,²² or women who want not to have a child are defined in that negative way, as child-free or child-less; always in relationship to another.

Seldom is it recognised, except by some of the women themselves, that their identities and time commitment may be bound up in the intensive embroilment with children for a short time span only. Because of the particular age of childbearing in our society and the 'requirement' that women be at home with their infants for the first year/s .. a woman frequently forgoes not simply a job for that period of time but training, and career promotion, for her 'working' life and learns to 'accept' that.

Lucy: I don't really want to go to work and leave the kids. I think the important time in a child's life are his first five years ... Who'd look after the kids? - that's the problem - because I'm not sure anyone can look after them as well as I can ...

Mathews triptych

Jenny: I'd love to go back and do midwifery, but I won't because it's full time and evening and shift work and you can't do that with kids. I won't work while the kids are young during the daytime.

Montgomery triptych

Yet increasing numbers of women are going out to paid work, including those with children who are very young. The 'normal' family - father the breadwinner, mother at home with the children - is no longer the 'normal' family in a statistical sense. There are single parent families - male and female; families

²¹ See Harper (1980).

²² See Dowrick and Grundberg (1980), especially page 71.

of all different shapes and sizes and definitions, and the traditional model does not provide an adequate conceptual map for them, though they might still contrast their situation with that.

Lucy: ... We're not normal; we're not married.

People pinioned in roles can find it very difficult to cope with the 'normal' growing which occurs - physical, emotional, life style changes; habits, ways of thinking, behaving .. can be fixed, attached to 'role' performance rather than emerging as human being.

My husband spoke eagerly of the children we would have; my parents-in-law awaited the birth of their grandchildren. I had no idea of what I wanted, what I could or could not choose. I only knew that to have a child was to assume adult womanhood to the full, to prove myself, to be 'like other women'.

Rich, 1977:25

what do you do with the guilt, if you do not love all yr children? ... many women have kids they can't relate to. stop trying to force yr feelings, she left your body 11 years ago.

alta, 1974:40

Another major assumption underlying the concept of parenting is that people in families are 'significant others' for each other, that they share similar beliefs, experiences, and a similar definition of 'family'.

Sheryl and Phillip Moore had fostered Debbie H. for two years. They were approached by a social worker and told they could adopt her, if they wished.

Sheryl: I can't. I love her. I enjoy having her in my home but I have no gut feeling for her that I could say she's my daughter. My husband has.

Auckland, 1982 ²³

Steven Greville: When I was 12 I used to spend a lot of time over the back fence with a single man. He was arrogant and overpowering, and used to say things like - Greville's been here again - but I used to spend as much time as possible because I could ignore all that about him.

He was a parent to me. When he died I didn't think society allowed for me to grieve or miss him in a proper way. My parents were terribly competitive about him. They used to restrict my hours - the time I could spend with him.

Yet the targeting of different members or 'role-persons' in a family is an acknowledgment of people in various relationships to one another.

In similar vein, it is presumed, in a bland kind of way, that 'all families' regardless of residential area, of age, employment situation, education .. regardless of social class, even ethnic identity, share the same outlook or priorities, the same values, or, perhaps, that they should do.

Hidden within this concept of 'family' is the notion that families are problem-free, if people perform according to their role-selves. 'They' expectations prescribe what is best for family living; what foods a family should eat; what television programmes are suitable; what modes of address for various family members are acceptable/not acceptable - aunty and uncle are 'out'; christian names for parents a little 'twee'; how children should be taught about drugs, sex, religion .. what behaviour is appropriate for mother and father, mum and dad, mummy and daddy ... what is fashionable, what is a problem.

Suzanne: If you want to know about our family you'll have to ask - because we don't have any problems, nor do any of our friends.

Strahan triptych

Intervention in the family is designed to shore up this family model. The Harvester Award in 1907 did just that; ²⁴

²⁴ See page 485, Part 3:2.

so, too, but by omission rather than commission, does the state today by not providing adequate child care facilities, by the investigative nature of many social work agencies, and particularly through the operations of the 'psy'-experts²⁵ who define within broad, sometimes specific, parameters what is 'normal' and what is 'deviant'. Rapoport *et al.* list a number of conceptions of parenthood: the last two are crucial.

Parenting involves sacrifice, but the rewards balance the sacrifices, and anyway no sacrifice is too great when it comes to children, for having children brings its own rewards; people who do not accept this should not parent.

No compromises are possible with the totality of dedication that is required to be a good parent - because children's requirements are total and their neglect brings irreversible damage.

Rapoport *et al.*, 1977:36

A further conception:

... a mother typically considers herself, and is considered by others, to be responsible for the maintenance of the life of her child ... Although rarely given primary credit, a mother typically holds herself, and is held by others, responsible for the malfunction of the growth process.

Ruddick, 1982:78

And the 'family' ordering of unequal power is assured; these responsibilities are so 'burned' into the consciousness of parents, or women in particular, that it is hard to escape, even temporarily.

Beryl Duff found in her research that men and women who left their children were treated differently. She suggests that men were 'restratified' because of their occupational 'hold' in society, and were considered 'good fathers' in a

²⁵ See page 531, Part 3:2.

moral sense, if they supported the family financially. Women, on the other hand, said:

People I had known for years walked past me - cut me dead.

I was called selfish, a child who has never grown up.

I was called unnatural, uncaring.

He said that even an animal wouldn't leave its young.

Duff, 1979:8.7

People are expected to survive parenting, to wend their way through these conceptions and expectations which form part of the legacy and currency of society, yet which are so deeply embedded in consciousness they seem so 'natural'. Only when something becomes 'un-natural', or problematic, or one has what has been called an 'I-am-me' experience²⁶ do these conceptions get challenged.

I start looking for words (answers then questions) when existence reveals to me its rough edges; I need words to patch up the cracks in my world. I do not start from looking at my world, contemplating it, analysing: I start from living it ... It becomes an object of my contemplation only when it is brought into salience because it is missing, or when it strikes me because of its unsuitability.

Bauman, 1978:156
(brackets added)

Kevin White started looking for 'words' .. when Valerie first got sick; his 'words' were unable to patch up the cracks as the illness became progressively more disabling, and then Kevin was forced to change his life, his priorities, his thinking: so too Michelle, Catherine and Sandra.

That is parenting praxis: people working-at-parenting; people giving life, colour, shape, form to personal relationships which they define as parenting relationships. This

²⁶ See page 87, Part 1:3.

praxis is influenced markedly by their gender, age, material context, and their history, primarily by the people they are. A concept is an abstraction: the concept of parenting cannot account for human being, the human labour which is parenting. The application of rigid status definitions - legal and/or gender and/or life cycle .. definitions can and do diminish people.

Both the concept and praxis of parenting need, for full un-veiling, to be examined within a societal context,²⁷ and against the ideological backgrounds which inform that society. Only then can the ambiguity and contradictions and complexity at the heart of parenting be unmasked, and parenting seen to be what Giddens calls a 'structural fault-line' in society.²⁸

²⁷ See Part 3:1, Part 3:2.

²⁸ Giddens (1981:236-238).

Part 3:4

In this thesis I have argued that parenting is a crucial process for human being. Via our parents we are thrown into the world, caught in a particular people context, in a space-time context. We learn society initially in this context: we learn the language, the codes .. which enable us to live in society: we learn to play, work, love, care, be angry, frustrated, in awe, feel dis-connected, apathetic, tired, bored, involved .. to belong, grow, feel worthwhile, independent .. we learn to be human. The way we deal with the world, with people, nature .. ourselves, is markedly coloured and inspired by this people context, and we carry that legacy for life. At the same time, as human beings, we become impregnated with and responsive to, the habits, routines, norms, practices of the society-which-is-larger-than-us but of which we are part.

The task in this chapter is to explain why the concept and praxis of parenting is as it is, and then to ponder what it might become. In order to do this it is necessary to uncover yet more layers of societal praxis, to reveal the assumptions, beliefs, ideology .. which serve to define, legitimate, perpetuate society-as-it-is. There are a number of steps in this process.

The first involves the presentation of an ontological statement about society. This draws, in part, on material from previous chapters and enables parenting to be seen as-part-of-society.

The second step is to look at the contradictions inherent in society. Mao Tse-Tung's essay on contradiction is the anchor for that discussion.

Then it is necessary to examine the beliefs, the ideologies, which support this form of society, and enable the contradictions to be ignored, concealed, traversed. The sexual division of labour, I argue, is a prior supposition or premise

on which the other tenets of liberal ideology rest.

Only then can parenting be said to have been examined, and the contradictions and ambiguity intrinsic to societal praxis be revealed as contributing, causing structural contradictions in both the conceptualisation of parenting and in parenting praxis.

This chapter is essentially about power, and the ordering and routinisation of power in particular forms of relationship and institutional praxis. This is critical research; 'it is designed to challenge, and change, existing praxis and beliefs about parenting.'¹ To change any behaviour, or thinking about that behaviour, especially behaviour which is believed to be 'natural', it is necessary to reveal the social construction of that behaviour, and expose the beliefs which serve to sanction that particular social construction, praxis. That is what this theory of parenting is designed to do.

Society ..

Australia bears the imprints of its past.² Attitudes towards human being, especially attitudes towards male and female human beings, were established in the early years of settlement. So, too, the direction and structure of the socio-economic system. Australia is a capitalist society and has, therefore, a number of distinctive features: firstly, it is a class society.³ Those owning or controlling the productive system - 'the capitalists' - have far more power to influence the priorities, values, social practices of a society than those forced to sell themselves as 'labour power'. Secondly: the state and 'the capitalists' are dependent on one another. The state depends on capital to finance its practices - education, welfare, bureaucracy, housing, agri-

¹ See page 2, Part 1:1.

² See Part 3:2.

³ See Giddens (1981:106-108).

culture, public works .. and 'the capitalists' depend on the state to organise, control, people. This is made possible via the commodification of time and people.

The state cannot use physical violence in its surveillance, commodification and control of the population so has increasingly looked to other forms of control. One of the most central is that of the 'contract': people become contracted to their employers, their spouses .. through a legal bond, or informally. Informal contracts, or 'orderings' of power, become reified in status positions: parent/child; teacher/pupil; mayor/citizen. The notion of rights - individual rights, parents' rights, children's rights .. embodies some of the ambiguity and contradictions implicit in such relationships (this concept will be discussed shortly). The crucial point is that the state has increasingly ordered social relationships in a number of different ways: through the notion of 'contract', legal or informal, through reification of status, through the defining of rights - of a citizen, individual ... Foucault refers to this process as bio-power .. ⁴

the increasing ordering in all realms
under the guise of improving the welfare
of the individual and the population.

Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982:xxii

Rationalisation is the glue which enables this ordering: both the capitalists and state have certain goals; progress, increasing profits, maximisation of resources, technological development .. and are clipped-together in seeking ways to attain these goals. Human beings become 'programmed', forced to work to 'clock-time' and in a milieu often alien to themselves. Giddens talks, for instance, of

... the fragility of ontological security
in the wasteland of everyday life.

Giddens, 1981:13

⁴ See page 452, Part 3:1.

Parenting is central to this supervision, 'care', control, this existence. Parenting is defined, monitored and sanctioned as part of this rationalisation process: individual's lives, from conception to death are increasingly 'handled' by the state. Parenting is crucial in the structuring of society, and both implicated and implicating in the contradictions which are inherent in capitalist society.

Contradictions ..

In any society there are a number of basic existential contradictions.⁵ The central paradox is that people enter the world as separate individuals, and die as individuals, yet we are social creatures. Most societies have 'explanations' for these contradictions: in many societies these 'explanations' take the form of myths, or religion. In western society, such forms are no longer as acceptable and 'answers' are sought in philosophy, the occult, psychoanalysis, and in individual searching; .. or such questing is re-directed, siphoned into an exaggerated concern with the accumulation of possessions and the immediate concrete world.

For Mao Tse-Tung, meaning or identity comes about in and through contradiction.

Contradiction is present in the process of development of all things; it permeates the process of development of each thing from beginning to end ...

Every form of motion contains within itself its own particular contradiction. This particular contradiction constitutes the particular essence which distinguishes one thing from another.

Mao Tse-Tung, 1968:35

All processes, all relationships have, co-incidentally, contradictions, and that tension is the dialectic which gives

⁵ See page 446, Part 3:1.

energy, or force to life.

Without life, there would be no death
 ... Without 'above' there would be no
 'below' ... Without misfortune, there
 would be no good fortune ...

It is so with all opposites; in given
 conditions, on the one hand they are
 opposed to each other, and on the other
 they are interconnected, interpenetrat-
 ing, interpermeating and interdependent,
 and this character is described as
 identity.

Mao Tse-Tung, 1968:61

The identity of each of the six families in the trip-
 tych, the identity of any person, or relationship, or society
 .. is, I suggest, to be found in the labour which is the
 working-through of these contradictions.

Contradictions are embedded in praxis at various 'layers':
 there are existential contradictions, and structural contra-
 dictions, ⁶ one of the main ones in capitalist society being
 the contradiction between the need for a 'docile' labour force
 and individual freedom; and there are contradictions at the
 level of everyday reality; tension between your need for space
 and my need for space; between his demands and her needs;
 between employer time and leisure time; between being treated
 as an individual and as a wife, mother, daughter, friend ..

In western society, including Australia, contradictions
 are not seen as ubiquitous, nor as giving meaning or identity
 to social praxis, but interpreted more as conflict: this is
 seen as bad, as a negative force, so contradictions are re-
 interpreted, ignored, or transformed into institutional prac-
 tices; for example, trade unions are a major tool to straddle
 contradictions.

⁶ See Giddens (1979:131-145; 1981:236-239). A structural
 contradiction is a contradiction inherent in the structur-
 ing that is society.

The primary means whereby this is accomplished is ideology. There is one contradiction in capitalist society so basic, however, that I suggest it is considered an *a priori* supposition.

On the basis of biological differences, an ordering of the human population has been established which goes far beyond any perceived differences and similarities. The sexual (biological) divisioning of labour is predicated on women's ability to conceive, carry, and give birth to children; the gender (social) divisioning of labour is predicated on the same base, but has much wider, more diffuse implications. Men have more power - physical, economic, institutional .. and this is modelled in part, on their role in the family.⁷ Men are perceived as the provider, protector .. within families and in loco parentis in the state: women, by definition, and in practice, become dependent. That all women do not want to have children seems a forgotten point: that all men do not want to be ascribed such a role is neglected.

In the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the first Article reads:

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience ...

Article 16(3) reads:

The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.

⁷ See Sennett (1981), especially for comments on John Locke, and his belief that once patrimonialism was destroyed 'liberty for adults outside the family would increase. What he and other liberal idealists did not anticipate is that what could be materially destroyed could be imaginatively rebuilt: metaphors linking fathers and bosses, fathers and leaders' (1981:57).

Article 25(2) reads:

Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance ...

That these contradictions can be enshrined in a document fought over by committees, people from many nations .. and still read as if making common sense is an indication of how entrenched is the belief in the divisioning of labour.

One way of understanding the pervasiveness of this is to view the structuring as a 'myth'.⁸

... 'myth' (can be used) to denote a rather complex intellectual-emotive pattern or structure, a web of explications designed to catch no less than the whole of reality or reality as a whole, which nevertheless can be and often is expressed in comparatively simple terms and images.

Pelz, 1974:69
(brackets added)

For instance: God the Father, God the Son .. man and wife, Mr and Mrs Les Pace ... such terms carry certain assumptions and are

... so universally shared and taken for granted, that they are often no longer recognised as myth.

1974:69

One of the characteristics of myth (used in an anthropological sense) is the mediating task of the myth. The inequality of this structuring, the injustice, the diminishing of human being .. is thus not-recognised, for the myth of the sexual

⁸ This is a specific use of the term: I betray my structuralist undergraduate training in using it this way but I can find no better way to grasp the embeddedness of this particular form of structuring.

divisioning established its 'rightness', 'naturalness'. People believe 'it', as well as live 'it'. The divisioning has been reified: social process appears to have the

... fixed and immutable character of natural laws ... (reification) can be regarded as the principal mode in which the naturalisation of the present is effected.

Giddens, 1979:195

Ideology ..

The concept of ideology has its origins in France: initially it was concerned with a critique of tradition and prejudice, but Marx, some years later ...

... gave a particular twist to the concept ... linking ideology to the sectional interests of dominant groups in society.

Giddens, 1979:182

Any group of ideas adhering round a central axis might be given the name of ideology but the usage I am concerned with in this thesis is that of the 'total' ideology, the beliefs, ideological ideas which saturate a form of society, and provide both direction and sanctioning, and set the parameters of what is 'supposedly' right and proper in social structuring.

Althusser claimed that ideology is the social cement in any society: ⁹ the analogy is apt, for whilst there are competing ideologies wherever there are groups of people, in any society the dominant ideology is that of the ruling group, and people become fixed in their thought and practice because of the infusion of this dominant ideology. Ideology is transmitted in language: it is 'lived', and reified and disguised.

⁹ See Giddens (1979:179).

Ideology functions best when it does not bear the name 'ideology' ...

Morgan, 1975:211

In capitalist society the dominant ideology could be termed the liberal democratic ideology. The key tenets of this are: individualism, and the accompanying concepts of autonomy and freedom; equality, materialism and rationality. Each of these will be discussed shortly, and the contradictions intrinsic to each revealed. What is crucial, however, is that these central ideas are legitimated, enshrined in law.

'Individual rights' and 'equality' are guaranteed before the law and are thus assumed to exist. The 'leap from history into freedom' is made at the stroke of a pen and we live in a realised utopia.

Branson and Miller, 1979:26

Ideology is more-than-ideas, and the difficulty is that an

... ideology cannot be challenged by either facts or rival theories. In the case of liberalism all historical evidence is necessarily evidence for civilization ... having advanced or regressed. Every other ideology is a projection based upon a false understanding of human nature and man's past.

Manning, 1976:142

One other point about the dominant ideology: it cannot be challenged, nor avoided: those 'having power', those ideologists or people-believing-the-ideology

... do not believe what they see, but see only part of the truth. They see all in the way of their belief and see all of what they believe.

Manning, 1976:141

The perfidy involved is that such liberal ideologists, 'practitioners' believe they are addressing 'all men regard-

less of race, class, religion, nationality or language' (Manning, 1976:140), and their success is assured by underlining social praxis with a moral obligation, defined in tautological terms - within the ideology itself. Contradictions are denied or obscured. One of the main ways of insuring the continuation of the status quo, and thus the dominance of those-in-power, is to present their sectional interests as societal interests. Parenting is a principle move in 'their' game plan: I want to change the rules.

Individualism ..

The concept of individualism¹⁰ is now one of the main defining characteristics of western or liberal democracy. It is a nineteenth century term and in France was used perjoratively: individualism was seen as a threat to a pluralist social order. It is now used as a 'symbolic catchword', praised for its focus on 'the individual', and blamed as an ideology for emphasising or encouraging egoism.

There are a number of elements contained within the concept: individualism supposedly affirms the dignity of the individual, and his/her sacredness or individuality. This is the underlying moral aspect or imperative - to treat an individual with dignity derived from, and deserved simply because he/she is 'an individual'.

Secondly, individualism focusses attention upon the autonomy of the individual. Lukes talks of autonomy as self-direction:

... according to which an individual's thought and action is his own ..

Lukes, 1973:2

but it is difficult to speak of autonomy without the corollary

¹⁰ See Lukes (1973); Fletcher (1974); Manning (1976); Branson and Miller (1979); Lasch (1979); Sennett (1977, 1981).

concept of dependence, and naive to discuss any such concept without also contexting that within the wider situation of restricted opportunities and choices 'allowed' within society.

Another aspect of individualism is that of privacy. This is a crucial notion in modern thought and is linked to notions of ownership of one's body, right to one's own space, right to be free of interference .. from other people, and from the state.

Privacy is the state of being unobserved or unknown, confidential, undisturbed, or secluded. It is the opposite of being public, and hence the condition of not being open to or shared with the public.

Wellman, 1978:56

This connects closely with the notion of freedom: this too is an ambiguous concept, though Roosevelt clarified some of the issues in 1941 by defining Four Freedoms: freedom of speech and expression, freedom of worship, freedom from want and freedom from fear.¹¹ Freedom is always a relative term:

Complete freedom would be a void in which nothing would be worth doing, nothing would deserve to count for anything.

Jung and Jung, 1977:footnote 62.

The classic meaning is freedom from coercion, manipulation, discrimination: all three 'processes' are central, and essential in western praxis - status-people are coerced, manipulated and discriminated for and against by their very status definition.

Another element is that of self-development, self-responsibility. This is one of the most treacherous notions in the ideology of individualism; as Sennett points out, in the nineteenth century the essence of individualism

¹¹ Tay (1978:108).

... lay in being left alone: if you were poor, as an individual you were abandoned to your fate; if you were rich, no one had the right to stop you from becoming more so.

Sennett, 1981:85

The same thinking masquerades in different guise today: people are declared lazy, or dumb if they 'fail' to meet standards considered 'normal' in financial management or educational prowess. That people start with different abilities, access to resources, opportunities .. may not be taken into account. Suzanne Strahan, talking of people finding it hard to make ends meet:

Such people aren't working hard enough, or they are spending too much on cigarettes, alcohol or gambling. We're working hard for what we're getting.

Strahan triptych

The concept of individualism is turned upon such people: it has been called the principle of divide and conquer .. the individual is responsible for his/her good fortune, and to be blamed for misfortune.

There is ambiguity, ambivalence, and contradiction at the core of the concept of individualism. The concept of 'an individual' is an abstract concept: as Lukes (1973) points out, considerable benefits have accrued from the increasing use of the concept, especially in providing for formal status for each person in a legal sense. But a concept cannot deal with real people, with human beings: as noted earlier, this ambiguity or existential contradiction is traversed in our society by the defining of people in status terms; the contractual obligations of such a status may be made explicit - as in a professional setting - or explicit/implicit as in a parenting status.

Of special importance ... is the capacity of people playing their parts in the ruling apparatus to think about people, to think about social relations, to think about social action, in terms of systems and in terms of social processes external to individuals.

D.E. Smith, 1979:163

Relations between 'people' in the business world, on the factory floor, in the economic sphere, are characterised as

... impersonal, competitive, contractual and temporary.

Thorne, 1982:18

Human beings, it might be caricatured, are expected 'to take off their bodies and put on their brains' when they enter the paid work sphere; or in the case of manual labour, extend their hands in the service of the system.

Relations between people in families, however, are characterised by nurturing, by a stretching time-span, by commitment. Both descriptions are exaggerated, yet carry some of the tension: 'families' are expected to 'grow individuals'; to nurture, to enable, enhance the opportunities for the growth of autonomous, free individuals who then become anonymous and un-individual in the 'work-world'.

Unfortunately we are not clear about the potential adults we want. This results in confusion about goals.

Spalding, 1980:219

Or are the contradictions so implicit that goals about child-rearing, about the growth of individuals, are deliberately left to be ambiguous?

Parenting is a crucial process in the bridging of these contradictions; it not only bears the paradoxical situation of status-people being unable to realise their own power as human beings, but institutes its own contradictions. For

example, a married woman, dependent by definition on a male, is required to raise an independent child. An infant is wholly dependent and needs to grow to independence, yet retain, work at maintaining relationship to the person/s he/she is grown from.

Because parenting is so important it is increasingly defined, 'inter-sected', and yet individuals are said to be entitled to privacy. Nowhere are the contradictions central to this process more acutely spelt out than in the transfer of rights when a child is removed from his/her parent/s.

In the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, it is written in Article 8:

1. Everyone has the right to respect for his private and family life, his home and his correspondence.
2. There shall be no interference by a public authority with the exercise of this right except such as in accordance with the law and is necessary 'in a democratic society ...

Benn, 1978:61

... in the Australian Capital Territory and in New South Wales once a child becomes a state ward no court has any further jurisdiction. The department's power is absolute ... In New South Wales the Child Welfare Act provides that a child can become a state ward without any court hearing ... The statute does not set out any procedures to be followed, or say who can apply for a child to be made a ward, or what criteria the department is to apply in deciding ... It has no obligation to notify anybody, or to give reasons for its decisions.

Chisholm, 1980a:228

Yet the concept of individualism stresses individual autonomy, freedom, privacy.

The exercise of power in a society is dependent, in part, on one's status. That is why, I suggest, parenting is increas-

ingly defined and monitored: the status definitions in a family are as confused, as ambiguous as any in society: for instance a father's status may be determined by biology and/or marriage or by the courts. A woman's status in society is a dependent status, yet in the parenting relationship she is crucial. The concept of parenting is therefore moulded to suit the needs of the ruling class, but parenting praxis is the working out in a specific concrete situation of these contradictions; it is personal, real, human.

Equality ..

We hold these truths to be self-evident:
that all men are created equal; that they
are endowed ... (with) inalienable rights;
that among these are life, liberty and
the pursuit of happiness; that to secure
these rights, governments are instituted
among men ...

Jefferson, 1776
in Koch and Peden, 1944:22
(brackets added)

Jefferson's words were not acceptable then to many, for he literally meant men; the question of women and slaves remained contentious. Previously Jefferson had abolished the law of primogeniture in the State of Virginia; that too was a debated point, for the gentry did not approve such a move. The concept of equality is always a political concept, not an ontological one: people - men and women and children - are variously defined as being equal: their status definitions - whether marital, or age, or nationality, or citizenship .. influence how they are treated before the law.

Yet in society equality has become a taken-for-granted aspect of the belief system which fuels the ordering of society; equality of opportunity is a rallying cry for education-ists, welfare experts, politicians .. yet such phrases cover-up the institutionalised inequalities which derive from the social, political, economic structuring in our society. Inequality is an aspect of the class structuring, and, equally,

the gender structuring in society: no policies aimed at re-dressing, or band-aiding, poverty or equal wages or equal rights, will affect these inequalities in a structural manner.

There is a basic confusion about the concept of equality: people are unequal - in age, in ability, in height and weight, physical attractiveness, athletic skills ... but the central truth of the concept is that people are entitled to be treated equally, before the law, simply because they are.

The concept cannot carry the questions, issues, debates which hover around like gad-flies: people-are-society, and the ordering of power relations is un-equal, so an ideal cannot 'fix' social relations. What is important are the criteria used to order relationships and the distribution of power.¹² To change society, one must change the criteria.

Various means are used to cover-up the inequalities institutionalised in capitalist society. To recap: the classification of people by status definitions is a primary one; the reification of social processes is another; and the seduction of alternative interests and ways of behaving into 'mainstream' behaviour, another.

Parenting is a key tool in the perpetuation of inequality. Not all women are involved in parenting: those that are, are linked to 'the system' via a relationship, via the male-husband-father, or via the child.

While the sexual division of labour which apportions housework and childcare to women continues to exist, women will continue to occupy a sex-specific place in their access to economic, social and political power.

Cass, 1981:180

The sad irony is that women-are-not-perceived as individuals,

¹² See Giddens (1981); Hiller (1981); Troy (1981).

and yet held responsible in society-as-it-is for the nurturing, and care-taking of other individuals, including dependent children.

Power is often unacknowledged by women, who have mostly learnt to live without experiencing the sense of social potency, the choice of options and the possibilities, for good and evil, in both that expansion and that blunting of the self which is afforded to even the most modest male inheritors of patriarchal authority.

Grieve and Grimshaw, 1981:xii

Power is denied women, and yet the responsibility entrusted to women for the care of another has no parallel. The contradiction of autonomous individuals and dependent citizens is traversed in the parenting relationship.

A number of examples can be used to illustrate this autonomy-dependency paradox. Gloria Butler, talking about her eighteen year old son, Mat, and the other two children, said:

I hope they don't go along a straight and narrow path. It's very important that they develop as people rather than stand out in any particular field ... I'm happy as long as he's not bumming round ... as long as he is contributing ... one's not entitled to Social Security when they are just bumming around.

And Roger Foley said about having children:

I didn't have to think - do I want children or do I not want children. I had a wife who wanted children and I was prepared to go along with it without any hassles ... I was quite prepared to go along with having children that fit in with me ... I think having children is a good thing because they provide you with enjoyment ... like everything else ... you chew a very nice lolly ... it gets stuck between your teeth and it hurts like hell every now and again but in the long run you like having the lolly and the kids.

And about his wife:

Mum takes the easy path ... anything for peace.

Jean Foley:

Unless it's something very important.

And Caroline, the eldest daughter:

Did you know that Mum's been in hospital for nerves? Dad and I have always seen it coming months beforehand but none of the others tried to help in any way ... Mum's always called me a second mother.

Glen: ¹³ *I think it's much easier now ... I'm not trying to be a wife as well ... it's hard to divorce what's being a mother from what's being a housewife. Allan (ex-husband) didn't hassle me ... The kids would go to bed at night and they would want a kiss from daddy but he'd be sitting on the toilet for half an hour and just when they were settled he'd get them up and give them piggyback rides, and throw them into bed ... you don't have to cope with that any more ... the day flows at my pace.*

Materialism ..

Materialism is another core facet of liberal democratic ideology, and particularly pronounced in Australia, for it is a 'lucky country'. ¹⁴

... we Australians are materialists; and this more than anything else determines our behaviour. Throughout our history we have been victims of waltzing materialism.

King, 1978:11

More is better than less; progress is perceived as inevitable, on a national and personal scale - or that was the 'ideal', till the economic downturn. In business, in liberal philosophy ..

¹³ Real name: surname omitted.

¹⁴ See page 493.

The word 'profit' is seen as the magical explanation for what is good in life.

Horne, 1976:19

The owning of one's own home, a car, two colour televisions, a video, perhaps a computer .. is seen as the urban 'middle-class' dream. The competitive spirit is what enables the achievement of such a dream: a 'good' education, contacts and a 'good' job ... those who are quick will achieve ... the survival of the fittest becomes a way of life.

In such a context, perceived and concrete worlds, people become treated as a means to an end, not as individuals. People become robots, consumers, anonymous ... 'they' people responding to 'they' expectations. Boundaries between needs and wants are deliberately fudged, especially in the media and 'big business'.

Money as a medium of exchange is used to confuse the issue; the advent of hire purchase, time payments, credit cards .. blurs the transaction between 'me and you'; people live 'owing' legitimately, part of their earnings to an anonymous 'they': they lose control, or accountability, to whom and for what is hard to distinguish. An individual in such circumstances finds it hard to feel in control.

Likewise in family relationships: the concept of ownership is no longer a tenable one in husband/wife relationships, nor in parent/child relations .. but what is the bond that replaces or 'holds-together' such people? Goldstein *et al.* suggest that the birth certificate confirms the biological parent's possession .. ¹⁵ and the debate over human rights, and the rights of people vis a vis one another tries to address issues of duties and obligations - but none of these ideas penetrate to the massive layers of meanings - commitment, caring, loving, responsibility, duties, obligations, wanting ..

¹⁵ See page 516, Part 3:2.

that are, potentially, central to parenting.

Ideas about materialism may be rampant in the Australian ethos, but Australians are not alone in being bewildered about parent/child relationships .. and in knowing how to ensure more healthy growing for all persons involved.

One of the key signs of this confusion is the debate about payment to a parent for the care of his/her child. This relationship is presumed to be a natural relationship, so payment for such services seems contradictory, even offensive. The debate is made even more complex in a discussion of payment to adoptive parents, and foster parents. Such payments are seen as tainted, yet the alternative, for some children, is institutional care: even for state financial reasons, such payments are advantageous.

The confusion is apparent, too, in custody disputes between parents, and between the state and parent/s.¹⁶ For example, Ann Saunders (trptych) denied Colin access to the children when he refused to pay maintenance, and because he refused to deliver the clothes drier after they split up. Many women feel powerless in such situations; the children are their only perceived bargaining point.

Another area of confusion develops with control: Tony Mathews (trptych) said about his three daughters

*I own them now. I mean to say, in ten years'
time I won't.*

Parents consider it a 'natural right' to discipline their children: Godfrey's Cordial was administered as a drug to infants last century.¹⁷ In both Newcastle, New South Wales, and Melbourne, Victoria, I have heard social workers and

¹⁶ See pages 501-508 (this chapter).

¹⁷ See page 465 (Part 3:1).

public health nurses express grave concern about the level of drugs being administered to infants in order to pacify them. The borderline between child abuse and health care is a faint one. Physical abuse, especially incest, is common; justification for this abuse may be made on the grounds of ownership of one's children, one's partner. It may be that the demands, expectations, work .. which is parenting is too much for some people some of the time, and this leads to such a high level of abuse in our society.

It is an elementary mistake to suppose that the enactment of a moral obligation necessarily imposes a moral commitment to it.

Giddens, 1976:109

Or that the capacity to cope is within everyone's means.

I suggest that the way in which we organise parenting in our society places too much stress on one or two adult parents. Other societies do not necessarily link the 'ownership' of children to but one or two.

When Maoris talk about 'our children' they mean not 'a maua tamariki' (the children of us two) but 'a matou tamariki' (the children of us many). The responsibility for bringing up children is not laid exclusively on their parents but is shared by adult relatives¹⁸ ... other relatives are allowed and expected to act in relation to the family's children as need or opportunity arises, to rescue from danger, to feed, direct, comfort, correct, chastise and protect ...

Metge, 1982:6

Parenting is caught up in the contradictions in society which are fuelled by the ideological notion of materialism. It carries its own contradictions. The work involved in parenting is different from any other kind of work: is not manage-

¹⁸ Kinship is defined in a different way in Maori society from Anglo-Saxon kinship: more people would be classified as relatives in Maori society.

able by the compartmentalisation of duties, and these are recurring, changing, everpresent; nor are there shifts of work/leisure periods: it is a twenty four hour, seven day a week job. In no other form of relationship are people expected to invest of themselves, their money and resources for such 'intangible' rewards. No contract can ever capture the quality or content of any parenting relationship. It is identified by human labour.

Rationality ..

Rationality is an ambiguous concept. Central to the many definitions is the notion of reason .. of an individual, a group, a society exercising reason in its decision making, its setting of goals, and the means of achieving those goals.

Weber's work on rationality is the catalyst of most discussion: his starting point is the 'purpose-fully acting individual' and this concept has led to much confusion. Questions arise about the autonomy of an individual, about the nature or definition of purpose, about reason being defined within-an-already-established or accepted definition of reality.

In this work I am using rationalisation as Giddens uses it. He argues that the rationalisation of conduct is a universal feature in social interaction; that people reproduce certain practices to achieve certain ends, but that they may not be aware of 'the conditions and consequences of their activities ...' (Giddens, 1979:215-222).

In that light, a woman preventing her child from falling onto some broken glass or stopping her child cutting itself and thereby preventing an accident is a rational act, even if she is screaming (or showing emotion) at the same time; so too is a child's behaviour when he/she withdraws, shows off, cries in order to get attention.

One of the tragedies of life is that a forced divorce has

been made between different forms of behaviour.

'Rationality' ... has become part of the essential logic of modern society: part of the 'fate of our times' ... a social order has emerged in which 'there are no mysterious incalculable forces that come into play', in which 'one can, in principle, master all things by calculation.'

Weber, in Gilbert, 1980:63

An artificial dichotomy was drawn between reason and emotion in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries with the birth of scientific thinking, and as yet, this contradiction has not been reversed, or traversed.

To be rational is commonly (mis)understood as being objective, level-headed, un-emotional, un-involved, un-biased, un-embroiled, un-passionate. The head is severed from the rest of the body, yet all human-being-in-the-world involves all of us. 'Through our body we are situated in the world'.¹⁹ We have exorcised magic, intensity of feeling, passion, excitement, joy, angst, despair, frailty .. from human being by emphasising the superiority of a misconstrued sense of rationality.

... it is a serious misconception that because emotions are felt there can be no reason in them and because they are felt by individuals they are merely psychological events. Every emotion we mark with a name ... each emotion ... includes a knowledge of and reference to the norms and rules a culture bestows on its members ...

Cocks, 1984:44-45

Much of parenting, parentwork and parenthood is rational behaviour: that is, designed to achieve certain ends. What is commonly claimed to be 'women's intuition', or instinct, is

¹⁹ See Part 1:3.

essentially 'rational behaviour': so often women are deified because they seem to know what to do, when to do, how to do .. parenting. Yet it could be argued that women know because 'they attend to the other': ²⁰ their sense antennae are developed because there is a recognition of 'the other's need'; and they do this because men, generally, default. Society is socially constructed that way.

Rationality, as misconstrued, therefore disguises the social construction of parenting and the disproportionate contributions of male and female individuals to parenting labour. This is made to appear a 'natural' arrangement, but cannot be justified by appeal to other ideological beliefs: women are scarcely recognised as autonomous individuals, nor is there equality - in access to money, power, or resources. Parenting demands embroilment: demands, continuing with the 'accepted' use of the term, a-rational commitment.

A well-known pacifist, also a mother, said recently on a platform: 'If anyone laid a hand on my child, I'd murder him.'

Rich, 1977:37

... a child needs ... the care of someone for whom she is 'a miracle'.

1977:247

So do all human beings.

The contradictions in capitalist society are systematically (deliberately?) concealed: the interests of the dominant class are perpetuated, legitimated .. by the belief system or liberal ideology which serves both to set the parameters of 'ideal' societal behaviour, and to reinforce existing institutionalised forms of behaviour.

²⁰ See page 550 (Part 3:3).

Parenting is a crucial process for human being: that it is manipulated, ordered, structured in certain ways attests to the deeply entrenched structural power and interests of the ruling class. Parenting can be defined as a structural fault-line²¹ in society, a central axis 'along which' contradictions, conflict, adhere. And therein lies the reason for optimism. Change is more likely to occur when there is deep-seated opposition or conflict. That parenting is socially constructed means it can be re-constructed.²² The task in this chapter has been to un-cover the contradictions intrinsic to capitalism, and therefore intrinsic in the conceptualisation of parenting and in parenting praxis. It remains to suggest some of the directions in which change could take place.

One final step prior to that. I want, briefly, to draw together again the essential facets of parenting: concept and praxis: to define, explain, then to ponder ..

What holds us back is not the pressure of reality, but the absence of dreams.

Birch, in King, 1978:219

21 See page 569 (Part 3:3).

22 See Thorne and Yalom (1982).

Parenting ..

Parenting is of gut importance in terms of nurturance, belonging, identification, and social learning. Potentially ... it is one of the most enabling and enriching relationships open to human beings.

Via our parent/s, we are pinioned in a density of age, gender, geographical, cultural, historical .. factors ... We are plummeted into this particular people context: how, when, where, if .. we get fed, clothed, mental and/or physical stimulation, exposure to different sorts of environment, to smells, taste, touch .. all depends, in the initial stages, on these people ... we carry their legacy through till we die.

We learn the language of the world via these people: how, when, where we participate in the world is coloured by them; we interpret the world through their eyes, at first, and their codes and societal codes are secreted into us - via our bodies, through a process of body-knowing, a process which involves all our senses and requires an inordinate amount of time and contact, an embroilment which is different from any other form of human relationship.

Parenting is socially constructed: it is a crucial hinge in 'family' praxis, perceived and lived as a total process: parenting is complex, messy, ambiguous, demanding, embroiling, frustrating .. essential for human being. Through parenting we grow, become aware of ourselves as distinct individuals, as social creatures, of necessity involved in and with human beings-in-the-world.

Parenting as a process is best viewed as an intersection in societal praxis. Because it is so important for human being it is defined, monitored and sanctioned; people involved in parenting feel torn, this way and that: their adult needs as individuals are considered secondary to the needs of the child/ren: their needs as a child must usually/always be met via one or two specific people who may/may not be able to satisfy.

Inherent in parenting praxis are the contradictions central to human living as it is ordered in our society: parenting is supposedly about the growing of an independent individual, but society does not want, need, independent or autonomous individuals so the existential and structural contradictions, as with the contradictions of equality and ideas of personal freedom .. have to be concealed.

To be human means to be authentic, to celebrate, to enjoy one's uniqueness, ability, capacity to make contact with another; to be aware of colour, pain, the environment, of suffering and misery and war and the fragility of human life; to be caught up in the human dilemma, be made to feel what it is to be alone, hungry, too busy to stand, or sit and converse; parenting is the entry to being-in-the-world; we need to capture the power that is in each one of us, to ensure that parenting is enabling of human being, rather than a process which thwarts and belittles human being. The essential aspect of parenting, at least the ideal core of parenting, is the process of nurturing: we can never have too much nurturing, too much caring in the world: I suspect, know, we have far too little.

Epilogue ..

I have a dream that one day ..

people will be able to live in dignity, as human beings and not slotted into categories, or identified primarily by their status ..

that the complexity of human being, our wealth, poverty, impotence, fears, hopes .. can be acknowledged as emerging from our sense of humanity .. and not be dismissed or separated into poetry, or art, or sculpture, or academic discourse, or 'women's talk', or anger ..

that people will be able to be people, and not primarily men and women and boys and girls and fathers and taxi-drivers and nurses and wives and 'kids' ..

that persons, male and female, may be able to choose to become parents or be free to nurture in other ways ..

that parenting is not seen as essentially belonging to one or two parents and a child/ren .. but that others can share in the responsibility and caring - in practical ways and fun ways and onerous ways - for short spells and for longer periods ..

that we can learn from other cultures, other societies .. their strengths and alternative ways of dealing with some of the contradictions inherent in parenting praxis in Anglo-Saxon society ..

that power be seen to be vitalising, releasing, positive, enabling .. and not as something to be feared .. that strength and weakness are seen as complementary and not as debilitating, defining characteristics.

that people can learn from one another, explore what is good, what is bad, be encouraged to take risks, make

mistakes, ask for help .. to learn to express their joy, frustration, hurt, anger .. and know that such feelings will be acknowledged, and not ignored ..

that human beings learn to operate from I-am-me rather than from a spot peripheral to their centre .. and that parenting, and people involved in parenting, be given all support to do just that.

that we come to feel, to know the magic, the pain, the privilege of being alive ..

Appendix A

Not only are we caught within so crushing a tradition of individualist thought - even if we are ideologically opposed to it - that we are barely conscious of our participation in it; but also our ideas are the currency of our careers, and we build around them a wall of citation, of copyright, of professional etiquette, of personal identification and stock-holding. They are territories, the paths we travel alone, going our own ways, constantly on our guard against anyone who may infiltrate our positions unseen and steal something from them without even acknowledging them to be ours ...

Dawe, 1978:341

Experience is ongoing, in constant flux and, therefore, the traditions we use to articulate it have to be re-accomplished on each and every occasion of their use. We thus constantly renew, remake, transfigure them.

1978:343

Appendix B

Thursday evening, July 26 (1979)

I'm feeling anything but articulate - but here goes.

For the past couple of days I've been 'doing a typing job' at home to earn the odd extra dollar. But it's materialised into much more than a job. I'm feeling quite fraught and emotionally drained and really Ann, it's all because of getting to know you. You're faceless I know, but we have many things in common, you and I. You've brought to the surface many feelings I've successfully repressed for a long, long time. I, too, have somehow survived a torturous, soul-destroying marriage. Mine was over a long time ago, and I'm happy and grateful to say I'm now married to a wonderful guy and we enjoy a fulfilling, extremely happy relationship.

So happy, in fact, the past pain was buried so deep I didn't think it would ever surface again. But surface it has - to the extent that I'm quite overwhelmed. I'm consoled, however, by the fact that the pain I presently feel causes me to re-evaluate my present happy status and I'm left again with the feeling that everything I did suffer was most certainly not in vain. One would never choose the course I've trodden ... but I have found peace, self-respect and lots of things I thought were lost to me. Ann, may you, in time, know these things too.

Wednesday afternoon, September 26

Where to begin ... I've finished! Phoned Marg an hour or so back ... the minute I typed the last word. I just had to let her know there and then. Cried ... a lot. As I said to Marg (or MG as I've come to know her) I have a similar feeling to what I've felt at the end of an all-involving book or movie. In a way fulfilled and sad at the same time ... drained. An empty void. This 'job' has been with me a long time ... and in a way all the time ... for a period of more than two months. It's really had a telling effect on me, and some people close to me. I'm talking mainly of my mother. I will note here that I picked up on B's martyrdom. (I typed the last two tapes involving C & B before the other tapes which brought this subject up). Can't remember specifically when I picked it up, but it was incredibly clear to me. I don't think perception comes into this as much as identification. I relate to my own mother. Her martyrdom has always been in evidence but really surfaced at the time of my own marriage breakup. My mother was perhaps more obvious. She actually used the words 'what are you doing to my life' on probably twenty occasions. Would take hours or pages in typing terms to go into to any degree. Suffice to say that for years I've subconsciously harboured resentment towards her for her attitude at this time. I suppose my resentment has surfaced at times but I just couldn't cope with it ... and pushed it underground whenever it did. Anyhow ... my attitude has definitely surfaced over the last two months ... and instead of ignoring it or pushing it away ... I've been giving it lots of thought. I have been able to discuss the subject with Mum (on two or three occasions). She was perhaps unwilling to participate in any discussion the the subject at first and I suppose I pushed it a bit. I felt it would be valuable to both of us. We have always been extremely close and no subject I can think of apart from this has ever been taboo to us. It's just too involved to get into detail about what passed between us ... but I feel it was mutually good for both of us. I think she feels that too.

Added Notes

Picked up on Marg's, in my opinion, one and only as she calls it 'boob'. That was when she asked Peter how would he feel in terms of responsibility towards Ann's kids if Ann was killed in a road accident tomorrow. I physically cringed at that one.

Again through identification picked up on Bryan's ... I think I would call it insecurity ... the status quo bit ... the arrogance bit. (I have a younger brother who reacted similarly in the same situation ... although I must state I didn't move into the parental home.)

I was aware throughout of Ann's emphasis on self. The self-importance bit. But I've been there too.

Finally, I just want to say, if it isn't already apparent, that I've found this whole experience really rewarding. Harrowing, exhausting ... a lot of things, but ultimately rewarding. I would like to feel that I too have 'grown' from it. Thanks Marg.

Jenny

Permission given by Jenny for the inclusion of this letter.

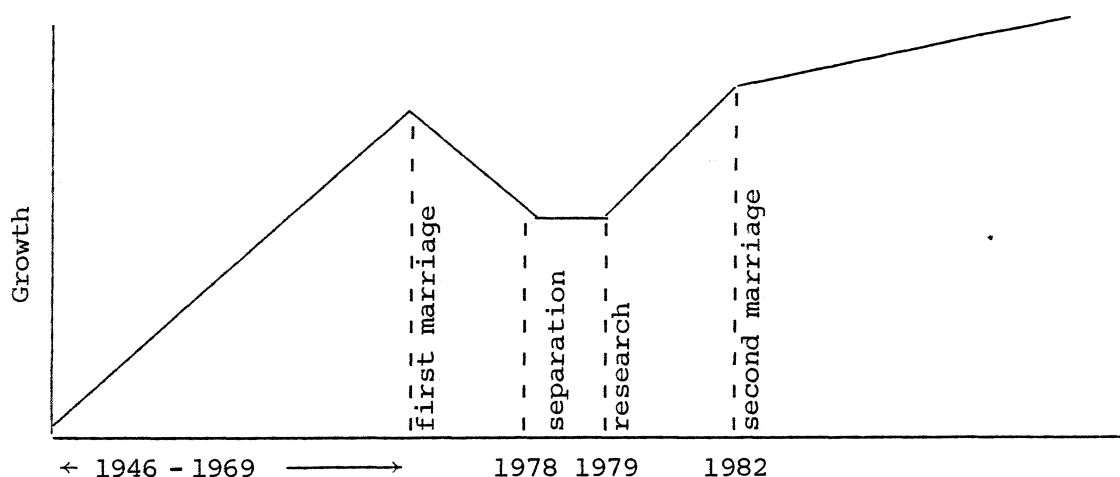
Appendix C

April 1983.

Dear Marg

Where to start? Having read all those words - mine, yours, my family's - what are my thoughts? There are so many that I'm not too sure where to begin, which ones to pick out.

I guess my dominant feeling is how much I have changed in the last four years. I think I had started to climb out of the abyss I felt myself in when we commenced the research - but what a boost you gave me! The research certainly acted as a strong catalyst, as I, in fact, had intended it to do. I grew so much just in that ten (eight) days, and feel that I haven't stopped growing since. I count July '79 as the month I finally grew up, and got to know myself, those around me. Now I feel that my marriage to Doug is in the process of completing that growth. No, that's wrong, because you never stop learning and growing - at least I never intend to again. Maybe all this can be shown on a 'Growth Chart'.



As I read the Triptych I found myself frequently hauling back and considering the person and family being revealed there. What do I now think of the values and creeds held to be important by them?

Some of the things I said make me almost shudder now. Particularly in relation to men. My attitude then was strongly biased towards the 'singles' world - and, in my opinion, a vast gulf exists between that and the 'married' world. Attitudes, interests, lifestyles, conversations are all contrasted markedly. As a 'single' there is no permanence - no one person, who you can put first and be secure in the knowledge that he will place you first. Not even the children could fill this particular chasm, though they filled many others. Therefore you must place all your reliance in yourself. I discovered that I enjoyed working and felt quite an intense pride in the fact that I could indeed support both myself and the children. Although I have gone back to part time work since remarrying, I doubt that I will ever cease working again - at least, not until Doug does. I also learnt self-confidence both at work and at social gatherings. Actually the more singles parties I attended, the more I was saddened to perceive the brittle, 'egg-shell' facades that people erect. I call them 'egg-shell

fronts' because my feeling was that they were so fragile and hiding so much hurt that they were afraid if they let you too close you might shatter them. Over thirties who have been through broken marriages all too frequently become plastic.

On my parents. As you know, we have a far healthier, happier relationship. The 'explosions' - first with Mum and later with Dad - seemed to clear the air and create a more honest, less harmful atmosphere. Our love is far less complicated, and without the power struggle. I feel that I can now love them just as they are ('warts' and all!) and I think the same is true in reverse. A sense of humour is essential in coping both with your family's and your own faults and shortcomings. Family is still, for me, the basis of society. Mine may not be perfect, but I do both love and like them all.

On Shaun and Megan. Single parenting is exhausting - even when you have children as happy and cooperative as these two. The responsibilities of loving, caring, supporting, feeding, playing, teaching etc. are too great for one person over a long period of time. We all need support and 'turn-off' times. I'm loving sharing my children with Doug now - and more and more they are becoming 'our' children.

I hope that my own parenting has improved also. When I hear myself using martyrdom, manipulation or guilt-producing tactics with them, I hastily back-pedal. I may not be always successful, as ingrained habits are hard to overcome, but I will be eternally grateful to you and your research for helping me to recognise them. (Of course, not all manipulation is bad - especially when it's successful!)

In the Growth Chart I showed another spurt of growth last year with my marriage to Doug. I feel this has occurred because Doug and I work on a basis of strong mutual respect and love and for me there cannot be one without the other. Our feeling is that 'Together, we can lick the world!' Finally, I have the type of relationship I always wanted, but had begun to doubt the existence of. The contrasts between this marriage and the last one are so great and numerous that it's not worthwhile even starting on them. Suffice to say that I know now that I love and am loved. Peace, contentment, maturity and excitement about the future are all mine.

Finally, what comments on the research? Obviously I have no regrets now about entering into that with you, nor have I had any in the past and certainly expect none to arise in the future. You probably know me better than anyone else, yet our friendship has survived and grown - I regard that fact as quite a compliment, thanks Marg.

In my view, only good has come out of the research. It was hard going at times, and potentially dangerous, but even my parents appear to feel no uneasiness. We never refer to the incidents that occurred now, but I don't think we're just pushing them back under. Rather, we brought them out into the open, dealt with them, and reduced them to insignificance.

I greatly regret your imminent departure to New Zealand, Marg, but wish you all the best - always.

May your thesis rock the world!

Love from

Ann.

Permission given by Ann for inclusion of this letter.

Appendix D

... I go on from day to day, betraying
the core of light, the depth of darkness -
my speech inexact, the note not right,
never quite sure what I am saying -

on the periphery of truth ...
Judith Wright
in Grieve and Grimshaw, 1981:102

A personal vista:

I felt like Judith Wright for much of my stay in Australia: I am still trying to work out what it is at the core of the Australian Anglo-Saxon psyche which causes me to wonder, to 'hold-back', to refrain from committing myself as I usually do in human contact; what prevents people, like me, from making contact with other human beings. I saw this persistently, and only a lot of hard work could enable the bridge to be made between people.

I am talking about the nature or quality of what Buber calls 'in-between', or in sociological jargon, intersubjectivity. 'What kinds of human nature are revealed' .. that is what I am trying to un-cover, but I cannot find even part-answers. At times I suspect/ed a brittleness in human relations, not a distrust - nothing as energetic as that, but a lack of interest or caring, what I eventually termed an a-difference to people except when they were part of one's life or orbit. A friend who also lived in Australia for nearly ten years described it as a 'functional' country where people related only in function-roles; if she was/is correct, then human beings become involved with one another when they have to, not simply to make contact with another human being, because he or she is.

I found it hard being a woman in Australia, and hard being 'different'. I changed dramatically in my time in Australia - that was partly due to being in my thirties; partly the job opportunities and challenges, partly because of friends, and also the exposure, particularly in Melbourne, to the richness and variety of peoples with different backgrounds: Greek and Italian, Jewish, Lebanese, Vietnamese .. But the more eclectic I became in my interests, or the more enthusiastic or intense I became in discussion the more I was, or appeared to be, threatening or rubbished. So often I would retreat, inside, yet on the outside remain the same as usual - strong, full of sick jokes .. My confidence teetered to and fro, up and down, and I individualised the situation.

In Maori society there is a concept of 'whakama'. As I understand whakama it means that when one has made a gaffe one can discreetly withdraw, from whatever group one is in, and then, when the time is right, someone will come and help you make the entry back into the group. In Australia, it seems, at times, that just by being a woman one has made a gaffe. I found the materialism hard to take. In 1966 I taught in India for four months; my attitude to money is still anchored back in that period. I have not updated my thinking as I should, nor become accustomed to spending money on electrical appliances, on clothes .. not without a wealthy sense of guilt. I found the automatic assumption of more money, more resources, more .. hard to swallow.

New Zealand is our home, our turangawaewae - the place where our feet belong, where our spirit can rest. I was always part-stranger in Australia.

Appendix E

Diary, 2 September 1918.

... Well we took the hill all right but God knows how many of our mates died to capture it. When I was home in Bathurst, you never dreamed that men could feel about each other the way we've done here. When Jim died last week I took him in my arms, kissed him and cried like a baby. I loved the stupid big cow with my guts. I suppose June will think I've turned queer or something but she knows me better than that. They say the old Spartan fighters used to take men lovers into battle. I know we used to laugh ourselves silly when we read about it at school ... men cuddling up to other men, and all that sort of stuff. But I used to sleep very close to Jim more than once in the trenches. You could hardly say we were 'on' with one another, but it felt good, decent, even grand to be close - not queer at all. Why didn't Dad or someone tell me that when I was home? Why did I have to come over here to this dirty butcher's shop of guns and broken bodies to find it out? A man needs a woman all right but he needs a man too and I don't see how you really live an honest life without waking up to that. It's much more than boozing together. We've been happily pissed many times but real fellow-feeling is for stone cold sober days. You shouldn't have to hide behind your grog to show what you feel for a mate ...

in Conway, 1978:83-84

*Appendix F*List of Social Services available: Australian Government

Department of Social Security (as at November 1982)	Family Allowance Handicapped Child's Allowance Orphan's Pension Widow's Pension Health Care Card Sheltered Employment Allowance Funeral Benefit
Pensions (as at November 1980)	Age Invalid Widow's Supporting Parent's Benefit Wife's
Benefits	Unemployment Sickness Special

(see page 606 for copy of front page, Claim for Family Allowance)

Victorian Social Welfare Department (no date on pamphlet)

Opening comment: The Social Welfare Department is concerned with the well-being of all people in Victoria - people as individuals, as members of families, and as part of the community.

Family Support Services	Family Assistance Payments Family Supportive Grants Family Support Units Family Counselling and Information Services
Child Care Services	Emergency Care Foster Care Adoption Children's Homes and Family Group Homes
Adolescent Services	Youth Training Centres Youth Hostels Youth Welfare Services Court and Parole Orders
Correctional Services	Prisons Community Treatment Probation and Parole
Community Services (FACS)	

FAMILY ALLOWANCE

WHAT IS IT?

Family Allowance is paid to anyone who has the custody, care and control of a child under 16 years of age. (It is also paid for full-time students aged from 16 to 24 years. If you wish to claim for a student, you will need a different form. You can get one from your local Social Security office.)

WHO CAN CLAIM IT?

Anyone with one or more children in his or her care can claim. If a child is in the care of two people living together (such as parents or guardians), the MOTHER or FEMALE GUARDIAN should claim.

The person claiming Family Allowance, and the child, must be living in Australia. If not born in Australia, they must have been living here in the twelve months before the claim, or be likely to remain here permanently. However, if the child is outside Australia, he or she must be coming to live here within a reasonable time.

WHEN IS IT PAID?

Payments are made each month. The period for which payment is made begins on the 15th day of the month and ends on the 14th day of the next month.

If you have a baby or have just come to Australia, the allowance starts from the next pay period and the first payment is due the month after that.

If a child comes to live with you, and some other person was receiving Family Allowance for the child, you may get paid from the day the child came into your care.

You must claim Family Allowance within 6 months of a having a child, or coming to Australia, or a child coming to live with you. If you claim after 6 months you may not be paid for the time before your claim.

HOW IS IT PAID?

Family Allowance can be paid into a:

- bank account (savings or cheque account)
- credit union account
- building society account

Payments will be made to one account only. Most people like to be paid this way. But, if you wish, you can have a cheque sent to your home each month.

WHAT YOU MUST DO

You must tell the Department of Social Security within two weeks if your child

- leaves your custody, care and control
- leaves Australia
- dies
- marries

You should also tell Social Security if you CHANGE YOUR ADDRESS or if you are going OVERSEAS.

HOW TO COMPLETE THIS FORM

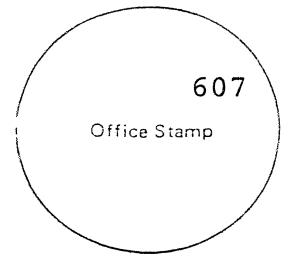
- Read the form right through before you fill it in. Answer all the questions in pen.
- On page 3, fill in all the spaces other than the shaded parts which are for Office Use.
- On page 4, tick one box for each question (for YES or NO), and if required, give details.
- If you are claiming for a new baby, a certificate should be placed on page 4 by the hospital.
- If a certificate is NOT attached proof of birth is required before payment can be made.

If you want to know more about Family Allowance or need help to fill in the form, please ask at your local Social Security office.

OTHER BENEFITS FOR CHILDREN

If you have an orphan in your care, you may be able to get Double Orphan's Pension. If you have a child in your care who has a physical or mental handicap, you may be able to get Handicapped Child's Allowance. Ask for details at any Social Security office.

OFFICE
USE



FAMILY ALLOWANCE No.

FA CN

CONVERTED
NAME

4

Date of Lodgement Reg. Code

PREVIOUS RECORD YES/NO

CHANGES

Personal YES/NO
Address YES/NO
Payment Method YES/NO
Other Children YES/NO

OVERPAYMENT YES/NO

FA CN

Reg. Code Transfer to Cheque

US

FA CN

Bank State Branch

CLAIM FOR FAMILY ALLOWANCE for baby, or child under 16

YOUR DETAILS

22	Christian or Given Name	Second Initial	Surname or Family Name	SEX Female <input type="checkbox"/> (F) Male <input type="checkbox"/> (M)
	Mr <input type="checkbox"/> (1) Miss <input type="checkbox"/> (3)	Date of Birth	Born in Australia <input type="checkbox"/> A Born Overseas <input type="checkbox"/> O	Previous or Maiden Name (if applicable)
	Mrs <input type="checkbox"/> (2) Ms <input type="checkbox"/> (5)			

DETAILS OF YOUR SPOUSE

13	Your Spouse's Christian or Given Name	Surname or Family Name
----	---------------------------------------	------------------------

YOUR POSTAL ADDRESS

22	Number	Street
16	Suburb or Town	Postcode

YOUR RESIDENTIAL ADDRESS (If same as Postal Address write 'as above')

Number	Street	Suburb or Town	Postcode
--------	--------	----------------	----------

YOUR PAYMENT DETAILS — If you do NOT presently receive Family Allowance OR wish to change your present method of payment or account details, tick the box showing the method of payment you require and complete the account details if applicable.

to a Savings Account to a Cheque Account by cheque to my address as shown above

9	Account Number	In name(s) of
Name of Bank, Credit Union or Building Society		Branch

Date of Lodgement Date of Birth Meth. / Add. Ind. Changes

FA CN 0 1 US US US US US US

FA US US

DETAILS OF YOUR NEW BABY OR CHILDREN for whom you now wish to claim Family Allowance

Christian or Given Name	Second Initial	Sex (M or F)	Surname or Family Name	Date of Birth	Place of Birth	Your Relationship to Child
	US					
	US					

DETAILS OF YOUR OTHER CHILDREN for whom you are already receiving Family Allowance

QUESTIONS CONTINUE

OFFICE USE
Coded by: / /
Approved by: / /

Further Action: Batch No.:

Have you already lodged a claim or are you now receiving Family Allowance?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
If YES, what is:		
(a) the State where the claim was lodged or payment is made		
(b) your Family Allowance number		
(c) the name under which the claim was lodged or payment is made		
Are all the children you have listed on this form living with you?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
If NO, what is:		
(a) the name of the child (or children) not living with you		
(b) name & address of the person or Home with whom the child (or children) is living		
(c) the date the child (or children) left your care	/ /	
Have any of the children you have listed, OTHER THAN YOUR NEW BABY, recently come to live with you?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
If YES, what is:		
(a) the name of the child (or children)		
(b) name & address of the person or Home with whom the child (or children) was living		
(c) the date each child (or children) entered your care	/ /	
If you were born overseas, have you been IN AUSTRALIA for all of the last 12 months?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
If NO, please present or send in your passport or other papers to show the date of your arrival in Australia and the dates of birth of your children, when you put in this claim. (Any papers you send to the Department will be returned to you by registered or certified mail.)		
If you do NOT have any of these papers, please tick this box <input type="checkbox"/>		
Do you and your children intend to live in Australia permanently?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
If NO, on what date will you be leaving Australia?	/ /	

STATEMENT BY CLAIMANT — this must be signed by the person claiming Family Allowance.
(see the Note "WHO CAN CLAIM IT?")

PLEASE SIGN HERE

I authorise the Department of Social Security to make any enquiries necessary to establish my eligibility for the payments claimed, and I declare that the information supplied in this claim is true and correct.

CLAIMANT'S SIGNATURE _____

TELEPHONE No. _____ DATE _____

THE MAXIMUM PENALTY FOR A DELIBERATE FALSE DECLARATION IS \$500 OR SIX MONTHS IMPRISONMENT

IF YOUR NEW BABY WAS BORN IN A HOSPITAL,
A CERTIFICATE SHOULD BE PLACED HERE BY THE HOSPITAL.

IF A CERTIFICATE IS NOT PLACED HERE,
PROOF OF BIRTH IS REQUIRED BEFORE PAYMENT CAN BE MADE.

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