

CONTEXTS OF DECISION-MAKING IN FAMILIES: THE QUESTION OF POWER

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ABSTRACT

The thesis is about power and about the ways in which that concept might be useful in exploring social relations in a domestic context. The central focus of attention is the relationship between instances of overt decision-related dispute and their ordering social contexts. Interview material, collected from a sample of 64 respondents, provides the basis for analysis of this issue.

The first part of the thesis develops a typology of conflict, organised with reference to respondents' perceptions of the kinds of choices involved in instances of contentious decision-making. A discussion of capacities and resources takes this account a stage further and sets the scene for subsequent analysis of the contexts of conflict.

Having outlined a model of the relation between context and conflict, part two of the thesis goes on to explore relevant dimensions of variation identified in the interview material. Discussions of discrete decisions about family and career, house and home, holidays, and leisure, give rise to accounts of patterning in described perceptions of choice. These, in combination with later discussions of family finance, and responsibility for housework and child-care, locate debatable domestic decisions with reference to a structure of informing routines, habits, beliefs and material circumstances.

The concluding chapter considers the implications of the research for accounts of women's position in the family and for analysis of power relations in general.

INTRODUCTION

This thesis is about power and about the ways in which that concept might be explored in the "real" world. It is also about decision-making and relations between husband and wife in the domestic context. The informing argument represents an amalgamation of what are normally seen as separate lines of thought drawn from existing work on the family and on power. Though the literature on power, much of which has been developed in relation to work on formal organizations, community relations or politics has, on the surface at least, very little to do with traditional sociological or feminist work on the family, there is actually plenty of scope for cross-fertilisation. I have tried to take advantage of that, and to explore the potential of an analysis of everyday domestic relations in terms of power.

Accordingly, this thesis can hardly be described as "feminist", though certain feminist ideas informed the structure of my argument. Equally, the thesis is not entirely about power. Though the research was designed with reference to a particular concept of power and in the light of a specific idea of how power relations might be studied, the resulting empirical materials reveal much about the processes of routine domestic decision-making and about the cultural and material worlds in which such choices are made. In this aspect the thesis is concerned with the everyday domestic experiences of a sample of wives. However, my account of the interview material is designed to provide rather more than a documentary report of those experiences. Because I took "the family" as a context in which to explore a particular conception of power, the research inevitably comes to be concerned with the ways in which everyday family routines structure the context of conflict and so order domestic power relations.

I began with the notion that the feminist literature had made a valuable and significant contribution to understanding the family in that it had

introduced questions of power, inequality, and injustice. However, it seemed to me that the feminist work had failed to realise the potential of its own insight and that, in particular, it had failed to take questions about power sufficiently seriously. While the feminist literature made rhetorical use of the term "power", the underlying concept was usually taken-for-granted - a case I shall develop more fully in chapter 1. It was for this reason, therefore, that I decided to explore notions of power in a family context in the hope of developing that aspect of feminist work on the family.

As I shall suggest in the latter half of chapter 1, power has been conceptualised in a number of different ways, and existing work on family power exhibits many characteristics of the general power literature. A review of that material, with the aid of Lukes' three part classification of "one", "two" and "three" dimensional approaches to power (Lukes, 1974), suggests that there are several ways of distinguishing power relations from other types of social interaction. Each of these different methods rests on what are essentially different responses to the problem of identifying "real interests". Some approaches, especially those which resemble what Lukes describes as the "three dimensional" view, and, to a lesser extent, the "two dimensional" view, permit the analyst to describe actions (or inactions) in terms of power, regardless of the actor's own view of the situation. Others, especially those which resemble what Lukes describes as the "one dimensional" approach, are confined to an analysis of overt conflict. I shall suggest that it is important to separate the study of power relations from a general and essentially moral discussion of advantage and disadvantage. Because I decided not to claim that my respondents were the unknowing victims of some power structure which only I (or only I and other "experts") could see, I adopted a limited and "one dimensional" definition of power thus avoiding the need to make any

absolute decision about the "real interests" of the subjects of my study. However, and this is an important qualification, I decided to attend systematically to the social context in which those limited instances of "one dimensional" power were situated, thus edging towards a concern with Lukes' "two dimensional" concept, though without the "two dimensional" emphasis on advantage and interest. Again I did not want to take any essentially moral view of that context. Rather I wanted to explore the ways in which, in this case, domestic routines, habits, patterns of authority, and beliefs about appropriate family behaviour ordered the world in which A got B to do what B would not have otherwise done. Questions about how that context favoured particular categories of actors (as opposed to structured particular outcomes) raise what are, from my point of view, separate issues.

This line of argument informed the way in which I set about the study of domestic power relations. It demanded, first, that I attended to instances of overtly contentious decision-making, (ie. instances which fitted the "one dimensional" definition of power) and second, that I found some way of situating these, in the event, relatively rare instances in a context of routinely "unproblematic" decision-making. To this end I chose to question my respondents about the ways in which they made certain common domestic decisions and about the ways in which they allocated certain common domestic responsibilities. I consequently accumulated a wealth of material on taken-for-granted decision-making procedures and patterns of localised authority as well as some data on decisions which were the subject of overt dispute.

Further development of the analysis required some method of relating described instances of overt dispute to the described context of unproblematic decision-making and, in turn, to a broader context of beliefs about proper family behaviour. I needed, that is, to find some way of

linking those few reported cases of conflict to the wider world. Analysis of the materials suggested that the respondent's perception of the degree to which the outcome of a contentious decision was "open" (ie. seen to be determined only by personal preference) or, at the other extreme, "closed" (ie. seen to be determined by factors beyond the respondent's control) appeared to order the subsequent course of conflict. In particular, it seemed to order the respondent's definition of relevant resources: their views about the means or capacities which might be used to secure a preference in case of conflict. I categorised the reported instances of overt dispute accordingly. Chapter 3 describes that process, while chapter 4 reviews the kinds of resources which were reportedly relevant in relation to different categories of contentious situation. These chapters fulfil two functions. On the one hand they provide an analysis of that section of the interview material concerned with overt dispute. On the other hand they allow me to develop a method of categorising instances of conflict which permits them to be reviewed in terms of their ordering context.

The key argument here is that the respondent's definition of a relevant resource, and hence the course of a particular domestic dispute, varied according to their initial perception of the kind of choice associated with what later proved to be a contentious issue. Of course that issue might not have turned out to be contentious. But if I could classify the respondents' perceptions of choice associated with a range of unproblematic decisions, then I would have gone some way towards describing the world in which decision-making dispute (if any) would be located. It seemed that the world of overt conflict and "one dimensional" power could therefore be connected to an unproblematic structuring context of routine and taken-for-granted decision-making via this notion of perception of choice. Having ordered types of conflict in this way, and having explored the relationship between types of resources and types of conflict in chapters 3 and 4, I could then describe the kinds of choice seen to be associated

with a selection of common domestic decisions. If different sections of the sample described characteristically different perceptions of choice, then the contexts in which, to use the power terminology, A might get B to do what B would not otherwise do, would vary accordingly. Argument about the same topic could be expected to follow a different course, and would involve appeal to quite different resources, depending on the initial perception of choice. So, I needed to document the ways in which different sections of the sample defined the same issues. Were decisions about family size, holidays, leisure, house and home seen to be "open" matters of preference, "closed" matters of "no choice" or issues about which there was scope for personal preference provided that the outcome did not contravene some normative convention of appropriate behaviour? What were seen to be "normal" or viable alternatives? What was taken-for-granted and what was seen to be a genuine and so potentially debatable choice? Or, in more general terms, how did the contexts of conflict vary across the sample? The results of these enquiries are presented in chapters 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9.

The contention is that decisions, disputed or otherwise, can be ordered according to the respondent's perception of the type of choice involved. In cases of conflict the respondents' perceptions of relevant resources appeared to vary depending on the type of choice initially associated with what subsequently proved to be a contentious issue. For example, if a decision about holiday location were seen to be a matter of personal preference, and if that were to prove contentious, then those involved would be likely to draw upon certain kinds of "relevant" capacities. Those who saw the holiday location issue in some other way (ie. if they concluded that there was no, or only limited, choice) would be likely to draw upon other "relevant" capacities if there were any dispute about the subject. That was one way in which the context of conflict ordered the course of particular instances of domestic dispute.

Parallel to this, I had to attend to the ways in which decisions were actually made, and to the ways in which patterns of habit and routine served to obscure otherwise debatable and potentially contentious issues. This meant exploring the ways in which decisions were bracketed together or defined as the responsibility of either A or B and so removed from "joint" view. If different sections of the sample described different patterns of everyday domestic authority, if they allocated routine decision-making responsibilities in characteristically differently ways, then the boundaries between potentially contentious and normally taken-for-granted decision-making would fall in different places. In practice, therefore, I had to attend to the domestic routines and habits of different sections of the sample so as to map areas of similarity and difference in the ways in which decision-making responsibilities were allocated. This process is described in chapters 9 and 10.

In effect, then, chapters 5 to 10 address variations upon the same question. How do respondents perceive different decisions? Which choices are "invisible" and which the subject of debate? Or, more generally, what are the domestic contexts in which decision-making conflict might (or might not) arise? In detail, chapter 5 reviews the respondents' described perceptions of family planning decisions and their view of choices associated with their own and their husband's working lives. Chapter 6 concerns decisions about house and home, chapter 7 choices about the use of leisure time, while chapter 8 focuses on decisions about holidays. Chapter 9, on family finance, attempts to unravel the inter-relationships between areas of financial authority, methods of financial management, and decisions about spending and saving, while chapter 10 documents the ways in which different sections of the sample allocated responsibility for (and so authority over) certain areas of domestic decision-making.

The thesis ends with a discussion of what are really three different kinds

of conclusion. The first is concerned with the interview material and focuses on the similarities and differences evident in the accounts provided by respondents from different sections of the sample. Those variations are, of course, identified with reference to the preceding argument about power and the context of conflict, and so make some contribution to the second and third kinds of conclusion. These latter concern the implications of the argument and material presented in the thesis first in terms of an account of women's position in the family and second in terms of an analysis of power relations.

PART 1 .

CHAPTER 1

FAMILIES AND POWER

The literature on power is considerable and that on the family, quite overwhelming; accordingly, it is clearly impractical to provide a complete "survey" of existing work in both areas. If I were to attempt to review arguments in anthropology, debates in social psychology and history, research in psychology and politics, not to mention studies in sociology, I would have to fill many volumes before I even scratched the surface of the literature. This chapter on families and power, therefore, makes no pretence to be an exhaustive literature survey. Rather, it is an attempt to tease out a thread of argument from an enormous and tangled volume of work. In so doing I shall encounter many different debates, engaging with some of them head on while others, less relevant to the course of my argument will inevitably receive less attention. Though some attempt will be made to situate the argument in a wider context, the main aim of this chapter is to present a case first about feminist and sociological conceptions of the family, and second about the potential value of a particular approach to the study of power relations. I shall distinguish between what seem to be central and tangential issues accordingly. However, this should not be taken to imply that the literature which I shall consequently bypass, or which I shall only mention in passing, is of no value.

The chapter is divided into two sections, each of which represents an element in a cumulative argument. The first involves a discussion of the feminist contribution to the sociology of the family and the second a review of the ways in which family relations might be conceived of in terms of power. In the first section, "Feminism and the family" I intend to suggest that the feminist (1) and sociological literature on the family shares a common vision of the family as an institution, though differing in

their analysis of the interests served by that institution. Despite this similarity, feminist re-conceptions of the family make a significantly different contribution in that they draw attention to the possibility that family members might have different or even opposing interests. I want to argue that the common framework of "family as institution" has structured the lines of enquiry followed by both feminist and family sociology such that neither has addressed questions of domestic power. In the traditional family sociology context the institutional emphasis has tended to obscure questions about relations within the family unit. Where such issues have been raised, they have usually been approached with reference to themes of "jointness" or "modernity" rather than power (2). In the feminist context, the over-riding concern to understand the role of the family as an oppressive institution has led to a particularly limited conception of women's "powerless" position in the family. Thus, while the feminist literature makes use of the term "power", that use is (almost always) rhetorical rather than analytical. My argument is that in neither the feminist nor the family literature is full use made of existing sociological conceptions of power, in part, at least, because of the common focus on the family as a coherent institutional form.

The second section of this chapter reviews accounts of domestic (and other) power relations presented in family, feminist and power literature. That review focuses on the problems of developing a conception of power which goes beyond the simple baseline of overt conflict but which stops short of an essentially moral view of the interests of powerful and powerless groups. In conclusion, I shall seek to develop a strategy for approaching the study of domestic power relations which is not based on the presumption that wives are the unknowing victims of a system of power but which does go beyond a simple analysis of overt disputes.

Essentially the argument is that the existing feminist and sociological

literature on the family has failed to realise the potential of an analysis of domestic relations in terms of power. In the case of the sociological literature (3), the informing conception of family as homogenous institution has served to obscure such issues. Because the family is taken to be a cohesive unit of analysis, questions about internal family relations are rendered (relatively) invisible. In the feminist context, such internal relations are the central focus. However, they are viewed in terms of, and with reference to, what is presumed to be women's oppression. Because the family as institution is known to be a, if not the, site of women's oppression, there is no scope for a more sophisticated enquiry into the nature of domestic power relations. As I shall show later, most feminist conceptions of power rest on an often implicit notion that women are relatively powerless whatever their own view of their situation. I shall argue that questions of domestic power can fruitfully be approached in other ways. Discussion of the power literature, including that on family power, serves to raise a series of general questions: questions about real interests and about the relationship between responsible action and "structural determination". Having worked through these arguments I shall devise a method of approaching the study of power relations in a domestic context which, hopefully, avoids the need to specify the "real interests" of the parties involved but which goes beyond a simple behavioural account of overt dispute. That method hinges initially on a "one dimensional" definition of power but demands that instances of overt dispute are examined with reference to their "unproblematic" ordering context of routine decision-making, habit, and localised patterns of authority.

1. FEMINISM AND THE FAMILY

Feminist inspired accounts of the family are usually seen to be radically different from those which have informed the work of traditional

sociological, historical and anthropological work on the family. Though there is some truth in this claim, in this first section I want to suggest that these different approaches are formally similar in certain respects; in particular, the institution of the family figures as a homogenous unit of analysis in virtually all areas of feminist and family sociology. This basic conceptual similarity has certain implications for the ways in which feminist and family analysts have addressed or, more commonly, avoided questions of family power.

By and large, feminist and family sociologists agree that the family-as-institution does certain things to, for or against its members and/or society. The disagreements are about precisely what those "things" are. Such differences of opinion reflect what are essentially different accounts of the nature of society's functional requirements or, from the feminist view, those of patriarchal society (4). This case can be illustrated with reference to two important family/historical debates. Consider, for example, debate about the definition of the family.

Definitions of the family

Social groups have been defined and picked out as "family" on a number of different grounds. The critical role of these prior and informing grounds is clearly illustrated in case of discussion about the universality or otherwise of "the family". As Harris (1969), Farmer (1979) and others have observed, argument about the universality of the family is essentially argument about the defining characteristics of the family as social group and so, often, about the functions of the family as institution. Collier Rosaldo and Yanagisako (1982) note that the definition of evidence relevant to the claim that the family is a universal phenomenon depends on the observers' initial model of the institution. They write in support of this point: "Malinowski separated questions of sexual behaviour from questions of the family's universal existence. Evidence of sexual promiscuity was

henceforth irrelevant for deciding whether families existed." In other words, the family is (or is not) a universal institution depending on the analyst's vision of what should count as essential family features.

Similarly, writers identify more or less historical variation in the form of the family depending on their vision of what should count as a significant change or development. Feminists and family historians, having different views of the role of the family as institution, have, not surprisingly, produced different accounts of family history. Equally, marxist feminist family history is not the same as radical feminist family history. Eisenstein attends to this difference in the course of an argument in favour of a capitalist patriarchal understanding of the past. She writes: "We must take into account two processes. One is history defined in terms of class - feudal, capitalist, socialist. The other is patriarchal history as it is structured by and structures these periods" (Eisenstein, 1979b, p45). Such differences of definition and so of analysis are also evident in more "traditional" accounts of family history. For example, Zaretsky (1976) identifies aristocratic, early bourgeois and proletarian family forms, each of which have a characteristically different relationship to the developing capitalist society. Different family forms are distinguished with reference to that relationship. In comparison, writers such as Anderson (1971) or Laslett (1972) "define family types with reference to the quantity of kin relatives in a household" (Poster 1978) while Stone (1979), Shorter (1977), Branca (1978) and Aries (1973) divide periods of family history with reference to the nature of the emotional bond between husband, wife and children or, as others might see it, in terms of changing ideologies of the family (5).

What is seen, and what is seen to change, depends on the analyst's orientation and theoretical framework. This is nothing new. What is interesting is that accounts of family history are typically ordered with

reference to an underlying account of the functions of the family institution. Accordingly, those who document patterns of residence or describe relations between immediate and extended family groups order their accounts and their definitions with reference to a more or less explicit notion of the family's function. For example, debate about extended and nuclear family forms is only deemed interesting in as far as it relates to a more general discussion about changes in economic and social function. At this point, I am not concerned with the nature of the relationship between evidence about actual family and accounts of the family as institution. Rather I want to emphasise the importance of a functional conception of family institution as a component in many different theoretical jigsaws. The peculiarly functionalist character of most conceptions of the family institution is especially evident in arguments about the "cause" (or consequence) of historical variation in the actual family.

Explanations of change

To continue the historical example, feminists and family historians have set out to write the history of the family as the history of the ways in which it fulfils what are defined as its basic material and ideological functions and of the ways in which it gains and loses other peripheral roles. The resulting patchwork of contradictory family histories reflect equally contradictory perceptions of the nature of the functional relationship between the family and other social institutions. As I observed above, Laslett (1972, 1977), Mount (1982), Anderson (1971), Stone (1979), Shorter (1977) and Aries (1973) adopt different conceptions of family as institution which, in turn, inform different explanations of change. Some writers consequently emphasise economic factors while others explain changes in family form in terms of a series of "emotional" revolutions (Shorter, 1977).

Similarly, feminist writers advance rather different explanatory accounts of family history depending on their conception of the role of the family in relation to other (oppressive) institutions and, in particular, depending on their conception of the oppressive consequence of patriarchal, capitalist patriarchal, or capitalist forces. (Zaretsky, 1976; Firestone, 1970; Mitchell, 1971; Gittens, 1985; Barrett 1980). For example, Mitchell writes "..women's role in the family - primitive, feudal or bourgeois partakes of three quite different structures: reproduction, sexuality, and the socialisation of children. These are historically, not intrinsically related to each other in the present modern family. We can easily see that they needn't be." (Mitchell 1971). Framed in this way, family history is seen to be the history of the relationship between those three structures. Different feminist writers place more or less emphasis on the role of particular components in this or some other causal and oppressive sequence. For example, Zaretsky (1976) describes the history of the family in terms of the relationship between family (as institution), the "organization of production", and personal life. He writes, "While the rise of industry largely freed women from traditional patriarchal constraints, the expansion of personal life created a new basis for their oppression - the responsibility for maintaining a private refuge from an impersonal society." Others agree with the first point but differ in the account and explanation of the oppressive consequences. For example, Hartmann agrees that "The emergence of capitalism in the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries threatened patriarchal control based on institutional authority" but goes on to argue that the new basis for women's oppression depended, above all, on the resulting "sex-ordered division of labour" (resulting that is from a combination of patriarchal and capitalist forces) rather than on a notion of the appropriate organisation of personal life. (Hartmann, 1979, p207)

Feminist explanations of family history (and of the family in general) vary

in relation to the analyst's preference for a "radical" patriarchal or a "marxist" capitalist account of the role of the family institution. In the traditional family history context explanations vary depending on the analyst's preference for an economic or "belief centered" view of historical development. Either way, working definitions and sub-divisions of family type along with explanations and interpretations of historical change, are made with reference to a notion of institutional role or function. This common "functional" background has certain implications for the kinds of questions then addressed. Historians, anthropologists, feminist and family sociologists alike, have approached the study of the family with reference to such issues as a) the universality or otherwise of the family b) the historically variable way in which the family fulfils its key functions, c) the relationship between the family and other social institutions, and, sometimes d) the relationship between the institution and its ideology and/or the relationship between a set of beliefs about the family and actual family life. (Flandrin, 1979; Donzelot, 1980; Barrett and McIntosh, 1982; Gittens, 1985)

In these respects, feminist analyses of the family are organised with reference to much the same issues (the changing role of the institution of the family, the relation between that institution and others etc.) as those which order the accounts provided by family sociologists. This is not surprising, for the common emphasis on the functions and roles of the family as institution (patriarchal or otherwise) inevitably highlights some sorts of questions and obscures others. I shall now consider the feminist and traditional sociological approaches to the study of relations within the family and suggest that the common functional and institutional focus has effectively limited analysis of such relations.

Family sociology and the analysis of relations within the family

One of the feminist criticisms of traditional sociological literature has been that the vision of the family as an analytic unit precludes discussion of the relations between husband, wife, and children (6). Indeed, it is the case that traditional family sociology has paid relatively little attention to relations within the family, or rather, that it has not attended to such issues with a view to establishing or documenting women's oppression. As Gittens writes: "The family has generally been treated by sociologists and historians as a unit and, as such, it has assumed that all individuals within it are, by and large, in a similar situation sharing similar resources and life chances" (Gittens, 1985, p2) (7). It is also true that many other branches of sociology have taken the family as a basic unit of comparison in cases in which the "equivalence" of family members was yet to be established. Delphy describes the problem in these terms: "Traditional stratification studies consider the family to be a 'solidary unit of equivalent valuation', thus the status of the woman is assumed to be equivalent to the status of her husband... the fact that women are not equal to men in many ways is irrelevant to the structure of stratification systems. It is presumed that wider inequalities have no influence on the (assumed) equality of the couple, and on the other hand that relationships within the couple, because they are seen as equal, cannot be the cause of wider inequalities" (Delphy, 1980a).

Where family sociology has considered relations within the family, relevant questions have been defined with reference to general presumptions about the family as institution. For example, Bott (1957), Rappoport and Rappoport (1971, 1976), Pahl and Pahl (1971), Rosser and Harris (1965), Edgell (1980), Allen, G (1985) and Udry and Hall (1965) have considered the internal structure of the family and the respective roles of husband and wife as part of a more general analysis of the way in which the family

works as a social system and/or of the way in which it, the actual family unit, responds to changing demands and external pressures associated with its neighbourhood, its social and geographical location, the fact that the wife works, that the husband is unemployed etc. Others have described changes in the relations between husband and wife in terms of equality. Young and Willmott, for example, document changes in the balance of actual family "equality" as that relates to and/or reflects the changing role of the family in relation to other social institutions (Young and Willmott, 1973). In this context "equality" has tended to mean sharing, levels of which have been estimated with reference to such indices as the ways in which a couple divide their domestic responsibilities (Platt, 1969). Whatever the terms used, "joint", "segregated", "symmetrical", "equal", "modern" or "traditional", those who have worked within the family sociology framework have not, on the whole, been concerned to document patterns of inequality or injustice. The task has been to describe whole families with reference to the ways in which responsibilities are allocated, but not to evaluate the consequences of those different styles in terms of the way in which they serve to advantage some family members at the expense of others. The informing questions have been "How does the family cope?" and/or "How does it respond to changes in the "outside" world?" Questions of internal discord, as opposed to difference, are therefore bracketed out. There is very little room for the notion that family members might have different interests and so no room for a discussion of internal family relations in terms of an oppositional account of power.

Feminism and the analysis of relations within the family

In comparison, feminist conceptions of the family are founded on the conviction that husband and wife have opposing interests. What is particular to these accounts is the presumption that the family is a major

site of women's oppression: that in some way women get a bad deal because of the institution of the family. Feminist accounts of the family, like those presented by historians and sociologists, rest on a particular conception of the functional role of that institution. What is different about the feminist version is that it depends on the belief that the family works, in some more or less direct fashion, in the interests of men and against those of women. Given this initial conviction attention has been focussed, not surprisingly, on the nature of what are believed to be unequal relations within the family. I shall suggest first, that the notion that husbands and wives might have different interests and that family members might not share the same resources or life chances provides a genuine challenge to traditional sociological conceptions of the family. More than that, it opens the way for a discussion of internal family relations in terms of power. However, my second point is that the feminist literature has failed to realise the potential of this insight and, in particular, has failed to take questions of power sufficiently seriously.

Consider first the ethnographic feminist literature. Writers such as Oakley (1976), Pahl (1980), Hunt (1980) and Hobson (1978) attend to relations within the family, asking much the same questions as researchers working within the traditional family framework (Young and Willmott, 1973; Edgell, 1980; Rosser and Harris, 1965). However, their analysis is distinctive in that relations between husband and wife are described as if they revealed something about power and oppression. For example, Hobson writes, ".in many cases the words spoken by the women are more forceful when left to stand on their own. For this reason the article is concluded with a long extract, spoken by one woman, left without detailed comment because I think the woman speaks her own oppression" (Hobson, 1978, p92). Though it is difficult to winkle out the conceptions of power embedded in such work, it seems that the implicit argument goes something like this. Women are oppressed. This means that there is an imbalance of power either

because oppression can only be sustained if that is the case or because oppression is founded on some pre-existing imbalance. In addition, many feminist writers presume that "women's subjective experience reveals a 'sense of oppression' (Hobson, 1978, p79). In this context, documentary accounts of women's lives are believed to be valuable on the grounds that they reveal, to the feminist observers at least, the everyday "reality" of the family as a site of oppression and of power. I shall explore the characteristics of this particular conception of power later in the chapter. At this point it is useful to observe that women's oppression, and hence women's powerlessness, is presented as a fixed "given" which provides the starting point of the enquiry and which is not itself the subject of discussion. In addition, but related to this, such arguments depend on a common if implicit assumption that women are the victims of a patriarchal power structure whatever their self-avowed view. For example, the following quotation embodies the notion that women are oppressed, and that (whatever they may think) they are the victims of a power structure. "Many of the fiercest diatribes against liberation come from the women themselves... A woman's declaration of happiness with housewifery is a necessary identification, but as a true statement it must be suspected. Women's generally subordinate position in society means that there are inbuilt obstacles to the housewife's realization of her oppression" (Oakley, 1976) (8). The informing conceptions of equality and justice, in relation to which the present situation is judged and with reference to which ideologies are distinguished from "innocent" cultural themes, are so taken-for-granted by these analysts that they are neither explained nor justified. I do not want to get involved with a discussion of the meaning of equality here, though it is an important issue and one which deserves more attention than it is usually given. As Janet Radcliffe Richards notes, "it is all too easy to slide into the convenient idea that whenever women make choices which feminists think they ought not to make they must

be conditioned, so giving feminists an excuse to discount those opinions." If writers are to avoid this "mistake", she continues, they are obliged to arrive at some theoretical conclusion about "what things count as justice and injustice." (Richards, 1980).

The more "theoretical" feminist literature tends to make almost as many unargued presuppositions about power as it does about the notion of inequality and oppression. Again power is characteristically presumed to be either the medium through which inequality (however that is defined) is maintained, or the foundation on which it is based. Because most attention has been directed towards the project of understanding the cause or causes of women's oppression - and the role of the family as an oppressive institution - concepts of power and definitions of inequality remain relatively unexplored. As the following statements illustrate, power is either seen to be something which is automatically derived from an underlying structure of inequality or as something on which such structures are based. "Power is dealt with in a dichotomous way by socialist women and radical feminists: it is seen as deriving from either one's economic class position or one's sex" (Eisenstein, 1979b, p6). "Patriarchy is thus both a gender and an age relationship, based on power, and is essential in understanding families" (Gittens, 1985, p35). It is a measure of the rhetorical rather than analytic use of the term that such fundamental differences in the implicit conceptions of power pass unnoticed. Because much of the feminist literature has been concerned with the project of devising an institutional explanation of oppression and/or exploitation, and with the task of isolating the causal role of patriarchy and/or capitalism, it has become embroiled in debate about the relative explanatory value of patriarchy and capitalism as concepts. Questions about the meaning of power (ie. is it a means? a foundation of inequality? a personal possession? a property of society? etc.) do not figure in such

debate. As a consequence, the topic has slipped from the feminist agenda; a curious development for no-one could deny that concepts of power and definitions of inequality are, in theory, crucial to the feminist argument. In conclusion, I have argued that family sociology has paid relatively little attention to the relations between actual family members, let alone to questions of power, in part because of an informing conception of the family as particular kind of functional institution. Work which does attend to the internal structure of what is normally taken to be the family unit has been concerned with the variety of ways in which families respond to wider pressures. In the historical or sociological contexts such work is based on the presumption that family members share essentially the same interests whatever the way in which they organise their domestic lives. Either way, questions of power have been bracketed out. The feminist literature draws attention to the potential value of an analysis of domestic relations in terms of power. However, because that literature has the primary goal of documenting, explaining and understanding the family's role in relation to what is presumed to be women's oppression, it has so far failed to realise that potential. The feminists' institutional emphasis, in combination with their implicit assumptions about oppression, effectively obscure the need for a conceptual understanding of power (9). Indeed real debate about the meaning of power is virtually non-existent in the feminist context. In the next section I want to examine the literature on power, and in particular on power in the family context, so as to take advantage of the opportunity opened up, but not exploited, by the feminist work on the family.

2. CONCEPTIONS OF POWER

I have chosen to order this discussion of the power literature with reference to the argument presented by Lukes in his book Power: A radical view (Lukes, 1974). This strategy has two advantages. First, Lukes'

classification of "one", "two" and "three" dimensional views of power provides a useful framework with which to structure a review of the literature on family power relations. Second, his account highlights the importance of two key issues; the question of "real interests" and the question of the relationship between responsible action and what Lukes refers to as "structural determination". As I shall suggest later, those who wish to address questions of power have to arrive at some theoretical position with respect to both these issues. My initial discussion of the work on family power draws attention to a range of alternative responses to these two key issues and so lays the foundation for a more abstract review of the problems of describing domestic relations in terms of power. I shall begin with a brief summary of Lukes' classification before using it to order an account of the literature on family power relations. I shall then consider the general issues which this review raises and, on the basis of that discussion, outline the way in which I approached the study of family power relations.

Lukes and power

Lukes identifies three different views of power. The first view, routinely adopted by those writing about families as well as by those who have been concerned with the structure of formal organisations, "involves a focus on behaviour in the making of decisions on issues over which there is an observable conflict" (Lukes, 1974, p15). Seen in this way power is exercised when A gets B to do something B would not otherwise do when there is direct and observable conflict between A and B over the outcome. Such approaches are described by Lukes as "one dimensional". "Two dimensional" analyses of power, mostly but not exclusively provided by those interested in the sociology of formal organisations, differ in that they involve discussion of "nondecision-making" (10) and "agenda setting" as well as of instances of overt and contentious decision-making. In Lukes' words the

"two dimensional" view "allows for consideration of the ways in which decisions are prevented from being taken on potential issues over which there is an observable conflict of (subjective) interests" (Lukes, 1974, p20). The "three dimensional" view, devised on the basis of a critique of the behavioural and decision-making focus of the "one" and "two dimensional" approaches, offers the prospect of a "serious sociological and not merely personalised explanation of how political systems prevent demands from becoming political issues or even from being made" (Lukes, 1974, p38). Power is still defined in terms of A getting B to do what B would not otherwise do, though from the "three dimensional" view this need not involve any form of observable conflict. In such circumstances the analyst needs to justify the expectation "that B would have thought and acted differently from the way he does actually think and act" and to "specify the means or mechanism by which A has prevented or else acted (or abstained from acting) in a manner sufficient to prevent, B from doing so" (ie. from acting differently) (Lukes, 1974, p41) before describing the relationship between A and B as one involving power. Only having taken these steps is the analyst in a position to present a "radical" account which can describe even "the supreme and insidious exercise of power" and so account for the ways in which people are prevented "to whatever degree, from having grievances" (Lukes, 1974, p24).

Those who adopt either a "one", a "two" or a "three dimensional" view necessarily define instances of power with reference to quite different criteria. "One dimensional" accounts are only concerned with instances of overt conflict; "two dimensional" work explores conflicts of subjective interests; while "three dimensional" analyses examine conflicts of real interests which, though evident to the observer, are "invisible" to those involved. In other words, the range of social behaviour to be reviewed in terms of power varies according to the observer's preference for a "one",

"two" or "three" dimensional account.

In addition, proponents of each view find it more or less easy to specify the relevant counterfactual, that is to establish what B would have done if it were not for A's exercise of power. As Lukes observes "in general, any attribution of the exercise of poweralways implies a relevant counterfactual, to the effect that (but for A, or but for A together with any other sufficient conditions) B would otherwise have done, let us say, b." Lukes goes on to note that "conflict provides the relevant counterfactual, so to speak, ready made." Thus analysts of power defined in the "one dimensional" sense have a relatively easy life. In comparison, advocates of the "two", and especially the "three dimensional" views have to take more elaborate steps to establish, empirically, what B would have done "under conditions of relative autonomy, and in particular, independently of A's power" (Lukes, 1974, p33); they need to establish B's interests in order to identify an exercise of power.

Similarly, the problem of distinguishing between types of social causation which can, and which cannot, be described in terms of power depends on which of the three views is adopted. For example, those concerned with the ways in which A secures A's preference in cases of overt conflict usually attribute A's success to a sequence of actions or inactions for which A was clearly responsible. It is rather more difficult to be sure that an instance of nondecision-making is the product of a responsible action, rather than the result of something as general and apparently uncontrollable as the "bias of the system". Yet, for Lukes at least, "an attribution of power is at the same time an attribution of (partial or total) responsibility for certain consequences" (Lukes, 1974, p56). It is especially difficult to attribute responsibility in this sense for the wide range of action and inaction which might be included in a "radical" analysis of power. Again Lukes maintains that this is a "serious but not

overwhelming" difficulty, and it is an issue that I shall consider in more detail later in the chapter.

So, Lukes' work serves to highlight the importance of a) the definition of the relevant counterfactual and so of the interests of the parties involved in an exercise of power, and b) of the need to examine the relationship between power and responsibility on the one hand, and structural determination on the other. The following account of the family power literature is ordered with reference to Lukes scheme of "one", "two" and "three dimensional" views of power so as to emphasise the nature of the positions taken with respect to these two general questions. I shall begin with an account of the literature which adopts a "one dimensional" view of family power relations.

"One dimensional" accounts of family power

Most of the work on family power wholeheartedly adopts a "one dimensional view" of its subject. This literature, much of it produced in America in the 1960's and 1970's by writers such as Blood and Wolfe (1960), Cromwell and Olson (1975), Rogers, M (1973) and Centres, Raven and Rodrigues (1971) defines (family) power as the ability of husband or wife to secure a preferred outcome in relation to an overtly contentious decision. For example, Cromwell and Olson describe family power as "the ability (potential or actual) of individual members to change the behaviour of other family members." This ability is most easily recognised in cases of overt decision-making in which one party gets their way despite the other's opposition. Much of the American family power literature has therefore attended to practices of decision-making, to the results of overtly contentious decisions and, to a lesser extent, to the means by which individuals secured their preferences. Such a conception of power informs the work of Blood and Wolfe. Their research, reported in Husbands and Wives: The Dynamics of Family Living (Blood and Wolfe, 1960), was based on

responses to questions about the outcome of eight common decisions which "were selected to provide an estimate of the relative balance of power between husband and wife." Here, as with the "one dimensional" analyses described by Lukes, instances of power are identified with reference to conflict "between preferences that are assumed to be consciously made, exhibited in actions and thus to be discovered by observing people's behaviour." (Lukes, 1974, p14) Here too, then, the evidence of A's victory is taken as proof of the fact that B has ended up doing what B would not otherwise have done, and that A has therefore exercised power. Whatever the limitations of this view, the approach to power is via cases in which one party clearly came off worst and in which the other, just as clearly, got its way. Instances of the exercise of power, defined in this way, are consequently easy to recognise.

Most of those who define the exercise of intra-family power in terms of the outcome of contentious decisions also define potentially powerful individuals as those who are likely to be able to get B to do what B would not otherwise do because they have the means to meet B's needs. Cromwell and Olson write: "The family member with the greatest command of resources to meet the other's needs and goals was defined to have the greater power" (Cromwell and Olson, 1975). Such a view is much like that presented in the work of Blau (1964) and Emerson (1962) and depends on an assumption that the members of society, of a family, or of some other social group, share a set of common needs. In this context particular capacities, means, or goods come to have the status of resources because they are scarce and in common demand. Resources are therefore distinguished from other innocent capacities on grounds of dependence. As Emerson writes "Power resides implicitly in the other's dependence" (Emerson, 1962). X, or more precisely, A's control over x, counts as A's resource if B is dependent on A for x (whether x is a ten penny piece, a cooked breakfast, or an oil

well). From this point of view, then, resources can be treated as individual possessions whose value is determined by the other's dependence. If the observer can correctly identify the distribution of means required to meet what are presumed to be the common family or societal needs then, from this perspective, the observer has mapped out the absolute patterns of dependence and of (potential) power.

By definition, then, changes in the balance of mutual interdependence have an immediate effect on power structures. Many writers have attended to these patterns of dependence on the grounds that they are significantly related to levels of marital satisfaction, the presumption being that an even balance of power is the most rewarding and satisfying arrangement. (Madden, 1981; Cutright, 1970, 1971; Pearlin, 1975) (11). However, others observe that shifting patterns of exchange and mutual indebtedness, rather as in Durkheim's organic solidarity, serve to bind family members (or the family institution) together. It is, for example, from the second of these two positions that Scanzoni (1976b) documents the impact of a wife's work, and of working women, on family life (12).

A few researchers have attended to historical changes in the position of women (in relation to men) in terms of their access to resources likely to be relevant in the family context. Such work sets out to map historical variation in the nature and availability of the kinds of resources which allow women to exercise power (in the "one dimensional" sense of getting their way in case of overt dispute). For example, S Rogers (1975) reviews the consequences of the changing structure of a village and the cultural impact of urbanisation in terms of the structure of domestic dependence. She observes that the means which had clearly allowed individual village women to secure their (stated) preferences in the past were effectively devalued as a result of wider social and economic changes. "The woman, still running the household, and with fewer legal and other formal rights

than her husband, has considerably less access to crucial arenas and becomes heavily dependent upon him both socially and economically.... Her informal power is much less effective in the larger world, and her inferior formal rights become an accurate reflection of her actual position." It is important to acknowledge that, in this context, it is only possible to talk of the power which women (as a gender group) gain or lose if it is also possible to establish that they have the same preferences and that the capacities to which they have access in fact allow them to secure those common (stated) preferences. Though this was no problem for Rogers who was, on the whole, content to define domestic power relations with reference to the stated preferences of husband and wife and with reference to specific outcomes in cases of overt dispute, it can be problematic for those who wish to make more far-reaching claims about the position of women in general (13).

In summary, then, it is relatively easy to identify the exercise of power if that is defined as A's ability to get B to do what B would not otherwise do in cases of overtly contentious decision-making. Such instances are, like the outcome, as evident to the participants as to the observer (either A did or did not win what was a clearly contentious decision) (14).

At this stage it is useful to consider two kinds of criticisms of this view: those which revolve around the conception of resources which is commonly but not necessarily part of the "one dimensional" approach; and those which take issue with the conflict centered orientation of this approach.

Many proponents of the "one dimensional" view of power believe that resources have value because of the other's dependence, and so argue that it is both possible and practical to identify individuals with different levels of potential power. Given a conception of societal or family need it is, in theory, possible to define what would count as a resource and to

then identify resourceful individuals without ever having to take note of the way in which that potential is actually exercised (if at all). Such dependence/supply/demand accounts of the distinction between innocent capacities and useful resources need make no reference to the ways in which arguments are won, for the presumed relationship between the possession and the exercise of power is straightforward: those who have the most resources will get their way whatever the issue and whatever the circumstances of debate (15). As I observed earlier, "one dimensional" definitions of the exercise of power can stop short of such supply and demand accounts of resources and potential power. Those who actually do attend to the occasions on which power is exercised (as defined by the "one dimensional" view) argue that complex conventions of argument govern the use of particular tactics and appeals (resources) and, in part, determine their value. In other words, the social context of conflict complicates the relationship between possession of the means to meet the other's needs and ability to exercise power. While the dependence argument may hold at a general level (as advanced by Blau, 1964; Emerson, 1962) there is no reason to suppose that the value of a resource is simply and exclusively determined by an equation of supply and demand. The related notion that resources can be simply added together to produce an absolute index of power potential is correspondingly simplistic. If these criticisms hold, then, it is extremely difficult to recognise necessarily potentially powerful groups or individuals or to identify generally relevant resources. If capacities only and variously have effect as resources at the moment when they in fact allow A to get B to do what B would not otherwise have done, that is to say capacities only become resources when they are realised, then the definition of power potential must depend on a retrospective observation of cases of overtly contentious decision-making (16).

Critics of the "one dimensional" view also claim that it draws too tight a boundary around the core of observable and overtly contentious decision-making. Bachrach and Baratz note that "Power is also exercised when A devotes his energies to creating or reinforcing social and political values and institutional practices that limit the scope of the political process to public consideration of only those issues which are comparatively innocuous to A" (Bachrach and Baratz, 1970, p7). Similarly, though this time in relation to the view of resources characteristically adopted by "one dimensional" analysts, Clegg observes, "the assumption of resource based explanations of power ought also to entail an exposition of how some people come to have access to these resources while others do not. This entails a theory of power." (Clegg, 1979) In pursuit of such a theory, I shall now review accounts of power which encompass discussion of the distribution and definition of "resources", of agenda setting and nondecision-making practices and, at the most general, of the "bias of the system".

"Two dimensional" accounts of family power

Those who adopt what Lukes describes as a "two dimensional" view of power attend to "the fact that power may be, and often is, exercised by confining the scope of decision-making to relatively "safe" issues" (Bachrach and Baratz, 1970, p6). Such observers are obliged to "identify potential issues which nondecision-making prevents from being actual". More than that, they have to show that in making a nondecision, (ie. in deciding not to decide) one party was able to secure their preference. Advantaging nondecisions are included in the "two dimensional" account of power and are distinguished from innocent absences of decision with reference to an "observable conflict of (subjective) interests, seen as embodied in express policy preferences and sub-political grievances" (Lukes, 1974, p20). The means which permit agenda setting and nondecision-making presumably count as resources and, implicitly, those who have access to such "resources"

have what might be thought of as potential power (17).

Unfortunately, none of the work on domestic power relations really occupies this position. Some writers observe in passing that family rules, rituals, and expectations about, for example, the distribution of income or food "function to preclude power confrontations through the pre-solution of potential problems" (Broderick, 1975) (18). However, discussion of such routines is not the same as discussion of non-decisions. First, those family rituals are not the product of a discrete decision to avoid debate, and second, it is not necessarily clear that the outcome of the ritual or routine is in the interests of one party but not the other. Both of these criteria must be met if the event is to be described as one involving an exercise of "two dimensional" power. While it is useful to attend to the way in which decisions come to be made, and, in particular, to take account of decisions which "result in suppression or thwarting of a latent or manifest challenge to the values or interests of the decision maker" (Bachrach and Baratz, 1970, p44), it is only possible to describe those processes in terms of power if it is also possible to define the interests of both the nondecision-maker and of his/her "victim". Even if this were possible, the "two dimensional" account of power hinges on a notion of individual decision-making and as such could not help with an analysis of something as general as patriarchal power. To quote again from Lukes, the "two dimensional" account "confines itself to studying situations where the mobilisation of bias can be attributed to individual's decisions that have the effect of preventing currently observable grievances (overt or covert) from becoming issues within the political process." (Lukes, 1974, p37)

"Three dimensional" accounts of power

In comparison, the ways in which beliefs, ideologies, uncontentious actions and "social arrangements" work to the advantage of particular groups or individuals can all be discussed in terms of Lukes' three dimensional view

of power. From this perspective, instances of power are identified with reference to "a contradiction between the interests of those exercising power and the real interests of those they exclude. These latter may not express or even be conscious of their interests." These interests are therefore recognised and identified by the observer who, according to Lukes, must take steps to provide "indirect grounds for asserting that if A had not acted (or failed to act) in a certain way... then B would have thought and acted differently from the way he does actually think and act". Instances of power are therefore distinguished with reference to a definition of what B would have done if B were exercising choice under conditions of "relative autonomy and, in particular, independently of A's power". It is important to note that it is only possible to recognise such instances, including those in which people are prevented from having grievances because "their perceptions, cognitions and preferences" (Lukes, 1974, p24) are shaped having first "taken steps to find out what it is that people would have done otherwise".

Lukes claims that it is difficult but "not impossible to adduce evidence - which must, by nature of the case, be indirect - to support the claim that an apparent case of consensus is not genuine but imposed". Though such enquiry need not be restricted to an individual level (ie. in terms of individual As and Bs), it is difficult to conceive of the kind of evidence which would be required to support the general case that the preferences and desires of all women were structured in a way which was counter to their (common) "real interest". Yet this is a condition which must be met before the observer can identify the exercise or possession of power defined in terms of the "three dimensional" view.

In the final section of Power: A radical view, Lukes distinguishes between power and structural determination and specifies a second necessary condition of power. The observer has to identify the nature of B's "real

interests" in order to claim that B is in a position of powerlessness with respect to A. In doing that, the observer has to establish what B would do in the absence of, specifically, A's power. Lukes writes: "to identify a given process as an 'exercise of power', rather than a case of structural determination, is to assume that it is in the exerciser's or exercisers' power to act differently....The point, in other words, of locating power is to fix responsibility for consequences held to flow from the action, or inaction, of certain specifiable agents" (Lukes, 1974, p56). It is difficult, though not completely impossible, to imagine how expectations of proper family life, patterns of financial dependence etc. (even if they could be shown to serve the interests of men/husbands at the expense of women/wives) could also be attributable to specifiable agents and so described in terms of ("three dimensional") power. I shall return to this issue later in the chapter.

To sum up, Luke's discussion of the "three dimensional" view of power highlights the theoretical importance of a) the definition of real interests and b) the distinction between structural determination and responsibility. These are key issues for those who want to maintain a complex yet basically oppositional account of power which does not collapse into vacuous generalities.

The feminist literature and the "three dimensional" view of power

The feminist literature on the family tends to adopt a conception of power which is superficially similar to Lukes' "three dimensional view" but which bypasses both the problem of specifying the relevant counterfactual and the problem of determining the point at which "structural determination ends and power and responsibility begin" (Lukes, 1974, p56). Feminist discussions of power are founded on a belief that women are the victims of a patriarchal (or capitalist patriarchal) system and that they would choose

to behave differently if it were not for this system. Women's present position in the family is therefore recognised as one of powerlessness with reference to some implicit model of how things would otherwise be, or, to be more precise, with reference to a vision of women's real interests (19). This account of power and Lukes' "three dimensional" view differ in two critical respects.

First, few feminists have felt the need to justify the expectation that women, who are unproblematically agreed to be the victims of injustice and inequality, would "but for the exercise of power, strive for justice and equality" (Lukes, 1974, p46). In other words, feminist writers do not take steps to find out what it is that people (in this case women) would have done otherwise in order to then identify the exercise of power, because they begin from a conviction that women are in fact oppressed and/or exploited. The problem of identifying power relations is, from the feminist perspective, no problem at all. It is usually taken-for-granted that a) women are oppressed and/or exploited, and b) that this oppression and/or exploitation is maintained via an all pervasive medium of patriarchal or capitalist patriarchal power. Exactly which depends on the writer's conception of the nature and prime cause of women's oppression. It is important to note that this position is self-sustaining. Because feminist writers hold particular beliefs about the nature of women's real interests, they cannot admit counter evidence which "shows" that certain women have no genuine grievances. Such claims of consensus are already defined as the product of a false consciousness about what the writer already knows to be the real position (See note 8). The formal structure of the position is the same for those who adopt a patriarchal, or a capitalist patriarchal, or a capitalist account of women's position in the family. The difference lies in the precise conception of "real interest" and so in the precise definition of areas of "false consciousness", but not in the structure of the account.

The feminist literature has so far had just as little trouble dealing with the distinction between power and structural determination. Most feminist writers use "power" as a blanket term with which to describe the capacity of men to oppress women (20). In this respect the feminist position is (usually) the same as that which Lukes takes Poulantzas to represent. Here, too, power and structural determination are assimilated such that there is, curiously, no special role for the concept of power. Gender relations are, just like the class relations described by Poulantzas, "at every level relations of power" (Poulantzas, quoted in Lukes, 1974, p55). As Gittens writes, "Power relations between men and women cut across every aspect of social existence.... Relations of power and authority between the sexes and between adults and children permeate, and permeated, society at all levels from the simplest household to more complex social and political institutions". (Gittens, 1984, p36 and p37). Because such writers do not believe that an attribution of power is (or should be) at the same time an attribution of responsibility, there is no limit to the range of social arrangements, conventions or "biases of the system" which they can describe in terms of (patriarchal or capitalist) power. Though of course, such a description consequently carries little real meaning beyond a re-assertion of the basic analysis of the disadvantaging nature of that structure.

My suggestion is, then, that the feminist literature on the family makes implicit assumptions about the nature of women's real interests and does not seek empirical support for its claim that an "apparent case of consensus is not genuine but imposed" (Lukes, 1974, p47). Secondly, it presumes that patriarchal power is all pervasive, and therefore that the question of the relationship between responsible action (or inaction), power, and structural determination is not theoretically significant.

Having located the feminist and family literature on power in the terms

provided by Lukes' scheme I shall now consider the issues raised by Lukes' own position, first, in terms of "real interests" and second, in terms of the relationship between power and "structural determination".

Family power, real interests and the question of advantage

"One", "two" and "three dimensional" accounts of power, as well as those advanced by feminist writers, rest on a basic definition of power as A's ability to get B to do what B would not otherwise do. Different methodological solutions to the problem of defining what "B would otherwise do" in turn determine the variety of actions or inactions included under the heading of power. So, writers who are only prepared to identify what B would otherwise do in cases of overt conflict (ie. cases in which B has made B's preference clear) have to limit discussion of power to discussion of the outcome of decision-making disputes. Similarly, those who wish to describe instances in which individuals or groups failed to realise their articulated, if generalised, interests (even if there were no overt conflict) in terms of power have to limit their discussion to an analysis of a particular sub-section of events or non-events. Finally, all those who want to broaden the scope of the term "power" such that it could be used to describe or explain particular features of the context of overt conflict such as the creation of preferences or the manipulation of perceived interests have to decide what it is that B would be doing if it were not for A's power. In other words, they have to find a way of specifying B's real interests in order to distinguish between advantaging, disadvantaging and irrelevant aspects of the social world. If power is defined in these oppositional terms, the problems associated with the definition of group or individual real interests (given the possibility of the manipulation of preferences, false consciousness etc.) are critical.

The strategy adopted by the feminist and, in a different context, the Marxist literature (21) is clearly only a "solution" to the problem if

reader and writer share the same vision of how the world ought to be. In this context differences between, for example, socialist and radical feminists or between feminists and non-feminists reflect differences in an underlying (and essentially moral) view of women's real interests and so of the nature of a "better", "non-patriarchal" state of affairs. Unfortunately, none of this is especially helpful if the aim is to develop a sociological account of power relations within the family. It might, of course, be useful to temporarily "borrow" a range of alternative conceptions of real interests and to order an enquiry with reference to a series of "as if" hypotheses of the form, for example, "If women were in fact the subjects of a system of patriarchal power, then how might that system work?" Although this strategy is potentially more rewarding than that adopted by the feminist literature, it still rests on an essentially oppositional conception of power. In addition, if the search is for one model of power, in the end there would be no choice but to select one from the range of alternative hypothetical accounts on what remain basically moral grounds.

In comparison, at times at least, Lukes argues that the identification of real interests is an empirical rather than a moral problem (22). He claims that the observer can take steps to find out what otherwise would have happened and so find empirical evidence which "supports the claim that an apparent case of consensus is not genuine but imposed". However, it is not at all clear how such an enquiry would proceed if the job were, say, that of identifying the real interests of the members of a particular family, let alone of husbands and wives in general. If this were, in fact, an impossible project, analysis of family power relations (defined in terms of A getting B to do what B would not otherwise do) would have to be limited to an analysis of instances of overtly contentious decision-making or at least to an analysis of particular decisions which, though not

necessarily overtly contentious, nonetheless served or worked against the explicitly articulated interests of the parties involved. This is a problem for those who want to construct an oppositional account of power which goes beyond an analysis of instances of overt conflict and which incorporates the manipulation and construction of interests as a subject of study. The question is, how can uncontentious social action be described in terms of an oppositional account of power if it is in fact impossible to find evidence in support of a claim about what women would do if it were not for a system of power, or if the analyst is unwilling to make general assumptions about women's real interests?

In sum, I have suggested that this "real interests" issue might be addressed in one of three ways. First, as in the feminist literature, the analyst might make certain presumptions about the interests of those who are the subjects of study. Second, the analyst might argue, as at times does Lukes, that the identification of interests is an empirical rather than a moral issue. Thirdly, one might use a hypothetical notion of interests as a device with which to examine the social relations which would be said to be relations of power, if that hypothetical account were "true". The status of the hypothesis is, from this view, more or less irrelevant, it simply serves as a convenient base from which to work. I have also observed that the first strategy leads to a self-sustaining dead end: women are definitionally the victims of a power structure because feminist writers presume that they are oppressed. While it might be useful to "borrow" a particular and essentially moral account of real interests so as to conduct an "as if" analysis of social relations, that "as if" account would only be said to be an account of power if the observer decided that interests were in fact structured in that hypothesised form. Finally, it is difficult to imagine what kind of empirical evidence might support the case that, in the family context, "an apparent case of consensus is not genuine but imposed" (Lukes, 1974, p47). This is to imply that there is no

way out of the problem and that all analysis of power consequently rests on the observers more or less explicit vision of, in the family context, the real interests of husband and wife.

Perhaps the solution is to completely reconsider the conception of power. As Lukes notes, the "primitive notion lying behind all talk of power is the notion that A in some way affects B" (Lukes, 1974, p26). "In some way affects" need not, of course, be taken to mean that A gets B to do what B would not otherwise do. Affecting could be taken to mean affecting in the interests of the collective operation of the whole, as in the work of Parsons (1963), or, as in the work of Giddens (1984), it could be taken to mean "In some way to make a difference". Those who adopt a non-oppositional definition, that is, those who do not believe that power is "intrinsically connected to the achievement of sectional interests" (Giddens, 1984, p15) are under no obligation to show how uncontentious action or inaction benefits one group or person at another's expense in order to describe that behaviour in terms of power.

One "solution" to the real interests problem, then, is to use the term power to describe a sub-set of all uncontentious action or inaction which can be seen to further collective goals, a strategy seen at its most complex in the Parsonian attempt to develop an understanding of the societal media of exchange (Parsons 1963, 1964). From this point of view there is no need to define sectional interests in order to define power, although it is necessary to be able to specify both "collective goals" and the nature of action or inaction which would further those goals. Though I shall not explore the question here, this is likely to be as much of a problem as was that of specifying opposing real interests.

A second option is to separate discussion of power from all discussion of interests and so take power to mean "the ability to achieve outcomes"

without regard for the associated sectional or collective advantage or disadvantage. From this point of view neither type of interest (sectional or collective) plays a constitutive part in the definition of power. As Giddens writes, "Power is not necessarily linked with conflict in the sense of either division of interests or active struggle, and power is not inherently oppressive....Power is the capacity to achieve outcomes; whether or not these are connected to purely sectional interests is not germane to its definition....In associating power with so-called 'collective goals', Parsons sacrifices part of the insight that the concept of power has no intrinsic relation to that of interest. If power has no logical connection with the realization of sectional interests, neither does it have any with the realization of collective interests or 'goals'" (Giddens, 1984, p257).

If A is said to exercise power when A makes a difference to a "pre-existing state of affairs or course of events" (Giddens, 1984, p14) then A's ability to get B to do what B would not otherwise do, the distinguishing characteristic in instances of overt conflict, merely reflects one part of A's ability to exercise power (23). While it is useful to separate the question of interests from the definition of power in this way, it should also be emphasised that there are forms of social behaviour which "make a difference" such that A (in some more or less complicated way) gets B to do what B would not otherwise do despite B's overt resistance.

In conclusion, I do not want to make any presumption about the real interests of my respondents on the grounds that such a strategy marks the end, rather than the beginning, of a sociological enquiry into the nature of family power relations. In addition, I am not convinced that it would be possible to find indirect evidence in support of the claim, that in the family context, "an apparent case of consensus is not genuine but imposed" (Lukes, 1974, p47). Yet, I shall go along with Lukes' suggestion that the study of power relations should be informed by an interest in "the

securing of people's compliance by overcoming or averting their opposition" (Lukes, 1974, p31). Accordingly, I shall use the term to describe instances in which A got B to do what B would not otherwise do in cases in which the interests of A and B were clear, that is, therefore, in cases of overt conflict. On the other hand, it is useful to consider those instances of overt conflict as a sub-set of a much broader range of action which "makes a difference" and it is certainly important to avoid falling into an exclusively "one dimensional" position. Thus, to meet these various conceptual restrictions, I have sought in my research to situate instances of overt conflict in terms of what is, from the social actors' point of view, an unproblematic structuring and ordering context. If the "real interests" problem is not to be re-encountered, the analysis of that ordering context has to be framed in terms other than those of advantage and disadvantage. That is not to say that the context of conflict does not serve particular sectional or even collective interests; only that the question of whether or not that is the case is a separate question and one to which I shall not attend here. My present more limited concern is with the ways in which domestic routines, habits and patterns of authority structure instances of overt conflict.

Power, responsibility and structural determination

Lukes claims that "to identify a given process as an 'exercise of power' rather than as a case of structural determination, is to assume that it is in the exerciser's or exercisers' power to act differently" (Lukes, 1974, p55). While Lukes observes that a dichotomous view of structural determination and responsible action is misleading in the sense that "the future, though it is not entirely open, is not entirely closed either", he does "assume that, although the agents operate within structurally determined limits, they none the less have a certain relative autonomy and could have acted differently" (Lukes, 1974, p54). In other words the

social world is not entirely open nor entirely closed; it is, rather, a mixture of the two. Nevertheless, this position reflects what is still an essentially dichotomous view of the matter, in which responsible action is contrasted with structural determination. Indeed, such a view is implied in all oppositional accounts of power which take the form "A gets B to do...".

Definitions of power do not necessarily rest on this particular dualistic conception of the social world. If the claim "A gets B to do.." is not a constitutive part of the definition of power then there is no need to presume that, as Giddens puts it, "the structural properties of social systems,.... are like the walls of a room from which an individual cannot escape but inside which he or she is able to move around at whim" (Giddens, 1984, p174). Or, at least, this is so providing that the definition of power is not located at the other, structurally determined, extreme such that it is taken to be a property of a social system (24). If the relation between responsible action and structural determination is not presented in Lukes' dichotomous terms, but rather, if "..structure is implicated in that very 'freedom of action' which is treated as a residual and unexplicated category" (Giddens, 1984, p174) it is then impossible to sustain an "A gets B.." account of power in which an attribution of power is at the same time an attribution of responsibility.

In as far as I shall adopt a "one dimensional" account of power, I shall, for these purposes, accept the presumption of 'freedom of action'. However, the issue of the relationship between structural determination and responsible action is of no necessary significance in terms of my account of the context of conflict. All I am interested in, in that sense, is the nature of the domestic world in which conflict takes place. That is undoubtedly a world in which different actors, in different circumstances, are faced with a range of more and less "open" options. I am concerned

particularly to explore the ways in which that world orders instances of conflict rather than to unearth the factors which combine to produce those patterns of perceived possibility and impossibility. Needless to say, this is not to deny that such factors exist.

Power and the context of conflict

Those who define power as "A's ability to get B to do what B would not otherwise do" have to specify the relevant counterfactual. This is not a problem for those who adopt a "one dimensional" view, though it is for those who want to describe the bias of the system, instances of non decision-making, and agenda setting practices in terms of power. So, advocates of an oppositional conception of power can either limit the discussion of power to a discussion of cases of overt conflict or go beyond that limited analysis and consider instances of nondecision-making etc. having taken steps to identify the relevant counterfactual or having acknowledged that their work is ordered by a prior conception of the real interests of what can then be defined as powerful and powerless groups/individuals. I have tried to devise an alternative to the real interests strategies which focuses analysis on discussion of overt conflict and of its routinised social context. I shall reserve the term power for application to the few cases of overt conflict (ie. power from the "one dimensional" view) in which A clearly gets B to do what B would not otherwise do. However, I shall go on to consider the context of that conflict, the nature of the ordering system, the life history of the contentious issue, and so on, in terms other than those of interest and advantage. Were it not for that crucial qualification, such an analysis would cover much the same territory as that which has concerned those working within the "two dimensional" perspective. I am also concerned to understand the ways in which those unproblematic relations serve to preclude and/or order moments of dispute. Unlike the two dimensional

analysts, I shall not attempt to identify the ways in which that context is ordered to the advantage of one group at the expense of another.

I shall elaborate on the implications of this view of power and the context of conflict, and describe how it ordered the design and structure of the research in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 1: NOTES

1. By feminist I mean work which primarily aims to understand and explain women's oppression. As Delphy writes "A feminist study is a study whose objective is to explain the situation of women" - given that this is a situation of oppression (Delphy, 1984, p212)
2. With the exception of some of the American family literature which I shall consider later.
3. Again with the exception of the American work on family power and decision-making.
4. As Kuhn writes "The family is very often invoked as a final catch all explanation of the various characteristics of women's position in different societies and at different times, constantly referred to but still to be analysed without recourse to various forms of functionalism" (Kuhn, 1978, p44).
5. Gittens, for example, claims that "Much of Lawrence Stone's (1977) work, for instance, is really an analysis of changing family ideology rather than of actual patterns of family life and interaction" (Gittens, 1985, p2)
6. The feminist literature itself stands as evidence that those whose work is organised with reference to a unified conceptual model of the family as institution need not also conclude that the actual family should be seen as an undivided social unit. On this point I disagree with Leonard who writes "as developed in American and British Sociology such an approach (functionalist) will always tend to make us see the family as a unit, within which there is presumed to be equality and consensus" (Leonard, 1980, p2)
7. Barrett also makes this point "Feminist critiques of sociological assumptions about the internal equality of the contemporary family form have rightly pointed to a material conflict of interests within the household" (Barrett, 1980, p209)

8. Most feminist writers explain what is seen as women's collusion with their own oppression with reference to the mystifying ideologies of family, romance or motherhood. For example: "At first, I found the hold which the ideology of romantic love had over the young married women whom I knew disturbing in the face of the realities of marital power and their everyday married life" (Whitehead, 1976). While some are content to make reference to a notion of ideology, others argue that the "misconceptions" go deeper. For example, Barrett writes "Gender identity and the ideology of the family are embedded in our subjectivity and our desires at a far more profound level than that of false consciousness" (Barrett, 1980, p275)

9. For example, Barrett emphasises the need to provide an "adequate analysis of this central institutional site of women's oppression" (Barrett, 1980). Of course this institutional focus need not lead feminists to bypass questions of power though as Delphy and Leonard argue (Delphy 1984), the particular institutional approach adopted by socialist feminists does tend to overshadow if not preclude analysis of relations within the family (whether or not those questions are framed with reference to power). Interestingly, their criticism of the socialist feminist work is much like the more general feminist criticism of traditional family sociology. In both cases it is argued that the focus on the family as institution serves to obscure questions about internal family relations. As Leonard puts it when describing Delphy's work, Delphy "has continued to stress the significance of divisions within the family, unlike those socialist feminists who have taken up the economics of the family as a topic, but whose writings have in fact deflected attention from women's oppression within it (for example by continuing to focus on the functions 'the family' performs in relation to the 'reproduction of capitalism')." (Leonard, in introduction to Delphy, 1984)

10. In Bachrach and Baratz's terms a nondecision is "a decision that results in suppression or thwarting of a latent or manifest challenge to

the decision-maker" (Bachrach and Baratz, 1970, p44)

11. Others have argued that the state of the power balance critically affects the stability of the family at both an individual and an institutional level (Winch, 1971; G R Leslie, 1976; Blood and Wolfe, 1960). Such arguments about the health of the family as institution refer to evidence about the state of the balance of power in actual families on the grounds that this may be taken as a measure of the health and stability of the institution.

12. Those interested in individual access to resources in the family context have either set out to explore the impact of such events as the wife's employment or the significance of such factors as educational background or extra family prestige in terms of the domestic power structure. For example, Blood and Hamblin (1957), French and Raven (1959) and Beckman and Tavormina (1978) have addressed such issues. Others have set out to examine patterns of family power (and hence the partners' definitions of and access to relevant resources) in a cross cultural context. Writers such as Lee and Petersen (1983), Kenkel (1959), Safilios-Rothschild (1967), Conklin (1979), Rodman (1967) and Lupri (1969) have explored what were seen to be the different bases of power in, for example, Greek, French, Yugoslavian or West German families.

13. Ridd (1981) and Maher (1981) have considered similar issues but have been rather less cautious about the nature of the claims they make about the interests of the women who were the subjects of their study.

14. There is a substantial literature on the problems of measuring, as opposed to identifying, family power relations. For example, Allen and Strauss (1984), Turk and Bell (1972), Hallenbeck (1966), Herbst (1952), Centres (1971), Bowerman (1964) Olson (1969) and Richmond (1976) have written on the methodological problems associated with the task of producing a measure of family power. However, all such work adopts the same "one dimensional" approach to the problem of identifying power.

15. Interestingly, those few feminist writers who directly address issues about the meaning of power in terms of the lives of individual women often adopt a "one dimensional" view as well as a simple dependence based account of resources. For example, Yeandle writes "Women typically start from a position of relative powerlessness, men from a position of relative powerfulness. This is entirely to be expected in patriarchal families where marriage involves the state-sanctioned economic dependence of women on men" (Yeandle, 1984, p168). Generalising from this view, men are believed to be in a position of power with respect to women because of their generally superior, state-sanctioned economic position.

16. This critical observation has certain implications for the feminist conception of power. While men might systematically have access to certain capacities, that does not, in itself, necessarily guarantee victory because those capacities only have effect as resources at the moment of use. In other words, the fact that the wife is formally financially dependent on her husband does not necessarily mean that she is powerless. Rather, she would only be at a disadvantage if financial independence proved to be a relevant capacity (ie. a resource) in case of overt dispute (Note, I am here only concerned with power defined within the "one dimensional" frame).

17. Seen from a "two dimensional" view, the range of capacities which might have effect as resources is much wider than that which would be included in a "one dimensional" account. Again, individuals with the capacity, that is the potential ability, to set an agenda or to make a nondecision might or might not be said to be in a position of power depending on the analyst's view of the relation between capacities and resources and on his/her conception of actual and potential power.

18. While some of the feminist literature documents family routine (Grey, 1979; Leonard, 1980; Delphy, 1979; Dobash and Dobash, 1980) the analysis of the described practices is typically informed by a "three" rather than a "two dimensional" view of power. In effect those routines are seen in

terms of a general patriarchal structure rather than as detailed and specific instances of nondecision-making organised by a responsible individual.

19. In practice it is only the more "philosophically" orientated "feminist" literature (Richards, 1980) which directly attends to such critical issues. However, some conception of the nature of women's real interest is necessarily built into all literature which documents what are seen as the oppressive and hence problematic dimensions of women's position in the family. The concepts of oppression and/or exploitation only make sense in relation to corresponding conceptions of not-oppression or of not-exploitation. While Barrett writes "It is relatively easy to demonstrate that women are oppressed in Britain...", that demonstration does not take the form of an empirical investigation whose purpose is to "adduce evidence - which must, by nature of the case, be indirect - to support the claim that an apparent case of consensus is not genuine but imposed.." (Lukes, 1974, p47). Rather, that "demonstration" involves implicit comparison of what is presumed to be an agreed model of a "better", "unoppressed" situation with an account of the present.

20. In the simplest (but most common) cases, feminist writers use the term power to describe an undifferentiated bundle of "resources" or means which are believed to allow men to oppress women. For example, Gittens writes "In a general sense it is useful to see it [power] as lying along a broad continuum ranging, on the one hand, from general acceptance by others of a person's or institution's legitimate or natural right to give orders and expect obedience and deference, to, on the other hand, the ability to use force and violence to ensure that orders or wishes are carried out".

21. The following statement could be applied just as easily to the feminist literature. "The problem here, of course, is that the definition of what those "real" interests are is derived from Marxist [or, in this case feminist] theory of what man [in the feminist case, of what women]

would be like in a state of nature if capitalism [or capitalist patriarchy or patriarchy] had never existed" (Cox, Furlong and Page, 1985, p36).

22. Lukes also argues, in contradiction to this claim, that power is an "essentially contested" concept. He writes "I would maintain that power is one of those concepts which is ineradicably value dependent" (Lukes, 1974, p26) and "the notion of 'interests' is an irreducibly evaluative notion" (Lukes, 1974, p32).

23. This is to simplify Giddens' position. The very phrase "A gets B to do what B would not otherwise do" presumes a) that the relationship between A and B is one directional and b) that A "gets" B to do... as a result of A's "own" action - I will consider this point later. In comparison, Giddens describes control, a sub-set of power, in these terms. "It is a mistake to treat power as inherently divisive but there is no doubt that some of the most bitter conflicts in social life are accurately seen as 'power struggles'. Such struggles can be regarded as to do with efforts to subdivide resources which yield modalities of control in social systems. By 'control' I mean the capability that some actors, groups or types of actors have of influencing the circumstances of action of others. In power struggles the dialectic of control always operates, although what use agents in subordinate positions can make of the resources open to them differs very substantially between different social contexts." (Giddens, 1984, p283)

24. As Giddens notes, "conceptions of power in the social sciences tend faithfully to reflect the dualism of subject and object ...Thus 'power' is very often defined in terms of intent or the will, as the capacity to achieve desired and intended outcomes. Other writers by contrast, including both Parsons and Foucault, see power as above all a property of society or the social community." (Giddens, 1984, p15)

CHAPTER 2

APPROACHING THE RESEARCH

This description of the design and structure of the research begins with a more detailed discussion of the concept of power and of the context of conflict which I outlined in the last section of the previous chapter. I shall consider the practical implications of that approach and, in section 2 of this chapter, go on to describe the research strategy. The third and final section sets out the structure of the analysis and hence the structure of the subsequent chapters which are based on the interview material.

1. FAMILY POWER AND THE CONTEXT OF CONFLICT

As suggested earlier, I shall distinguish between instances of overt conflict which can be clearly defined in terms of power (A gets B to do what B would not otherwise do) and the social context of those disputes. Such a context clearly orders the development and course of overt conflict, but it can and must be considered in terms other than those of advantage and power. In practice, this leads to an analytic strategy in which one first attends to cases of overtly contentious decision-making, to the stated preferences of each side, and to the resources used to secure the final outcome. This provides the basis from which to begin an analysis of the context of that conflict, which involves discussion of the opponent's definitions of the type of dispute at issue, the perceived relevance of particular capacities, and the location of contentious topics in relation to a network of "unproblematic" decision-making. As was explained in chapter 1, the research was designed to explore the relation between instances of overt conflict and their ordering social context. Thus, my analysis of the social context of reported instances of domestic dispute is framed with reference to the general question "What must the participant's social world be like such that these contentious events take place in the

way described by those involved?" (1). I should emphasise that this enquiry is designed to examine the apparent ordering and patterning features of the respondents' domestic worlds, regardless of whether those features may be construed as advantaging or disadvantaging. Accordingly, the most general aim of my research was to apply such a two part analysis of a) instances of overt conflict and "one dimensional" power, and of b) the ordering context. In this respect, the principal aim was to "try out" a particular approach to the study of power relations. The family merely provided a convenient location in which to develop and explore issues of power.

At another level, I was interested in patterns of domestic power as a way into a more general discussion of women's position in the family. Given the view of power described above, it was possible to set about a study of decision-making as a means of, first, specifying areas in which respondents were (or were not) able to secure their own preferences, and, second, of reviewing the ways in which different family contexts structured those outcomes. From this point of view, the interesting questions concerned similarities and differences between the power relations and ordering domestic contexts of different couples. The task, then, was to document patterns of contentious and unproblematic decision-making in systematically different family situations. While I could try to map out a range of different domestic arrangements, arguments and habits, and so provide an outline of a range of power and power-related possibilities, the obvious limitations of research resources meant that I could not seek to identify generalised patterns of authority, decision-making convention, definitions of relevant resources, or perceptions of dispute which might be common to all families. Inevitably research was exploratory in that it was designed to plot dimensions of variation with respect to certain decision-making issues: not to uncover general contextual regularities. While the documented instances of domestic decision-making were evidently part of a

broader picture, the research was not designed to address issues about the relationship between generalised beliefs about husbands and wives, or general material differences in the circumstances of men and women, and an individual's ability to secure their preference in case of overt dispute.

The research was informed by two sets of questions: those about power and those about families. The former steered the research towards an analysis of the nature of overt dispute and of the types of resources associated with particular types of conflict. From this point of view it was also important to identify those aspects of the social context which served to order the course of domestic dispute. The latter focused on variation in form and location of dispute and, more importantly, on the variation in the perception of types of decision-making regardless of whether they actually ended in argument. It was also necessary to attend to the ways in which domestic responsibilities were divided, patterns of authority established, and decisions bracketed together and removed from family view. The informing argument here was that differences in perceptions of choice and patterns of decision-making would reflect significant differences in the domestic worlds in which A might get B to do what B would not otherwise do. In other words, husband and wife would be likely to occupy different positions of power depending on the domestic context in which that dispute arose. Differences in the ordering and structuring domestic context would therefore correspond to differences in power structure.

2. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

These informing arguments, whether orientated towards a discussion of power or of the family, demanded that I collect detailed information about conflict and decision-making routines. This was most effectively done in an open depth interview, both because of the detail required and because, as with all exploratory research, it would have been too limiting to use a closed schedule of questions (2). I would have liked to have spoken to a

sample of both husbands and wives and to have documented the perceptions and definitions of both parties. Unfortunately, this was impractical if I were to also ensure that I collected information from a sufficiently varied sample of respondents. The "family" element of my research design required me to map the decision-making experiences of those in a wide range of different family circumstances. I had to choose, then, between interviewing husbands or wives. I decided to concentrate on the wives on the grounds a) that I was interested (among other things) in the position of women in different domestic contexts and b) that it was likely to be easier to contact and interview a sample of wives than of husbands.

Having decided to interview only the wives, I then had to find some way of collecting a systematically varied group of married respondents. Because I needed to maximise the diversity of the "sample" as far as possible, it was necessary to carefully structure the selection of respondents. I could not rely on a "case study" approach as adopted by, for example, Westwood (1984), Pollert (1981) or McKee (1982). Nor could I rely on such tactics as "snowballing" or random door-knocking as a means of constructing a sample. While all of these strategies would have provided me with respondents, none would have allowed me to ensure that those respondents' domestic circumstances were systematically variable (3). Given limited research resources the only practical solution to this problem was to devise a matrix of potential respondent types and set about finding people who fitted those categories (4). I aimed to find two respondents for each of the 30 cells shown below.

FIGURE 1

	NO CHILDREN YOUNGER	NO CHILDREN OLDER	PRE SCHOOL AGE	SCHOOL AGE	16+
WORK					
H1					
H2					
H3					
HOME					
H1					
H2					
H3					

Drawing up the sampling frame

It seemed that the most relevant dimensions of difference (relevant, that is, from the point of view of the nature of the respondents' decision-making experiences) were age, or rather age of children, the wife's employment, and the couple's material circumstances. Because I decided to define a sampling framework and then set out to find relevant respondents I had to be able to distinguish between potential interview candidates in advance. I had to have some way of knowing that I wanted to interview person x (who belonged in category a which was currently empty) and that I did not need to interview person y because I had already filled the quota of two for the category in which y would belong. As will be shown below, these practical demands influenced the structure of the sampling frame.

Age and "domestic age"

It seemed important to interview respondents of different ages on the grounds that domestic habits and routines, material circumstances and definitions of gender appropriate behaviour would differ with respect to this variable. However, the presence or absence of children and the age of the youngest child evidently also influenced a family's everyday domestic routine. Sociologists of leisure have developed a concept of "domestic age" which incorporates chronological age, parental status and position in the life cycle (Parker, 1976, p56). I shall borrow this term and use it to describe the child-related "age" groups defined below. To some degree, of course, actual age and child-related age group were likely to overlap and, from the decision-making point of view, the child-related variable seemed to be the more significant. I structured the sampling frame on the basis of this assumption and in the knowledge that it would be difficult to establish a potential respondent's actual age prior to the interview (5). In detail, I tried to ensure that I interviewed across a range including those whose youngest child was over 16, of school age, or of pre-school age, as well as those who had no children. I reserved two of the five age categories for respondents who had no children as it seemed important to attend to the fact that actual age was broadly relevant and that some of the childless group were likely to be "waiting" to have children while others would feel that they had "passed that stage". The first category was therefore designed to contain the "younger childless" who were under the (arbitrarily chosen) age of 35 while the second was for "older childless" respondents. The third, fourth and fifth categories were distinguished with reference to the youngest child's age as marked by stages in its school career. The five child-related age groups were 1. The younger childless, 2. The older childless, 3. Those whose youngest child was of pre-school age 4. Those whose youngest child was at school and 5. Those whose children had left school.

Housing

I also needed to ensure that I included respondents from what would loosely be thought of as different social classes and unless interviews were to proliferate unnecessarily, I needed to be able to place individuals on some sort of "class" scale before speaking to them. For this and for other reasons husband's and/or wife's occupation, educational or family background seemed to be impractical indicators (6). I simply needed to make sure that I interviewed respondents whose financial and material circumstances differed as widely as possible. Respondents' homes were likely to reflect such circumstances, and a classification based on housing resolved at least some of the problems. I was obliged to devise a somewhat unsophisticated method of classification because I could only afford to have three housing/class categories if I were to keep the ideal number of respondents to a manageable level. The option of distinguishing between respondent's homes in terms of three house types (eg. detached, semi-detached and terrace) was practical, but would not have served to reflect financial and material differences related to social/geographical area and would not have allowed me to place potential respondents before visiting the street (7). What was required was an indicator of social/geographical area which reflected the residents likely material circumstances. It would have been easy to categorise sections of the town with reference to "common knowledge" or reputation or to select respondents from just three geographical areas chosen with reference to these informal criteria. However, I wanted to devise a rather less speculative method of distinguishing between housing areas which would also provide me with a detailed guide as to where to look for respondents of different housing/class types. In addition, I was unwilling to restrict the sample such that respondents were selected from one of three chosen geographical districts (8). While this would have made my life easier, such a strategy

would have limited the very variation which I wished to maximise.

I finally decided that I would have to devise my own three part classification of housing areas. The most recent census data then available (1971) provided information on the percentages of owner occupation, the amenities of the housing stock, the distribution of heads of household in terms of the Registrar General's definition of occupation as well as figures for such variables as the percentage of car ownership, the average number of persons per room and the average number of rooms per house for all 206 enumeration districts in the City of York. Despite the associated problems, the arbitrary location of enumeration district boundaries, the social history of the figures and the definitions and conceptions which they embodied, I decided to select a range of documented characteristics and to combine them so as to create a composite "score" for each enumeration district. In detail, I listed the percentage of owner occupation, the percentage of council houses, the percentage of homes with only 1 to 3 rooms, the number of rooms per person, the number of rooms per household and the percentage of heads of household in the "top" three of the Registrar General's occupational class categories. Having done this I could then rank the enumeration districts on each of these six dimensions and divide the six resulting lists into three sections: 1 being the "top" third, 2, the "middle" and 3 the "bottom". In this way I was able to give each enumeration district a "score" of 1, 2 or 3 with respect to each of the six dimensions. (For example, a particular enumeration district might be in the top third of the hierarchically ordered list of owner occupation percentages and would therefore score a 1 in that respect, a 2 if it were in the middle third of the list of the number of rooms per person, etc.). I then took an average of the six scores which described each enumeration district, put the resulting figures in hierarchical order and divided that composite list into thirds. I labelled the 68 enumeration districts in the "top" third Housing 1 areas, the 68 in the middle third, Housing 2 and the

remainder, Housing 3. Having marked these on a map I could then select an address in the knowledge that the resident belonged in a particular housing category. A section of this map is included in Appendix 1.

The scheme was only designed to produce a rough three part classification. While it served that purpose quite adequately it inevitably simplified a more complex picture of housing and life cycle mobility. This meant that I had to decide how to place young respondents who were, for example, currently living in a Housing 3 area but were almost certainly going to move on to a "better" district and who shared the lifestyle characteristic of Housing 1 respondents. In such circumstances I followed the original policy and classified respondents according to their current housing status. The second problem was that I was only able to classify enumeration districts within the city boundary and so had to decide whether to reject those few potential interviewees who lived outside the city. I decided to include them, and to locate them (in terms of housing) with reference to the general reputation of the area and to their house type. My method of classifying housing groups was designed to ensure that I interviewed respondents whose material circumstances differed in broadly similar ways. Despite the two difficulties described above, it served this limited purpose.

The wife's employment

The domestic lives of those wives who went out to work (whether part-time or full-time) were likely to differ from those who were full-time housewives and, clearly, these differences would affect family routines, patterns of responsibility, and associated decision-making procedures. It was also possible that those who had their own income had access to a generally relevant capacity and were therefore able to influence the outcome of a wider range of decisions compared with those who were

financially dependent (9). I decided to ensure that I interviewed a mixture of working and non-working respondents but chose not to distinguish between full-time and part-time work on the grounds that this distinction would have created another 15 categories on the already large matrix of ideal respondent types. The "employed" category therefore contained respondents who were currently engaged in some kind of paid work, while those at home were full-time housewives.

It is important to note that the sample frame was designed to ensure that I interviewed respondents whose social and material circumstances were systematically varied. The resulting sample should not be construed as "representative" in any way. Rather, it was structured or "stratified" so as to include respondents from different backgrounds (defined in terms of work, age and housing) on the grounds that this would allow me to map patterns of domestic decision-making in as wide range of family contexts as possible. I was, after all, primarily concerned about a range of variables in the social practices being researched; research aiming to be representative in any meaningful way would require far more resources than were available to me.

Methods of contact

It did not matter exactly how I located my subjects as long as I managed to fill the cells of the matrix and so interviewed a good spread of respondent types (10). I was therefore free to adopt a range of tactics, each of which led me into different social networks and hence gave access to different types of respondents. I began with a list of domestic and catering staff, most of whom were employed part-time. This in combination with a list of part-time and full-time nursing staff provided an initial starting point from which I "snowballed" (11). Respondents volunteered friends and relatives who were often in the same housing bracket but not always of the same age group or work situation. These "recruits" in turn

volunteered others. This strategy ensured a good response rate and, given a few lucky encounters, a good mixture of respondents. Having completed about 50 interviews and filled, or partly filled, just over a third of the cells on the matrix I found that I needed to break out of the self-referencing social networks with which I had become involved. I needed access to different types of candidate respondents. At this point I turned to the Electoral register. While I was able to pick relevant addresses (ie. ones in either H1, H2 or H3 categories) I was unable to predict that the "candidates" would have any of the other desired characteristics of age or work. It was difficult to avoid landing myself with "duplicate" interviews and so I tried another method which allowed me to identify the candidate respondent's age and housing category if not their work or childless/family status. I checked through 4 and 6 year old back copies of the local paper, listed the names of people who had their wedding mentioned and then looked up the names in the current telephone directory. In this way I could locate the addresses of those few who now had a York telephone number and who had their wedding "advertised" in the paper (12). Though I identified a few "missing" respondents in these ways it was finally not worth pursuing the last eight required to complete the matrix of sixty (13).

In detail, fourteen of the hundred and four women who were contacted refused to be interviewed and another sixteen of those who were selected from the list of catering staff no longer lived at the same address. I was also able to "escape" from another ten interviews having discovered, on the initial visit, that the candidate respondent fell into a category which I had already filled. The final figures were:

104 candidates contacted by letter and visited a week later

14 refused to be interviewed

16 had moved away

10 proved to be unnecessary

64 completed interviews all but two of which were tape recorded and transcribed

7 pilot interviews, all of which were tape recorded and transcribed

Characteristics of the final sample

The grid of 30 categories described an ideal sample of respondents. Some of the cells were inevitably easier to fill than others. I was, not surprisingly, faced with a "glut" of Housing 2 respondents who were at home with pre-school children, and a complete absence of Housing 3 respondents who were at home with school age children. I decided to stop interviewing at the point at which I had "collected" 52 out of the ideal sample of 60. By this time I had also interviewed another 12 respondents who fell into categories that I had already filled. The diagram below illustrates the final spread of respondents, including those in the pilot group.

FIGURE 2

	NO CHILDREN YOUNGER	NO CHILDREN OLDER	PRE SCHOOL AGE	SCHOOL AGE	16+
WORK					
H1	4	2	2	2	2
H2	3	2P	3	5	2P
H3	3	1	4P	2	3
HOME					
H1	2	1	2P	2	2
H2	2	1	3P	2	2
H3	1	0	2P	0	2

I drew upon all the interviews for purposes of illustration. However, I needed to select a more evenly balanced comparative sample on which to base my numerical analysis. I therefore selected only two (the first two) respondents from each of the "over full" categories to produce the comparative sample illustrated below.

FIGURE 3

	NO CHILDREN YOUNGER	NO CHILDREN OLDER	PRE SCHOOL AGE	SCHOOL AGE	16+
WORK					
H1	2	2	2	2	2
H2	2	2	2	2	2
H3	2	1	2	2	2
HOME					
H1	2	1	2	2	2
H2	2	1	2	2	2
H3	1	0	2	0	2

The interview strategy

I adopted the same procedure for contacting, visiting and interviewing all respondents however they had been selected. I followed up an initial "introductory" letter (reproduced in Appendix 2) with a visit, about a week later, in which I aimed to fix a time and date for an interview.

The interviews lasted between one and a half and three hours and took place in the respondent's home, sometimes in the company of husband, and/or children, and/or relatives, and/or friends not to mention dogs, cats,

budgies and goldfish! This was a hazard which I had to cope with, and one which clearly affected the nature of the interview. I tried to cover all the question areas despite these "distractions" though in some cases the responses came from the husband rather than, or as well as, from the wife (14). All but two of the interviews were tape recorded and then fully transcribed. I was obliged to continue with the interview in both cases where the respondent refused to be taped. While I made notes in these circumstances, I made very little use of this less detailed material.

The questions

I needed to design an interview schedule which would allow me to collect the same kind of information from all respondents. This was not easy given that the sample was structured so as to provide a varied range of interviewees. Whatever else, I could not assume that the respondents would have a "sufficiently common vocabulary" such that it would be "possible to formulate questions which have the same meaning for each of them" (Richardson, 1965, p40). Part of the job was to document the variation in patterns of domestic power and in methods of decision-making, but I had to do this without inventing a different interview schedule for each case. It was not too difficult to select a list of decisions about which I might expect all respondents to have had to come to some conclusion. This list included, for example, decisions about where to live, which furniture to buy, where to go on holiday, what to watch on television, whether or not to have children, to work or not to work etc. I decided to ask about respondent's perceptions of the alternatives involved, the history of the decision, their husband's view, the nature of the negotiation or conflict (if any) and the respondent's view of the outcome. However, it was rather more difficult to document common patterns of responsibility. To give just one example, the childless sections of the sample would have no need to make decisions about the allocation of responsibility for child-care. I

chose to modify the schedule to take such differences into account and so had a supplementary list of questions which I asked as applicable. Again I was interested in how "decisions" were made about issues related to, for example, the cooking, the shopping, the family's finances, child-care, the decorating etc. I wanted to know what happened, who was in charge, how that arrangement had come to be, whether it was the subject of dispute and how such dispute (if any) was resolved. Though these were common issues, I could not approach the subject in the same way in each interview (15).

I developed and modified the structure of the interview on the basis of seven pilot interviews. This process gave me the chance to experiment with different sequences of questions, to anticipate some of the problems I was to encounter, and to make decisions about the amount of material which I aimed to collect. Though I was prepared to conduct a fairly informal interview, to follow up topics which the respondents introduced, and to deviate from my "ideal" sequence, I tried to make sure that I covered all the issues outlined in the interview schedule (the question areas are listed in Appendix 3). Like Spradley (1979) I saw the interview as a "friendly conversation with a purpose" and, like Denzin, I concluded that I had "the task of taking control of the situation and defining it so that the questions ...will be answered" by the end of the interview (Denzin, 1970, p141). "Answering" is perhaps too precise a term, though I did have a clear idea of the "subject areas" which I wished to cover. (16)

The analysis of the interview material

All but two of the interviews were tape recorded and fully transcribed. This left me with an enormous amount of information about the respondents' family lives. I made an early decision about the ways in which I wanted to use this material. I knew first that I was interested in the ways in which different respondents made the same kinds of decisions and I knew that I

wanted to attend to the different ways in which domestic responsibilities were allocated and delegated. I therefore knew that it would be useful to be able to assemble, for example, all the interview data on "decisions about having children". I organised the transcript such that the details about, say, a respondent's holiday were recorded on one sheet of paper, while all the information about, for example, shopping habits was recorded on a separate sheet. This meant that I could extract and compare all data on leisure, holidays, cooking, looking after the pets etc. etc. although I had no chronologically ordered record of the interview. This method of transcribing facilitated the analysis of the respondent's domestic routines and of their decision-making practices. In addition, I coded the interviewees' responses to certain common questions so as to provide a picture of, for example, the percentages of H1s who went abroad on holiday, the percentage of those with pre-school age children whose husband helped with the washing etc. etc. For these purposes I only made use of the material provided by the 52 respondents who "belonged" in the sampling frame, and ignored that provided by "duplicate" and pilot interviewees. I made sense of the resulting figures with the aid of a home micro (a Spectrum) and a database program. This simply speeded up a particularly laborious exercise.

In practice, I began with an analysis of the respondents descriptions of overt conflict. These were instances of domestic decision-making in which A managed to get B to select what was, from B's point of view, an undesirable option. This analysis suggested that respondents' definitions of relevant resources (that is of capacities which, in a particular case of conflict, would allow A to get B to do what B would not otherwise do) (17) varied depending on their perception of the kind of choice associated with the subject of dispute. I chose to order my review of descriptions of conflict so as to highlight the relationship between perceptions of choice, types of argument, and types of resources. Chapters 3 and 4 describe the

range of contentious issues and the kinds of resources drawn upon in those cases of overt dispute. It is in this context that I shall consider the structure of overt dispute and the relationship between types of conflict and types of resource in the family context. It appears that the respondent's perception of the type of choice involved in what proved to be a contentious issue had an important part to play in the development of the associated dispute. Arguments about what were seen to be matters of "personal preference", for example, about what to watch on television, or about the colour of a new bath, characteristically involved reference to particular types of resources including, perhaps, appeals to some sort of expertise, or maybe reference to personal financial advantage etc. In comparison, disputes about matters over which respondents believed they had very little control, such as decisions about moving house or changing jobs, involved reference to rather different categories of resources. In other words, perception of choice appeared to be the key factor linking instances of overt conflict to the context of unproblematic decision-making. If perception of the type of choice ordered the course of subsequent conflict then any systematic variation in the respondents' perceptions of the kinds of choice associated with particular domestic decisions would suggest a correspondingly structured pattern of potential power relations. In other words, if different sections of the sample saw decisions in different ways, then the course of any associated conflict would follow a different route and would involve appeal to different resources. I ordered the analysis of material on unproblematic decision-making and areas of responsibility with this theme in mind. One task was therefore that of documenting the kinds of choice seen to be associated with the range of decisions which I had been able to discuss in the interview. I wanted to find out how different sections of the sample saw, for example, the decision to move house, to change jobs, to go on holiday, etc. To do this I had to try to untangle the component elements of what proved to be very complex issues. The

results of this part of the analysis are reported in chapters 5 (Family and Career), 6 (House and Home), 7 (Leisure) and 8 (Holidays). In combination, these chapters provide a picture of the variety of domestic contexts which ordered, and in many cases precluded, family dispute about a range of selected decisions.

Everyday choices about, for example, what to eat for supper, when to Hoover the floor, or when to clean the car, rarely attained the status of a clear cut family decision. They were simply made by whoever happened to be "in charge" of that particular area of domestic labour. The identity of legitimate decision-makers, and the boundary of areas of decision-making which were properly under the control of an authoritative figure, varied according to how the couple chose to allocate their domestic responsibilities. It was important to document the ways in which different sections of the sample allocated and delegated those responsibilities because the associated patterns of authority served to remove whole areas of routine choice from family view and hence from the arena of potentially contentious decision-making. Chapters 9 (Family Finance) and 10 (Housework and Child-care) review the ways in which different respondents allocated and delegated responsibility for domestic finance, for the shopping, the cooking, the cleaning, the decorating and, where relevant, the child-care. Those chapters therefore describe the ways in which different respondents define the boundaries of "localised" areas of domestic authority.

Finally, discussion of the few cases of reported conflict, presented in chapters 3 and 4, provided the starting point for the subsequent analysis of the context of conflict. In addition, those two chapters present a general case about the relationship between types of choice, types of conflict and types of resources. Chapters 5 to 10 also fulfil two functions. First, they highlight ways in which the respondents'

perceptions of choice served to structure normally unproblematic decision-making thus illustrating the similarities and differences in the domestic worlds in which respondents made decisions. Second, they stand as an example of a method of addressing the relationship between "one dimensional" power, instances of overt conflict, and the context of those contentious issues. In effect they provide something resembling a "two dimensional" analysis of the context of overt dispute. However, because that account is not framed in terms of advantage and disadvantage (or "interests") it is, perhaps, better seen as an analysis of the ordering and structuring context of domestic conflict and not as an analysis of power (18).

CHAPTER 2: NOTES

1. Bhaskar writes "The various social sciences are concerned with the structural conditions for particular types of social activity" (Bhaskar, 1979, p56). Taken out of context and presented in a more limited form, the question "What must the world be like..." provides a frame for enquiry about the social world.
2. Most of the standard texts on survey research make the following point about the use of an interview as opposed to a questionnaire based research strategy. "As is generally recognised, one of the principal reasons for the use of interviews rather than questionnaires is to uncover a diversity of relevant responses, whether or not these have been anticipated by the inquirer" (Merton, Fiske and Kendall, 1956)
3. I was not, of course, concerned to produce a "representative" sample. I wanted to explore the range of differences, not to produce a picture which would mirror the "actual" pattern of particular types of domestic circumstances.
4. Such quota sampling techniques are described in, for example, Moser and Kalton (1971) and Hoinvill and Jowell (1978).
5. Of course, I could not always determine a candidate respondent's position on a child-related scale. However, it was likely that individuals would know and be able to suggest friends who had, say, school age children even if they did not know that friend's actual age.
6. I do not want to get too involved with theoretical or practical debates about the meaning of "class". What I faced was the much more mundane problem of finding a method of categorising material differences. However, there is much literature on the problem of defining class, and more specifically, on the problem of defining women's class position. As Acker (1973), Delphy (1980), West (1978) and others have observed, indices of class based on the occupation of the "head of household" incorporate certain assumptions about the class or status equivalence of other members

of that household unit. This is a problem for those who want to describe the "class" position of women or of families. From my point of view, an occupation based index would, in any case, prove to be impractical because I would have no way of placing possible respondents on such a scale prior to an interview. Measures of educational background, income, social standing, life-style or a combination of all four, were, on the same grounds, equally impractical.

7. Rex and Moore (1967) adopt the term "housing classes". However, those classes were distinguished on grounds of ownership and, to a lesser extent, geographical area. I had no way of identifying patterns of ownership in advance and, in any case, reliance on one such index would have produced its own problems. I needed a method of theoretically dividing the total area of the City of York into three even categories which would reflect material differences. Classifications based on such features as owner-occupation alone would not produce this result.

8. This is, of course, the strategy adopted by Willmott and Young (1957), Bott (1957) and Oakley (1974). However, none of these writers were concerned to interview a systematically varied group of respondents.

9. See chapter 3 on money as a resource and chapter 9 on patterns of financial management.

10. Hoinvill and Jowell make this point in their description of quota sampling. "Interviewers are supplied with quotas or set specifications regarding the number of people of various kinds that they must interview. Providing that the specification is fulfilled, they are free to interview whom they wish within the designated area". (Hoinvill and Jowell, 1978, p87)

11. It is important to note that such "snowballing" was effective as long as it produced respondents of the type which I needed. I was "snowballing" as one amongst other means of finding the types of respondents already defined by the sampling frame. In other words, I was not using the

technique as a means of generating a sample in the way described by, for example Coleman (1970).

12. As Leonard notes, "...drawing a sample from those whose engagements and weddings appeared in the local paper would give a very partial sample" (Leonard, 1980). Not only was I selecting respondents from this already selective list but I was then only able to trace and so interview those who a) still lived in York and who were b) listed in the current telephone directory. This might have been a problem if I were doing anything other than trying to find interviewees who would belong in a currently empty, or partly empty cell of an existing sampling frame. 13. Some of the respondent types described by the matrix, such as housing 3 respondents, at home, but with school age children, were inevitably hard to find - there were likely to be fewer women in this position than were, say, at home, with pre-school age children, and living in a housing 2 area. I stopped interviewing at the point when the effort involved in collecting yet more duplicate interviews and the risk of inadvertently contacting duplicate respondent types was no longer justified by the demands of the sampling frame. Given the limited resources available I had no choice but to conclude that I had done as well as I could expect. Only two of the thirty cells remained completely empty and although housing 3 respondents were slightly under-represented the differences were not such as to invalidate the limited comparisons which I wished to make.

14. Denzin describes similar interviewing "hazards" in these terms "...but what about the woman who insists on fixing her dinner or feeding her child during the course of the interview?These represent, from the interviewer's perspective, illegitimate activities that detract from the dominant activity - the interview" (Denzin, 1970a, p114). I had no choice but to make the best of what were occasionally difficult situations.

15. As Richardson and others have noted, "...if the meaning of a question is to be standardised, the question must be formulated in words familiar to

and habitually used by each respondent". In addition, "no fixed sequence of questions is satisfactory to all respondents; the most effective sequence for any respondent is determined by his readiness and willingness to take up a topic as it comes up" (Richardson, 1965, p47)

16. In this sense I was seeking to elicit information. This, in combination with the need to limit the length of the interview, meant that I actively ordered the course of the discussion. Leonard describes her interviewing strategy in similar terms "...the conversation needed to be semi-structured around an interviewing schedule so as to collect as much information as possible. This also fitted in with my informants' expectations of how social research is done". (Leonard, 1980, p286)

17. See chapter 3

18. See chapter 1

CHAPTER 3

TYPES OF CONFLICT

In this chapter I shall review the interview material concerning cases of reported conflict. Although this discussion documents the occasions on which husbands or wives appeared to secure their preferences in cases of overt domestic dispute, it does not set out to characterise the circumstances in which husbands or wives were likely to "get their way". Rather, it is designed to review the types of reported conflict so as to provide the basis for subsequent discussion of the relationship between overt dispute and the uncontentious contexts of decision-making. By documenting the form and location of family arguments described in the interview material I hope to identify the points at which routine and unproblematic decision-making procedures broke down. There are two levels of analysis involved. I am interested in the general relationship between conflict and an ordering social context: the family is one among other possible contexts in which such enquiry might take place. At the same time, however, I am also interested in the structure of distinctively domestic dispute and in the ways in which family context orders described instances of overt conflict.

This review is therefore informed by two concerns. On the one hand I needed to develop an account of the relationship between types of conflict, definitions of relevant capacities (ie. resources) and the social world in which different types of dispute took place. From this "power" oriented view, the family provided a setting in which to explore what might prove to be generally relevant connections between instances of "one dimensional" power and their structuring, if not necessarily advantaging, context. As I shall suggest later, the notion that perception of choice provides a critical link between the worlds of overt dispute and of unproblematic decision-making could prove relevant in a wide range of quite different

decision-making contexts. On the other hand, I needed to document the range of domestic decision-making issues which were reported to end in overt family dispute and to review the ways in which those involved attempted to overcome opposition and so secure their own preference. I needed to find out what my respondents claimed to argue about and to find out how they "resolved" such specifically family disputes. This strand of the enquiry therefore emphasised questions about "family" as distinct from questions about "power".

In order to advance on either front I had to devise some relevant method of classifying the interview material which described instances of overt dispute. As I shall explain in the first section of this chapter, I ordered respondents' accounts of overt dispute with reference to the kind of choice seen to be associated with what proved to be a contentious decision. This produced a three part classification of a) conflicts about "matters of preference", b) conflicts about "appropriate behaviour" and c) conflicts related to decisions in which there was apparently "no choice". Sections 2, 3, and 4 of this chapter review the characteristics of each of these three categories of dispute. In those sections I shall explore the relationship between the type of conflict under discussion and the kinds of resources employed by those involved. Throughout this and the following chapter I shall draw on the interview material as a means of illustrating general characteristics of a particular category or type of decision, conflict, or resource. I have selected examples from the whole body of interview material and, in this chapter, used them to illustrate types of conflict rather than types of respondent. For these purposes, details about the child-related age group and the housing or work status of the respondent cited are of secondary importance. Such information is, of course, critical in later discussions of the ways in which different sections of the sample defined particular domestic decisions and of the

ways in which different respondent types organised their domestic routines. For now, however, the aim is to classify kinds of conflict so as to facilitate subsequent comparative analyses.

1. A TYPOLOGY OF CONFLICT

I have defined instances of overtly contentious decision-making as those in which the respondent claimed that both parties held clearly opposed preferences about the outcome of a particular decision. The body of interview material thus distinguished could be approached from any number of different positions; my strategy reflects a particular set of informing assumptions and interests.

1. I am presuming that decisions involve the selection of one option from a range of perceived alternatives (1).
2. I am interested in domestic decision related conflict, that is in arguments about which of a range of viable alternatives the couple should select.
3. I am interested in respondent's perceptions of the type of choice, that is, in the range of viable alternatives associated with what turn out to be contentious decisions.
4. I am assuming that A's chances of successfully getting B to pick an option which B wouldn't otherwise choose depend on A's capacity to marshal sufficient capacities to overcome B's opposition.
5. The relevance of particular capacities depends (in part) on respondent's definitions of the type of choice associated with the contentious decision.

These informing assumptions clearly resemble those of the "one dimensional" approach to power. However, there are two important differences. First, I am concerned to categorise sub-types of "one dimensional" power so as to situate instances of overt dispute within their perceived context of unproblematic decision-making, a concern represented in assumptions 2 and

3. Second, as I shall explain in the following chapter, I have adopted a rather different view of resources to that found in traditional "one dimensional" approaches (2). To make sense of my typology of conflict it is necessary to consider what is meant by "range of alternatives" (assumption 3). The interview material on overt conflict covers a wide range of topics. To some degree, each dispute took a different course depending on the nature of the actual alternatives from which the respondent and her husband made a final selection. While it was not practical to order types of dispute according to the list of actual alternatives which the respondent believed to be involved (3), it did prove possible to describe types of dispute in terms of the range of options from which a selection had to be made. In other words, I could classify cases of conflict according to the respondent's perception of the type of choice, ie. their perception of what counted as appropriate alternatives. Types of choice range from the "open", as in cases where the list of viable alternatives was believed to be determined by personal preference to, at the other extreme, the "closed", as in cases in which there were apparently no alternatives. Types of decision-making depend on the type of choice involved, and types of conflict arise in relation to these different types of decision-making. Accordingly types of conflict include, at one extreme, disputes associated with decisions about "open" matters of preference and, at the other extreme, arguments associated with "closed" decisions about which there was apparently no choice. Because it is founded on a distinction between types of choice and hence of types of decision, this scheme can also be used to describe instances of uncontentious decision-making. Accordingly it provides a method of relating instances of overt conflict to similar, but undisputed, decisions.

I reviewed the interview material with reference to this kind of conceptual scheme and identified three major types of choice; the "open"; the

"limited" and the "closed". In this chapter I shall be concerned with the three associated categories of conflict, namely: conflict about matters of preference; conflict about appropriate behaviour and conflict about what appeared to be an inevitable outcome. The key characteristics of each type are outlined below.

1. Conflict about matters of preference

These arguments were related to decisions in which the range of possible options was seen to be determined by factors of individual taste or preference.

2. Conflict about appropriate behaviour

These arguments were related to decisions in which the range of viable alternatives was seen to be limited by normative conventions of appropriate and inappropriate behaviour. As I shall explain later, I shall only consider arguments about the allocation, delegation and control of domestic responsibilities.

3. Conflict about matters in which there was "no choice"

These cases of token conflict arose in relation to "decisions", or, rather, decision-like situations, in which those involved believed that there was only one viable alternative.

The next three sections of this chapter document respondents' descriptions of each of these types of conflict and examine the relationship between definitions of a particular type of choice (and so of a particular type of decision) and perception of relevant capacities. Note that these are all cases where that decision proved to be contentious.

2. CONFLICT ABOUT MATTERS OF PREFERENCE

The descriptions of overt argument included in this section share two defining characteristics.

1. The respondents acknowledged that husband and wife had equal right to an opinion in relation to the subject of conflict. Each agreed that the other was entitled to argue for their own preference.

2. Each believed that their own preference represented a practically viable option.

The range of issues associated with this form of conflict was enormous. Respondents described "preference type" arguments in relation to decisions about, for example, whether or not to go to Thailand on holiday, about which TV channel to watch or about whether to have a pink or a blue bathroom suite. While it is impossible to pin down a set of subjects or issues which typically generated this type of conflict, it is clear that respondent's perceptions of "matters of preference" varied in inverse proportion to their perception of matters about which there was "no choice" or about which there was some conventionally appropriate outcome (4).

At first sight it seemed that there were almost as many kinds of relevant capacities as there were instances of preference conflict. For example, arguments about the TV might involve reference to notions of "turn taking" or justice, while those engaged in disputes about the choice of a bathroom suite might try to take advantage of, for example, a superior financial position. On closer inspection, however, there did appear to be some general pattern.

Though the range of possible alternatives was seen to be the product of factors such as personal preference or taste, the universe of actual options varied from subject to subject. While, for example, the choice of a TV programme and the choice of holiday were both believed to be matters of personal preference, the actual range of possible options from which the respondent had to select varied dramatically; there were only 4 possible TV programmes compared with hundreds of theoretically viable holiday resorts.

It seemed, then, that the number of possible alternatives had certain implications for respondent's perceptions of relevant capacities.

To some extent, the range of possible alternatives varied depending on the location of a particular "preference" issue in terms of a broader sequence of decision-making. For example, some of the reported "preference" conflicts were associated with first-order choices which took the form "I want a..." while others were associated with subsequent second-order choices of the form "I want x out of all the possible a's". The relationship between first and second order choices was extremely complicated. Indeed, the distinction is only useful in that it allows the observation that the way in which a first-order choice was resolved ordered the respondent's perception of the second-order choice and to some degree ordered what were then defined as relevant capacities. In this case, for example, the way in which the wife won the first-order issue (to have a cat) literally precluded all further debate about the colour, age or sex of the creature.

"He doesn't agree with it, he went mad I kept asking for one and he said he wouldn't get one. Anyway I went to see one of my cousins, they live on a farm and so thats where I got it. You know I came home with it...he went mad."

Not all first-order choices precluded subsequent debate. Indeed most generated further choices. Much of the relevant interview data concerns decisions about financial expenditure in which the first-order issue was about whether or not to buy an item, while second-order choices related to the detail of the purchase.

"We bought that, which was er, well its a Canon [cooker], and it was er well it was an expensive...well it was over £400, but there was an allowance you see so it made it straight £400. He thought that it was ridiculous paying all that money. He said 'what's wrong with the old one.' Well we had had that since we were first married. Anyway, he said 'well if you have to get one, what is wrong with that one, that is only £200.' Er well, it was not as, I didn't like it as much, the features on it were not as convenient, and it was, the quality wasn't as good I didn't think, and so I said I was going to buy it you see and so well fair enough, he didn't argue any more so I chose this one."

In this case it seems that the wife won the first-order decision because she had her own financial resources. She had her own money and she was free to spend it as she wished. This meant that she was also able to determine the outcome of all second-order decisions about the detail of the purchase. However, as illustrated by the following example, those who "won" first-order decisions did not necessarily control the outcome of associated second-order choices.

"We used to have two cars, when we got married, well they were both old cars and he said shall we...his was getting beyond the stage where it could go to Northallerton every day so he suggested that we sell both cars and get one good one which we did. I didn't want to, I didn't want to sell my old car, it was a sensible thing to do, it was just that I was rather attached to my car at the time, and it meant that I had to get up earlier in the morning. Anyway we did, we got a new Mini, which I well, he wanted something a bit bigger, but I said well if I've got to drive it, then I want to have something small that I will feel comfortable with. So he let me have my way there I suppose."

Here, the husband's victory did not give him the right to choose the colour or make of the car. The wife seemed to have more say in these matters in part because she did not get her way in relation to the first-order issue.

I am not especially concerned to establish a hierarchy of importance, though first-order decisions were usually seen to have a greater impact on the respondents' lives. Rather I want to observe that conflict related to first-order decisions of the "I want a.." type tended to be resolved with reference to a different set of "relevant" capacities (often money) compared with conflict related to second-order choices of the form "I want x of the range of possible a's". Predictably, the outcome of second-order conflicts typically depended on the use of such tactics as persuasion, compromise, or appeal to some special area of expertise. I shall discuss the differences between "normative" and "material" capacities in Chapter 4. At this point I only want to note that respondent's perceptions of relevant capacities seemed to vary according to the first or second order status of the decision under debate. Some capacities, (for instance,

financial advantage) are likely to have relatively unlimited relevance and thus an influence which crosses this boundary. However, in as far as the subject of conflict orders the perceived relevance of different capacities, and in as far as first and second order issues concern characteristically different subjects (or different aspects of the same subject), there is some general relationship between the first or second order status of a decision and the respondent's definitions of relevant capacities.

In sum, conflicts about matters of preference could be resolved with reference to all kinds of appeals except those which depended on a notion of individual authority. If the issue was a genuine matter of preference such appeal would, by definition, be irrelevant. In practice the range of capacities which allowed A to get B to do what B would not otherwise do appeared to vary depending on the participant's perception of the first or second order status of the decision as well as on the actual subject of dispute. By implication, different individuals were better placed to secure their preferences in relation to different stages of decision-making depending on their access to what were seen to be relevant capacities. To give just one example, if it were the case that the ability to win a particular first-order decision depended on access to a source of independently disposable money, a wife would appear to have more chance of securing her preference in relation to that decision if she were working and if the fact of her employment meant that she had what she could use as "her own" money. However, this is not to suggest that working wives had more power than housewives. Such a claim could only be sustained if it could be shown that all wives had the same preference in relation to, say, first-order decision x, that all faced the same opposition, and that in all cases independently disposable money was seen to be a relevant resource. Finally, I would also have to assume the fact of working meant that a wife would necessarily have access to independently disposable money (5).

Similarly, the ability to invoke notions of family interest or of proper behaviour could variously work to the advantage of either husband or wife depending on each individual's preference and on the participant's definition of the decision as one in relation to which such appeals might be relevant. Again that is not to say that the "ideology" of the family and the associated normative resources necessarily or even systematically allowed husbands rather than wives to secure their preferences in cases of dispute about second-order "matters of preference". The point is that the respondent's perception of the nature of the decision as being a matter of preference, and of its location in a sequence of other related decisions ordered the definition of relevant capacities and so influenced the course of the argument. This meant that initial perception of the type of choice associated with a decision, and its location in what was seen to be a sequence of other decisions, ordered each party's ability to secure their own preference and so ordered the course of the dispute. I shall attend to the respondents' actual perceptions of choice in the later chapters on specific areas of domestic decision-making.

3. CONFLICT ABOUT APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR

I was unable to identify more than a fraction of the routine disagreements in which one side claimed that the other should (or should not) behave in a particular way. Disputes involving reference to a convention of proper behaviour were so common, so various, and so fleeting, that they were hard to pin down in an interview context. I had to accept that I would only be able to collect information about a sub-section of all possible "appropriate behaviour" related disputes. However, I was able to consider respondents' accounts of domestic arguments which shared the following defining characteristics.

1. The conflict concerned either the allocation of some sort of domestic obligation or the regulation of "work" associated with such an obligation.

2. The definition of viable alternative options depended on a conception of socially appropriate behaviour. Arguments were therefore about what should happen, rather than about what individuals would personally prefer to happen (as in the previous section).

Most of the reported disputes which fitted this description were about matters of responsibility. Curiously, the family and feminist literature which makes use of the concept of responsibility rarely sets out to unpack the meaning of this term (6). I shall define what I mean by responsibility and consider the particular characteristics of domestic responsibility before reviewing the respondent's accounts of associated conflict.

Responsibility

First, if someone is responsible then they are obliged, usually to another but sometimes to themselves, to satisfactorily complete a more or less clearly defined area of work (7) or decision-making. If they are responsible, they are also answerable to that other (or themselves) if they fail to fulfil those obligations. Second, responsibility is always limited. Responsible individuals are obliged to do the work x but not the work y. The boundaries of work x and y, and the definitions of a satisfactory performance are, in principle, established at the point when an individual takes over responsibility. Responsible people are therefore obliged to complete a specified task to a specified standard. However, they also have the right to do that work and to make all the associated decisions without undue interference from the other. In other words they have a defined and restricted area of authority. They alone have the right to decide about the particular set of issues for which they are responsible (8). Third, a responsible person can delegate aspects of a job for which they have responsibility. In these circumstances the boundaries of delegated and non-delegated responsibility, and the standard expected of

This diagram describes a structure of potential responsibility-related dispute. Though the content of the informing beliefs will vary from context to context, the diagram describes what are, in principle, generalised relationships. What is different about arguments about matters of responsibility in the family (as opposed to those set in, for example, a formal organisational context) is the nature of the informing beliefs. Accordingly, I shall examine the beliefs and expectations which appeared to inform respondents' accounts of conflict about matters of domestic responsibility. These can be grouped under three headings: beliefs about sharing, equality and justice, beliefs about gender and role appropriate behaviour; and, finally, beliefs about the circumstances of legitimate delegation.

Beliefs about sharing, equality and justice

All respondents believed that husband and wife should "share" the total burden of domestic labour, though it should be noted that "sharing" does not necessarily mean "equal sharing". While the actual definitions differed, all believed that there should be a just division of domestic responsibility and most presumed that this balance depended on an "equal but different" allocation of domestic work. Husbands and wives took on work for each other in what was seen as a kind of exchange relationship. The detail of division and the degree to which the terms of the exchange were formally or even overtly regulated varied from case to case. However, all systems of exchange and division produced patterns of mutual dependence. Once the system was established, the wife relied on the husband to do x just as the husband relied on the wife to do y. Both would suffer (though in different ways) if the system were to collapse as a result of an individual failure and so each was under some pressure to keep their part of the bargain. Patterns of dependence and indebtedness associated with second order expectations of help and delegation

complicated the already intricate network of mutual obligation established by the "major" divisions of domestic responsibility. Appeals to notions of fairness, justice and equality were made in the context of this complex background of interdependence and proved to be more or less effective depending on the combatants definition of the current balance of indebtedness. It seems that, for example, a husband had more chance of making a successful appeal of the form "its my turn to decide" if his wife had recently secured her preference in relation to what was seen to be a similar decision (I shall consider such "turn taking" practices in the following chapter).

Beliefs about gender and role appropriate behaviour

Expectations of sharing and justice demanded that the total domestic burden was shared. Beliefs about gender and role appropriate behaviour ordered the way in which that balance of domestic responsibility was achieved. Responsibilities were most commonly allocated to either husband or wife on the grounds of gender and/or role. Though the content of these gender/role expectations varied throughout the sample, all respondents described their domestic arrangements with reference to some such theme. Some observed that these expectations informed even the detail of their domestic lives. One respondent believed, for example, that it would be quite acceptable for her husband to take his son out in a pushchair, but quite peculiar for him to push the pram. Similarly, others expected their husband to help bring in the washing, but not to help hang it out. These kinds of expectations limited the respondents' perceptions of appropriate alternative courses of action both for themselves and for others in the family context. The domestic burden could only be divided in certain ways. Several respondents went on to identify what they saw as an extremely important relationship between the performance or non-performance of particular domestic tasks and a perception of themselves, or of their husbands, as appropriately masculine or feminine, motherly or fatherly. In this case, for example,

the respondent associates the performance of particular jobs with the fulfilment of a particular role.

"Its my job [cleaning the kitchen] isn't it. Though I don't particularly always want to do it its my job. Its how we work together. We wouldn't swap jobs, no, no, no, indeed no. I mean no, I think if you have a task and you do it well its more satisfying than say except for fun just to swap over...if Ian wants to Hoover and I'll do the garden thenbut why should I wallpaper? I think it takes something off a man if you were to take all of his jobs."

The perceived inter-relation between gender/role identity and the allocation of areas of domestic responsibility radically altered the nature of any associated conflict. Presuming that the couple agreed about the definition of "appropriate behaviour", failure to fulfil allotted responsibilities represented failure to behave as a "proper" wife/husband/mother/father. Worse, if one party failed to fulfil his/her allotted duties the other (through no fault of their own) had to take over an area of gender inappropriate responsibility. Attempts to "interfere" with what was deemed to be the other's responsibility were equally significant. If the husband does and should do x and the wife tries to take over all or some of that work the husband may interpret her move as a threat to his "masculinity" as well as evidence of gender inappropriate behaviour on her part. The respondent quoted in the following example expresses just such a fear.

"I've seen too many marriages where in order to stress their equality, women have gone overboard and I think once you start chipping away at a man's masculinity...like I've got a sister who her husband isn't as good at managing money as she is, but instead of having a joint account and keeping an eye on it, she insists she has all the money and she gives him what she refers to as pocket money. Well I think she is asking for trouble."

This association of gender/role identity with the proper performance of appropriate domestic tasks has certain implications for the course of responsibility related conflict. First, the association is likely to ensure some degree of stability. As long as the performance of specific tasks is equated with perception of a proper wife/mother/father/husband role there will be some extra, diffuse pressure to behave in the

appropriate fashion. Secondly, the association provides each party with an instantly relevant appeal. Either can claim that the other is not behaving as a proper wife/mother/father/husband. Such appeals are, of course, only effective if there is some fundamentally shared definition of proper behaviour: nearly all respondents believed that they and their husband had the same general conceptions of gender and role appropriate behaviour. Thirdly, these beliefs served to preclude debate and hence dispute. The range of acceptable ways of allocating domestic responsibility was often so limited that there was (from the respondent's point of view) literally "no choice" about who should do what and hence no room for domestic conflict about those issues.

Beliefs about the circumstances of legitimate delegation

When responsibility is allocated, that allocation is typically seen to be made without reference to the respondent's immediate domestic circumstance. The arrangement is not expected to vary in response to changes in other aspects of the family's lifestyle. If, for instance, the wife is in charge of the cooking she will probably remain responsible for this work even if the couple move house, have another child, etc. However, such variations in family circumstance did order respondents' perceptions of the occasions on which it was seen as legitimate to delegate specific areas of domestic responsibility. In some circumstances, conventions of proper behaviour demanded that normal definitions of gender or role appropriate conduct be ignored or reversed. To give just one example, many husbands were expected to look after the house if their wife was ill: this was what a good and caring husband "should" do in the circumstances. Involvement with normally "inappropriate" work was unproblematic providing that the helper obeyed the rules of delegation. As the next quotation illustrates, beliefs about the circumstances of legitimate delegation specified the meanings of "too much" and "too little" help in some detail.

"If I am ill ...which touch wood isn't very often, but if I am ill then he would look after himself, he could cook enough to look after himself, chops he does, he is very good at chops but that is about it. He wouldn't bake or anything like that, he'd draw the line there, I wouldn't want him to anyway. There is never any need for that anyway."

In conclusion, husbands and wives do expect the other to help (in certain circumstances) with what are properly their own responsibilities. These expectations of help gave rise to a second order system of exchange and indebtedness and provide both parties with legitimate reasons why, in case of conflict, the other should give way.

Whatever the circumstances of delegation, the standards expected of "helpers" were "lower" than those expected of the person who was normally responsible for a particular area of domestic work. Indeed, "helpers" who performed "too well" undermined the normal pattern of responsibility and marked themselves out as "inappropriately" equal to or better than the person who was rightfully in charge of that area of domestic work.

"If I ask him to do something, if I ask him to clean the bathroom then he will be there for hours and when he's finished it will be spotless, and that is how ...he thinks the whole house should be like that, but I've not got the time to do that really, not every day ..he doesn't realise that you can't do that if you have got a whole lot of other jobs that need doing"

Those who temporarily took on what was normally defined as gender inappropriate work are therefore expected to "fail" by not "too much", and not "too little". The actual meaning of "perfect failure" depended on the context of delegation.

Described domestic disputes about matters of responsibility were clearly structured by beliefs about sharing, about gender appropriate behaviour and (where relevant) about the circumstances in which delegation was legitimate. Such beliefs had the dual role of setting the scene in which different alternatives were seen to be more or less viable and hence in which decisions did and did not arise, and of providing a wealth of normative support for particular courses of action and so for particular

preferences in cases of disagreement. Having considered some of the general features of family disputes about matters of responsibility I shall now review the respondents accounts of each of the four possible forms of conflict outlined earlier. These four categories were 1) conflict about the allocation of responsibility, 2) conflict about allocation of delegated responsibility 3) conflict about the standards demanded of the responsible person and 4) conflict about the standards demanded of the person to whom responsibility had been delegated. In their different ways, all four kinds of argument highlight areas in which codes of proper family behaviour were doubtful, vague, or even contradictory and in which there was scope for dispute about what should happen. The following review of each of the four kinds of responsibility related dispute therefore reveals as much about the normal workings of the system of informing beliefs and conventions as about the structure and form of domestic conflict.

1. Conflict about the allocation of domestic responsibilities.

Interestingly, all the reported instances of this type of conflict concerned the allocation of responsibility for overall financial control or for more specific areas of domestic budgeting, and all arose as a result of what was seen as a failure (something did not happen which one party thought should happen) or because of some form of interference (someone took over what should have been the other's responsibility). In all cases, then, the respondent and the husband appealed to what were essentially contradictory definitions of "appropriate" behaviour. In the following example, the respondent and her husband held contradictory definitions of the way in which financial responsibility ought to be allocated.

"I think for things like money it's normally the man that would lose sleep over it and I don't honestly think that Steven would care whether we had money or not as long as he could spend something, so with regard to that yes, we are different. He doesn't really have any idea about money...I think one of you has got to be in charge, you know because otherwise you don't know what the other one is spending and then all of a sudden you look in your account and there is nothing

in it...if a husband can't manage the money then I suppose the woman has to do it but really I think it is the man's responsibility."

Other disputes arose when expectations of "joint" partnership contradicted beliefs about gender or role appropriate behaviour. In the next case the husband believed that his wife should be in charge while the wife thought that financial control should be a joint affair.

"He really blew his top. He said 'Well don't you know how much you've spent?' And I wasn't bothering it wasn't my money, it was our money and I was writing cheques blithely, no track at all, and he, he went really mad. 'What do you think you are playing at? Why can't you work out where your money's gone.' I'll show you, he makes me fill in a little red book every week. I have to account for everything because when he gets a statement he's real careful now, he likes to check that it ties in. I have to fill in my little book to prove I'm trying. It keeps him quiet, it makes him feel nice and masterful, he feels that he is in control then, its funny really, I'm in control but he likes to think he is. It was silly really, I thought we were managing fine, but he thought I was doing it all, well I didn't get married to worry about how my cheques are going through. I thought that all that was over and that we'd do it together, but really, neither of us was doing it, that was why we got into such a mess."

This debate about financial responsibility illustrates the contradiction between beliefs about marriage as an equal partnership and conventions of separate and different areas of gender/role appropriate responsibility.

Many respondents were aware of this contradiction, presenting their financial arrangements as "joint" while also acknowledging that they had to behave according to gender/role specific prescriptions of appropriate financial behaviour. Contradictory conventions of proper social and wifely

behaviour had similar consequences. In the next example the wife interfered with what was properly her husband's responsibility in order to resolve an embarrassing social dilemma. Her husband did not agree that the "outside" social circumstances justified her "disobedience".

"He thinks if a man takes his wife out it is up to him to provide the drinks. I paid, I got a round of drinks on er New Years Eve. Oh he went mad. He says 'Whats the point in you spending your money, you might as well save yours and pay you know put it towards something else and we'll spend mine.' Which is if you think about it, it is right enough you know. So I say 'Oh alright then', but I, you know, I felt obliged to buy a round of drinks for everybody... If I'm out on my own I usually use my own money you know because I feel guilty about using his."

All those who argued about the proper allocation of domestic responsibility

presented claims of the form "You should/should not have done..." Each set out to justify the rightness of their own view and the propriety of the conventions which informed it. When such strategies failed, as in the first case, one side was able to "win" by default. In that example the husband was able to abandon what his wife saw as his financial responsibilities because she would rather take over what she saw as gender inappropriate work than allow the family to get into debt.

While all reported arguments about the allocation of domestic responsibility concerned the allocation of financial responsibility, it is significant that neither party made use of such material capacities as financial advantage. Differences in income may generate or inform the dispute, as in the second and third examples. However, the resulting arguments were about definitions of appropriate behaviour and not about differential use of the family's finances. Curiously, family finance seemed to be the only area in which there was any real doubt or disagreement about the identity of the properly responsible person. Only here was there sufficient sub-cultural variation that husband and wife were likely to have developed even slightly different expectations of normal family life. I shall describe the actual range of different methods of financial management in chapter 9 so as to examine the domestic worlds in which this form of dispute did or did not arise.

2. Conflict about the allocation of delegated responsibility

Arguments about helping were more common than those about allocation of responsibility and were described in relation to a wider range of issues. These disputes took one of two forms: a few arose because A had not offered enough help, while the rest were a consequence of what was seen as interference or "too much" help. Those which arose in response to what was defined as illegitimate indifference took various forms depending on the respondent's conception of the kind of expectation which had been

infringed. For example, some respondents argued that their husband had contravened what they saw as normal standards of social conduct, while others reported arguments in which reference was made to a set of expectations about specifically family behaviour. In the following case, the wife believed that parents should support each other and take a joint interest in the children. Her husband's failure to meet even this standard of proper family behaviour was taken to represent a generalised form of non-cooperation.

"I think he [husband] should help [with son], I don't expect him to change nappies but just to play with him and take him out sometimes, you know, there is a park ...he could take him round there sometimes, but he is just not interested."

However, most of the reported disputes about a lack of help arose in relation to more concrete issues and involved reference to a circumstantially specific conception of appropriate assistance. To take the most commonly reported example: those who believed that a wife's domestic responsibilities should demand her full-time attention typically expected that a husband should help out in the "unusual" event that the wife went out to work.

he: "I clean up in here, I wash the pots every night so er I just I think it is my right sort of to chip in with her because she is going out to work. Blokes at work say 'Oh you are a fairy you know er you are not supposed to do that' well I don't think that is right. That is how marriages split up. I wouldn't do the ironing though, no you wouldn't catch me dead doing ironing"

Though expectations of appropriate help varied widely, all respondents acknowledged that they were obliged to fulfil their domestic responsibilities whether or not they went out work and whether or not they got any help. If their husband did not like doing a particular type of delegated work or chose not to get involved that was too bad. In these cases, and in others like them, the "delegators" were unable to ensure that the other helped out. Even if the circumstances allowed delegation, they did not necessarily demand it.

Arguments about interference made reference to similar beliefs about "appropriate" behaviour, but in a different context. These disputes arose when A believed that B had illegitimately taken over what was rightfully A's responsibility. Several of these disagreements were described by those who were still in the process of defining areas of domestic responsibility.

"He tends to think it is his job now, we used to argue a lot and now I sort of leave it to him and he gets on with it he hasn't sort of got me saying that piece [of wallpaper] isn't straight... It was because I tried to take part in it. I'd say 'thats not right'. Now I am not anywhere near."

This argument, for example, served to establish the identity of the rightful wallpaperer. More commonly, arguments about interference followed what was clearly and unambiguously defined as A's encroachment on what was agreed to be B's job. If that job was properly B's because of B's status as wife/mother/husband/father, the act of interference prevented the innocent party from fulfilling the responsibility appropriate to someone of their gender or role. For example, a husband could not paper the living room if his wife had already finished the job. Even "third party" interference proved to be a problem in this respect. In the next example the respondent was unable to be a "proper wife" because her husband had his washing done "for him" by an hotel.

"He is very good. I keep saying 'where is your washing? I want to do it you know, it is my responsibility, you should have clean undies, I don't want some hotel doing it for you' but he said 'no, it's alright dear, it will save you the work'. It makes me feel, he does a lot for me and I think well if I can't keep his underwear clean and iron his shirts er I've failed a bit."

Though there was some room for initial doubt and debate, established beliefs about proper domestic behaviour usually served to preclude domestic dispute about the definition of legitimate and illegitimate help. Disputes about interference or indifference almost always served to re-define the boundaries of normal responsibility. Providing that the offender and the criticizer shared the same basic model of appropriate behaviour and the same conception of the circumstances in which help would be justified, delegation arguments were essentially "border skirmishes" in which each

party argued in favour of a particular interpretation of an agreed code of conduct.

To sum up, then, dispute about the ways in which domestic responsibilities should be allocated was extremely rare. Though conflict about the allocation of delegated responsibility was rather more common, such debates never really undermined what seemed to be a shared conception of normal family arrangements. Indeed, once resolved, boundary disputes about appropriate help and delegation reinforced a definition of acceptable procedures. Conflicts about proper helping roles were clearly ordered by the respondent's conception of the circumstances which justified deviation from the usual arrangement. The few described cases of argument highlighted what were otherwise invisible expectations of who should help with what in what circumstances. I shall document the range and context of such taken-for-granted expectations in chapters 9 and 10.

3. Conflict about the performance of work for which individuals were responsible

Arguments of this type followed what was defined as an inadequate performance and were initiated by the "criticizer" who, presumably, aimed to prevent future "misbehaviour". The "criticized" either accepted the reprimand, explained why it was impossible to meet the normal standard in the circumstances, or set out to challenge the "criticizer's" definition of a proper performance. In this example the wife shared some but not all of her husband's definitions of proper cleaning.

"Trevor gets upset when things aren't straight. I'm not really bothered... If he came home and I said 'Oh I've worked really hard, I've done this room out properly', he'd check, and one of the ways he'd check would be to run his finger along the top of the door and say 'well you havn't done it have you'..Well I'd say it's done. He'd just shout... it used to upset me, he still says I'm a slob. It annoys him that I am, that I don't clear up after him all the time. I do clear up after him a lot more now that I am at home."

The husband believed that his demands were "normal" and so felt that he had

the right to criticise his wife's failure. However, failure (so defined) was as routine as the cleaning work itself. Neither side clearly won or lost what was effectively a ritual dispute about the nature of the wife's proper domestic role. Other reported conflicts about standards of performance were just as habitual.

Complaints about timing arose because something had not yet happened which the "criticizer" believed "should" have happened. In most cases the responsible person (usually the husband) failed to complete an apparently skilled and hence irregular and specialist task on time. The "criticizer" (usually the wife) aimed to get the "criticized" (usually the husband) to fulfil their domestic obligation and finish the job. Different forms of pressure or persuasion were more or less relevant depending on the context of dependence, on the reason why the "criticized" should be responsible and on the time scale involved. If, as in this next example, it was the husband's job (as husband) to dig the garden, the wife could try to shame him into action on the grounds that the delay was evidence of inappropriate husbandly behaviour.

"After much pushing and prodding, that part [of the garden] has been dug over. At the front my dad did all that, he dug that over to try and shame him [husband] into doing it [the back].

However, these "taking over" strategies had their limitations for if A has to take over the whole of B's job the "shaming" element has little effect. In the next case, for instance, the wife took over the work but did it so inappropriately that there was no danger that the normal boundaries of responsibility would shift. She aimed to provoke her husband but not to resolve the problem herself.

"All those pipes need painting and filling in and the pipes in the hall need boxing in. In fact I thought of doing it myself, it does sound ridiculous but I thought er I'd get some cardboard and bend it there sort of down in a little narrow bit. I'm going to bend it in and then do it with paint and paper it. I'm not going to tell him, I'll see if he notices it. You see if he does that he'll do it in wood. If I didn't do that or if I didn't ask him to box it in, the day he dies it will still be there."

Arguments about when work should be done may continue for a long time. This means that the "criticizer" can adopt tactics which are expected to have a cumulative effect. For example, some respondents tried to "wear away" their husbands' resistance through continuous nagging or sulking. As I shall explain in the next chapter, these measures were unreliable in that they depend on a potentially variable opponent's reaction. However, they were often reported to be the only means open to "criticizers" who were completely dependent on the "criticized" in relation to the subject of dispute. Several respondents observed that they were literally unable to do the offending work themselves, or noted that such action would be "more trouble than it was worth" and so had no choice but to live with the problems caused by what they saw as an inappropriate delay.

"The toilet was making the horriblemst noise and it was going on for weeks and this week-end he was off work this weekend and he got so sick of hearing it that eventually he did do it ... it took him three or four minutes. I didn't even know where to start."

Husbands were typically expected to be responsible for work which demanded relatively specialised and rarely needed skills, while "women's work" tended to be routine and relatively unskilled. The distribution of cases of reported conflict about the performance and timing of domestic work was clearly ordered by these characteristic patterns of responsibility: husbands complained about issues of performance while wives complained about delay and inaction. Though distributed in this way, such disputes were rare. This was hardly surprising as those who had to control the performance and timing of work for which the other was responsible necessarily lacked the immediately relevant knowledge and experience on which to base their criticism. This lack of knowledge was in part a product of the patterns of mutual dependence associated with a "separate but equal" division of domestic responsibility which perpetuated differences of expertise, skill and knowledge. The resulting system of independent specialism therefore guaranteed a degree of autonomy. Both

husband and wife could get on with their own work in their own way without fear of interference or detailed criticism.

4. Conflict about the performance of delegated work

The standards by which delegated work was judged were more or less stringent depending on the circumstances of delegation. Whatever these circumstances, standards were "lower" than those expected of the normally responsible person though it seems that the more routine the delegation, the less the difference.

"You know he is capable enough. He baths them [children] every night, and puts them to bed, he is nearly as good as I am."

"I went into hospital for 48 hours and when I came back he was trying to do it [hoovering] but ...it was terrible. I must be honest with you, I felt like taking it off him."

However, routine delegation was seen to be temporary and in this context, few thought that it was worth trying to offer constructive criticism so as to improve the helper's performance. In any case much of the delegated work was seen to demand gender specific skills which were literally un-teachable. Several respondents described past failures and cases of associated "token" conflict in order to illustrate what they saw as the absurdity of trying to behave in a gender inappropriate fashion.

"I was ill, and he had to do the washing. Well, he put everything in that there was, and I don't know, there was a nightie of mine which was a very dark blue, and all the white underwear, and he put the automatic on 6... the whole thing.. Well... they came out, everything was ...well not blue, they were yuk, you know terrible. I said to him 'Fred !!!' 'Well I did my best... I tried my best'. He has never done it since though, I have made sure of that."

"He can't bake, but he would try if he had to. It is a family joke because when he baked me a cake once on my birthday, it was like a brick. Even the birds didn't eat it."

"I painted one door once, and Graham came home and there was loads of runs in it. He sanded it all out. I was raving, he didn't have to do it, but it was all runny I suppose. He had to do it again, so I know my limitations you know so I do the things I can do, and he does the things that he can do."

Interestingly, a couple of those who only occasionally delegated work (usually cleaning or tidying-up work) found that their husband went

"overboard" and did much too perfect a job.

"He is actually the fussiest, but I am actually the tidiest. I'll tidy, and to me it will be tidy but to him it is no good, he'd have to straighten all the books up. If we have got visitors and I say right do the lounge, he'll spend hours getting all the books just right and he'll dust all the little bits, but he won't just dust quick round"

Either way, the delegator had very few means of effectively controlling excessive or inadequate performances. Arguments about the timing of delegated work were often precluded by the very circumstances which justified delegation in the first place. Work was frequently delegated because the normally responsible person was for some reason unable to get the job done on time. If the hoovering had to be done before the visitors arrive, delay was impossible. In any case, the person who was "delegated to" was, by definition, doing a favour.

"If I said anything he'd just turn round and tell me to get on and do it myself."

The level of necessary caution and tolerance was in part determined by the degree to which the delegator depended on the "delegated to's" assistance. Responsibilities could only be legitimately delegated in particular circumstances which meant, in most cases, that the delegator had some commonly recognised "need" for help and was therefore likely to be grateful for any help however inappropriate that proved to be.

In summary, disputes about the standards of performance or timing in relation to work for which individuals were normally, or only temporarily, responsible seemed to be ordered by the following factors. First, husbands and wives were unlikely to have the necessary knowledge to criticise any but the most obvious inadequacies. In this context it is important to observe that the visibility of an individual's failure to fulfil a particular responsibility depended in part on the nature of the work in question. It seems that, typically, wifely responsibilities were more routine and more visible than husbandly types of work. Second, husband and wife were likely to depend on each other to do certain jobs and

to help each other where appropriate. These networks of mutual dependence are founded on, and reinforced by, a basic willingness to conform to the associated expectations of proper behaviour. Failure to do so could set off a sequence of complex reactions and counter reactions which would cause a "disproportionate" amount of damage to the whole of the normally effective network of obligation. Third, but only in relation to delegated responsibility, normal definitions of gender or role appropriate behaviour, in combination with a conception of the nature of the present extenuating circumstances, served to define a "perfect" helping role in which the assistant was expected to try his or her best to complete what was by definition an "impossible" task. Assistants who performed "too well" threatened their own gender or role identity and that of the normally responsible person, while those who did not even meet the minimum standard expected of a helper undermined the values of sharing and cooperation on which family life was expected to be based. Finally, it is important to remember that help was given as a favour. This was so even if assistance was routine or positively expected in the circumstances. In this context, any criticism would seem to represent ingratitude on the part of the delegator, who, as I observed earlier, may have to depend on the assistant's cooperation.

Conflict about appropriate behaviour

There was very little reported disagreement about the ways in which domestic responsibilities were performed or allocated. This seemed to be because husband and wife shared much the same model of normal family life. The few described disputes developed at the margins of otherwise unproblematic working arrangements which were founded on equally unproblematic conceptions of appropriate behaviour. In fact, most disputes concerned the allocation of delegated rather than normal responsibility where there was apparently more scope for debate. Standards

of expected performance were as well defined as were normal patterns of allocation. This was so even in the context of rather more complex situations in which responsibilities were delegated. In other words, respondents seemed to maintain very clear conceptions of how family life should work. Given that they and their husbands held very similar models of family life, and given that their behaviour was informed by those models, there was very little room for dispute.

In the few cases of overt conflict, each side made instant reference to what was expected to be the shared definition of what should happen. Though some versions of what should happen clearly had greater cultural support than others, it is not possible to conclude that general visions of proper family life systematically worked in either the wife's or the husband's favour. Appeals to such general notions were only valuable if individual preference and general conception of what should happen coincided and if the opponent accepted the basic model of family life to which reference was made.

I have tried to describe ways in which models of proper family life order and preclude conflict about the allocation and performance of domestic responsibilities. I shall consider the content of those models in chapters 9 (on family finance), chapter 10 (on housework and child-care), and, to some degree, in chapters 5 to 8 (on specific areas of domestic decision-making).

4. CONFLICT ABOUT APPARENTLY INEVITABLE DECISIONS

The conflicts included in this section arose in relation to a curious type of "decision" in which the outcome was apparently inevitable and in which A had no chance of getting B to do what B would not otherwise do. Accordingly, such instances of overt dispute could not be described in terms of a "one dimensional" definition of power. Indeed, the "conflict"

involved was better described as a token form of resistance to what was believed to be an already determined "fate". The instances of reported "disagreement" discussed in this section, therefore, concern "decisions" in which there was apparently only one possible course of action, but in which one party disliked the seemingly inevitable outcome while the other party either liked it, or was indifferent. The conflict (such as it was) arose because the one unavoidable course of action was closer to A's preference than to B's. In such circumstances, those involved did not have recourse to resources, to means of overcoming the other's opposition, or to methods of securing their own preference. While B might have ended up doing what B would not otherwise do, this was seen to be because of some external factor, and not because of pressure from A (10). In this section I want to consider the nature of disputes which arose in relation to "decisions" in which the outcome was apparently determined by factors beyond the control of either A or B and to document the location and apparent cause of such argument.

Some of the described conflicts were "token" in the sense that one party simply registered their displeasure at what was agreed to be an inevitable outcome. Others were "real" disputes in that one party challenged the other's definition of "no choice". Each type was more or less likely depending on the perceived cause of the "no choice". The describe "causes" of what were seen to be an "inevitable" outcome fell into three groups. "No choices" were variously believed to be the product of 1) social obligation, 2) "external" pressure and/or 3) some prior decision.

1. "No choice" because of some form of social obligation

Obligations to other people (within and outside the immediate family group) were reported to have "unavoidable" and sometimes unpleasant consequences for respondents and their husbands. For example, several respondents

accepted that they had certain immovable domestic obligations and were resigned to the fact that they had to live with the implications. This was often difficult but not especially contentious. Overt dispute only arose when, say, a husband disliked the effects of what were basically his wife's obligations (or vice versa). In these circumstances, the wife/husband might challenge the significance of the other's commitments and so try to redefine their perception of "no choice".

"He's doing stores work for the TA, they are short of volunteers so he has to go in every week. If they could get more volunteers then he wouldn't have to go in so often. I go on every now and again, 'I feel a bit lonely, we don't get much time to ourselves', and he has a weekend off."

Several of those involved in the sort of conflict described above adopted the strategy of reminding their husband/wife of other competing yet equally "inevitable" obligations. When family obligations were juxtaposed with TA obligations there had to be some choice. While the husband "had to go in" he also "had to" spend some time with his family. The perceived "inevitability" of each option depended on the individual's evaluation of the relative priority of different social obligations. "Family" obligations were normally expected to take precedence over others. In such a cultural context conflicts involving competing "family" obligations were particularly fraught. In the next case, the contradictory demands and complex dilemmas of "no choice" nearly disrupted the respondent's family life altogether.

"When me mother-in-law died, he [father-in-law] said 'what is going to happen to us?' and of course we had him up here. He was my husband's dad so I accepted it but ...he wasn't a likeable man. When he came here I must be honest it nearly broke my marriage."

While husband and wife were expected to acknowledge that each had certain "outside" commitments there were limits to the degree to which those other obligations could legitimately disrupt immediate family life. Arguments about the definition of legitimate disruption were therefore "real" whilst those related to the consequences of what were agreed to be "legitimate" obligations were "token". As the following example illustrates, it was

often difficult to make such clear-cut distinctions between "token" and "real" conflict.

"We realised she couldn't look after herself [the respondent's mother]. We tried various flats and warden's apartments and of course they just hadn't the places, and I wouldn't really have liked to put her in a home... I had this idea one day, I thought well I wonder if we could make her a flat of some sort... the three bedrooms were standing empty.. He [husband] wasn't happy with it because he never did get on with her ...it was the usual mother-in-law situation anyway...so we thought of this idea of bringing her here and whilst he wasn't happy he felt it was, we had no choice really. He has problems with her now because she's getting up and he's got to make sure she's got back to bed... I try to ask her down to eat with us. I feel that gives her a bit of stimulation .. for her, not for us I might add, and he doesn't like me to do it."

While the husband had no choice but to accept the presence of his mother-in-law, he did have the chance to influence the degree to which that presence disrupted his daily family life. There was therefore scope for "real" choice about whether or not to invite the mother-in-law to eat with the family though there had been "no choice" about whether or not to have her to stay. This example, and those quoted above, illustrate the potential complexity of what might at first seem to be simple, inevitable decisions: much depended on the couple's definition of family and other priorities for it is these which determined the perception of different degrees of inevitability.

2. "No choice" because of "external" pressure

Family members may be forced to make certain decisions because of circumstances seen to be beyond their control. If they can only see one practical alternative they have "no choice" about what to do. In practice these definitions of "no choice" were made with reference to a system of "rational" family priorities. If, for example, an individual is offered the choice of becoming unemployed or moving to another part of the country, the definition of "no choice" can only be made with reference either to a notion that unemployment is out of the question or to a belief that moving house is impossible. Most of the reported cases of "no choice" because of

some kind of external pressure arose in this context. Respondents who believed that they had to follow their husband's job had "no choice" but to move (or to stay in the same place) though they disliked the consequences.

"I find York a bit claustrophobic. It doesn't affect my husband, it does me. I think a move would be nice but we've been very much tied to his career, I think most people are, so where we have lived, it has been just really because of his jobs."

However, a few found that there was scope for "real" decision-making about this issue because other equally rational family requirements came into conflict with the "need" to follow the promotion trail. In the following example, the children's educational needs countered the husband's need for promotion, so producing a real (if currently hypothetical) dilemma.

"You've got to move, you haven't any control over it at all, not if you want promotion. He says he is the one that's got to work till he's 65, and you've got to make sacrifices. I don't know, we will have to think about where we'd go more now, and at what time. When your children are a certain age I think it should be a decision, an actual decision rather than a yes we must go if it is promotion."

These were the exceptions. Most of those who had "no choice" but to do x because of some external pressure had no doubt about the nature of their fate and were only able to offer "token" resistance to what was seen to be the obvious course of action.

3. "No choice" because of a prior decision.

These "no choices" arose when one decision excluded the possibility of another. If family decision-making sequences were neatly structured and routinely recorded it might be possible to attribute a perception of "no choice" to a prior decision. Such projects are entirely impractical in the family context, however, in which choices pass un-recorded and they are in any case difficult to describe in terms of an ordered temporal sequence. However, several respondents identified decisions which they believed to have had clearly identifiable "no further choice" consequences.

"Well I get housekeeping and I've got to buy food and stuff like that from there, I don't pay any bills or anything, I'm not badly done to really but I think I made a mistake from the beginning ...I should

have insisted on my own money you know what I mean if I want anything other than run of the mill I've got to ask for it. Which goes against the grainit's not the same as having your own money. I don't think he'd like it [a different arrangement], no, not now, he wouldn't change now."

Having "mistakenly" gone along with the initial decision to have housekeeping money the wife now has "no choice" but to accept the consequences. Arguments about events which have already happened represent a particular sub-type of this form of "no choice" conflict. Those who act independently and against the others wishes leave that other with "no choice" but to accept that the offending action has happened. In these circumstances, opposition to a particular historical instance of "misbehaviour" is inevitably "token", although, of course, that "token" opposition may effectively deter future "misbehaviour". Finally, continual repetition of a particular choice may produce a situation in which there are, apparently, "no choices". If, for example, a family "always goes" on holiday to the same place, they have "no choice" about where to go. The decision, if it arose at all, would be a decision first about whether or not to break the tradition and only subsequently a debate about where to go. In such circumstances a perception of inevitability develops regardless of the range of "original choice". A few respondents found that they resented certain family habits but were unable to dislodge the routine and so re-introduce the possibility of "real" decision-making.

Conflict about apparently inevitable decisions

Many of the respondents' definitions of "no choice" proved to be the product of a particular set of family priorities or beliefs. Here, as in relation to beliefs about appropriate behaviour and the allocation of domestic responsibilities, most respondents claimed that they and their husband agreed about the definition of family priorities. In this context, token conflicts were expressions of distaste for what was nonetheless acknowledged to be the proper way of life. Other definitions of "no

choice" were related to a particular set of family routines or rituals. These habits, like the beliefs of proper family priority described above, served to bracket together otherwise debatable issues and to limit respondents' perceptions of alternatives. However, particular domestic routines were seen to be of the respondent's own making, and while that ritual structure served to alter the course of subsequent decision-making, it did not necessarily mean that all dispute was "token".

By definition, the parties involved in a "token" conflict could not attempt to secure their own preference or to get the other to behave in a certain way. This meant that neither side could make use of what would normally be described as "resources" (that is as means which allowed A to get B to do what B would not otherwise do) unless the conflict developed into an argument about the nature of the choice involved. Such "real" disputes only arose when those beliefs and priorities produced contradictory definitions of "no choice" (as in the father-in-law example) or when husband and wife happened to have different priorities and so different conceptions of the nature of the inevitable outcome. In these cases, appeal was made to an informing vision of proper family life in an attempt to get the opposition to redefine their conception of inevitability.

Types of conflict

In the three preceding sections I have tried to describe the location and form of each of three types of described conflict: conflict about matters of preference; argument about appropriate behaviour; and dispute associated with apparently inevitable decisions. I have also identified the kinds of capacities typically drawn upon as resources (that is as means which would allow A to get B to do what B would not otherwise do) in each of these types of contentious situation.

I began with a discussion of arguments related to decisions in which the

range of viable alternatives was "open" in the sense that the list of possible options apparently depended (given certain material limits) on personal preference or taste. In these cases both parties agreed that each had the right to argue for their own preference. While appeals to some kind of authority were, by definition, impossible, those involved made use of a wide range of resources. In practice, first-order decisions ("I want a") tended to be about expenditure and were therefore resolved with reference to such material capacities as independently disposable money. The course of second-order decisions of the form "I want x out of the range of possible a's" varied depending on the way in which the first-order decision had been resolved, but often involved appeal to "normative" themes of family interest, sharing or justice.

I then considered the course of reported dispute related to decisions in which the range of possible options was limited by a convention of appropriate behaviour. Analysis of the four forms of conflict related to the allocation and control of domestic responsibilities highlighted aspects of the relationship between notions of proper family behaviour and the course of associated dispute. It seemed that beliefs about gender appropriate behaviour and sharing served to minimise the contexts in which overt conflict was likely to occur and structured the course of the few arguments which did develop.

In the third section I considered respondents' accounts of arguments in which the range of alternatives was so limited that there was apparently only one possible option. This allowed me to identify yet more areas in which family beliefs, priorities, and rituals limited respondents' perceptions of choice and so structured the range of potentially debatable issues. If there was "no choice", the respondent had no chance of influencing the outcome of the decision. Appeal to normative or material resources was therefore irrelevant.

As I explained at the start of this chapter, this discussion of conflict types was ordered with reference to the perceived range of possible alternative choices. Decisions involving the selection of one from an apparently "open" range of alternatives were therefore associated with conflicts about matters of preference. If a decision involving selection of one from an "open" range of possible alternatives were to prove contentious then the resulting conflict would be of the preference type described in the first section. Similarly, decisions involving a selection from a range of alternatives limited by a notion of what should happen would be associated with the second type of conflict, while those involving only one possible option would (if they were to prove debatable) result in the last type of "no choice" dispute. In the course of this chapter I have suggested that respondents tended to make appeal to different sorts of capacities in relation to each of the three types of conflict. It seems then that the definition of relevant capacities was in part determined by the respondent's perception of the nature of the contentious issue, that is, their perception of the range of possible alternatives from which a final selection had to be made. In other words, the currency or likely relevance of particular capacities or appeals appeared to be related in some way to the pattern of conflict types described above. Having documented the described instances of overt conflict I can now examine the means which the respondents and their opponents employed in their attempts to secure their preferences. In the next chapter I shall review the range of resources used by respondents and their opponents. However, I shall structure that review so as to highlight the relationship between perceived relevance of particular capacities and particular kinds of conflict. If the hypothesised relation between types of conflict and types of perceived choice were broadly accurate, it would obviously be useful to explore respondents' perceptions of the type of choice associated with a series of unproblematic decisions since these perceptions would order the course of

any associated conflict, should that arise. Chapters 5 to 10 thus document variations in the described perceptions of the kind of choice associated with a series of common domestic decisions.

CHAPTER 3: NOTES

1. This definition is the same as that used by Lukes. He writes "Decisions are choices consciously and intentionally made by individuals between alternatives" (Lukes, 1974, p21)
2. As I observed in chapter 1, many of the "one dimensional" analysts adopt a scarcity/dependence based definition of resources. From this view, resources are defined as the scarce means needed to meet common goals. They can therefore be identified without reference to their "use" in cases of actual conflict or dispute. In comparison, I argued that capacities, which might have more or less potential relevance, only had effect as "resources" at the moment of use. From this view resources could only be defined retrospectively.
3. This strategy was impractical for two reasons. First it was impossible to establish exactly what the respondent believed to be a "viable" alternative (Indeed, the question of the viability of a particular option might itself be the subject of a secondary dispute. For example A might conclude that x was a real option whilst B might rule out x on the grounds that it was, for example, "too big", "too yellow" or "too expensive"). Second, even if I could produce lists of what were believed to be viable alternatives and lists of final outcomes, I would have got no further with the task of ordering cases of reported conflict so as to facilitate discussion of the structuring domestic world. Rather, I would have as many categories of conflict as there were contentious issues.
4. For example, if someone was expected to be responsible for a particular set of decisions, then those decisions could not be defined as issues about which both 'A' and 'B' had equal right to express and to try to enforce their personal preferences.
5. This was not always the case: see chapter 8 on family finance.
6. Such literature sometimes distinguishes between work, which is the performance of a particular task, and responsibility, which is the job of

ensuring that the task is completed. As Leonard writes "within marriage, though the division of tasks is less rigid (husbands may push a pram or do the washing up), the division of responsibility is as before (they do it to help their wives; and wives who go out to work do so because they 'choose to', and they have to make such arrangements as necessary to accomodate to it)" (Leonard, 1980, p267). However, the complexities of the relationship between obligation and performance and the even more elaborate relations associated with patterns of delegated responsibility are not explored further.

7. I am defining "work" in the broadest sense so as to include, for example, dish washing and lawn mowing as well as making decisions about the child's education, walking the dog, or arranging a trip to the theatre.

8. Which means, as I shall use the term, that they have authority. I am therefore defining authority as the legitimate right to decide, and am acknowledging that an attribution of responsibility is at the same time an attribution of "localised" or limited authority.

9. The difference in the standards expected of the responsible person and the helper needs some explanation. If someone is responsible they are responsible and answerable to another. Because delegated work will not be completed to the require standard, the responsible person will have failed to fulfil that particular domestic obligation. If the person they have delegated that work to is also the person to whom they are answerable, things get very complicated. Should a husband criticise his wife for failing to make a good cake (and so failing to fulfil her domestic obligations) when in fact he made the cake at her request? It seems that the very fact of delegation alters the definition of an acceptable performance. If A accepts that delegation is (in the circumstances) legitimate, then A absolves B of the need to meet the normal standards. If the husband agrees to make the cake, he accepts that the resulting product will be perhaps harder, lumpier or blacker than he would normally expect.

10. A may manipulate B's perceptions of choice such that B "mistakenly" believes that a particular outcome is inevitable. In such cases A is able to get B to do what B would not otherwise have done. However, I have no way of distinguishing between those situations in which relevant perceptions of choice were "deliberately" manipulated and those in which the definition of "no choice" was the product of other "innocent" factors which coincidentally determined the selection of a course of action which happened to suit A rather better than it did B. This means that I will consider the nature of "no choice" conflicts without reference to the "accuracy" or otherwise of the respondents' perceptions of inevitability.

CHAPTER 4

CAPACITIES AND RESOURCES

Chapter 3 described the kinds of reported conflict associated with decisions in which the range of viable alternative options was either "open" (as in the case of "preference" type conflicts), "limited" (as in the case of conflicts about "appropriate" behaviour) or "closed" (as in the case of conflicts about apparently inevitable outcomes). I shall structure chapters 5 to 10 with reference to that same typology, and so attempt to situate instances of overt conflict in terms of their described context of normal and unproblematic domestic decision-making. Before embarking on that discussion, however, I want to take the analysis of instances of overt dispute a stage further. This chapter considers the kinds of resources utilised in different types of contentious situation and examines the likely relevance or "currency" of particular sorts of capacities.

Much of the literature uses the term "resources" to describe the means which allow individuals or groups to exercise power. It is important to note, first, that the range of abilities/capacities/means/qualities which are counted as resources varied depending on the analyst's informing definition of power (1). For example, few "one dimensional" analysts would define the means used to manipulate preferences as resources. From that view, resources would be the means, such as physical strength, money etc., which allowed A to secure A's preference in case of overt dispute. In this context it is important to note that authority (2) is typically thought of as a resource by those "three dimensional" analysts who conclude that A is able to get B to do what is not in B's real interests through the use of (amongst other things) A's authoritative position. In comparison, Bachrach and Baratz reserve the term authority to describe a distinct set of social relations which, because they are based on legitimacy, are "antithetical" to those of power. They write: "While authority is closely related to

power, it is not a form thereof; it is, in fact, antithetical to it" (Bachrach and Baratz, 1970, p32) (3).

The status attributed to "resources" varies just as widely. As I observed in chapter 1, most of the "one dimensional" analysts adopt a dependence based account of resources. Those who have access to the scarce means required to meet common needs have resources and, so the argument goes, have power. From this view, power is seen as some kind of personal possession whose (absolute) value is determined by the scarcity of the resources on which it is based. Other writers argue that "power is relational, as opposed to possessive or substantive" (Bachrach and Baratz, 1970, p21). Accordingly, the "value" of particular sanctions or resources is relative and, perhaps more important, dependant on a series of circumstantial conditions (4). Alternatively, "resources" can be seen as properties of systems which, as in Parsons' account, contribute to the achievement of collective goals, or which, as in the various oppositional versions of a "three dimensional" view systematically favour the interests of one group at another's expense.

I shall use the term "resources" to describe those "capacities" which allowed, or which were expected to allow (5) A to get B to do what B would not otherwise do in cases of overt conflict. A's capacities, then, are the means which might allow A, rather than B, to secure A's preference. Individuals therefore only have capacities relative to each other. While capacities may be systematically and differentially distributed, it is important to remember that access to such means does not, in itself, guarantee success. Capacities are as yet unrealised "resources", they are means which might have effect in cases of overt conflict depending on a range of circumstantially specific factors. From this view, then, those who have authority, money, or physical strength have capacities (not resources) which might, or might not, permit them to secure certain

decision-making preferences. So, for example, A's reference to A's status as an "expert" would count as a resource if that appeal was made explicit and accepted in the course of some kind of overt dispute. In all other contexts, that expertise is merely a capacity. Although I shall use the term power to describe instances of overt conflict and so, in a sense, adopt a "one dimensional" view, I clearly do not want to claim that resources have any absolute value or that they can be identified in advance. Rather, I shall suggest that resources are those capacities which were deemed to be relevant, and which had effect in a particular case of overt dispute. In other words, resources are capacities which, by virtue of certain circumstantial conditions (in particular, the participant's definition of relevance), allowed, or were expected to allow, A to get B to do what B would not otherwise do.

This definition highlights the importance of the participant's perception of relevance. In a sense, "resources" do not exist until the moment of their use: the conversion of a "capacity" to a "resource" and the identification of its value as such critically depends on the participant's definition of relevance with reference to a particular case of conflict. Prior to that defining process, each party merely has access to a range of potentially effective capacities. Analysis of the interview material suggested that there were systematic variations in respondents' definitions of relevant capacities depending on the nature of the contentious situation with which they were involved. Capacities which were relevant in cases of preference conflict were often irrelevant in cases of dispute about appropriate behaviour (6). In this chapter I want to consider the characteristics of three groups of capacities, each of which was typically reported to have a different sort of "currency" or potential relevance.

The first section of this chapter focuses on the "capacity" with the most widespread "relevance" or "currency": indifference. In the second

section I shall document the range of "material" resources drawn upon in cases of overt dispute and examine the circumstances in which such capacities were effective. The third section, on "normative" resources, reviews respondents' accounts of the use and potential value of capacities which depended on some kind of conventional or normative expectation. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the relationship between access to particular types of capacity and potential power, so bringing together themes from this and the preceding chapter.

1. INDIFFERENCE

Indifference is an interesting capacity. It cannot be controlled by those who benefit from it (although it can be cashed in upon); it cannot be used to secure a preference, nor can it be used to reward, threaten or sanction the opposition yet, in some respects, it is the most generally relevant capacity of all. The effort required to secure a preference depends in part on the kind of resistance which has to be overcome. If B offers very little opposition it will be comparatively easy for A to get B to do what B would not otherwise do. In this sense B's indifference can be counted as one of A's resources. Patterns of indifference therefore structure the context in which other more conventional capacities are expected to have effect.

Issues about which both parties were relatively indifferent were, by definition, relatively uncontentious. Some respondents concluded, for example, that particular subjects were just too "trivial" to bother arguing about.

"I'd rather turn it [TV] off if it were going to cause an argument."

However, in most cases of reported conflict one side was more concerned about the outcome than the other. Though individual involvement was relatively unpredictable in relation to dispute about matters of

preference, patterns of domestic responsibility were clearly associated with patterns of indifference. If A was responsible for x, then B accorded A the right to make certain decisions relating to x (ie. A had authority over matters relating to x). In this context, B's involvement would count as interference. In other words, particular allocations of responsibility produced particular expectations about who should and who should not be involved with particular areas of decision making. This relationship between indifference, responsibility and authority is extremely important. Because of this connection, decisions which might otherwise be the subject of domestic conflict become issues about which only one party has the right to decide. Routines of sharing and taking turns produced similar, if less systematically structured, expectations of appropriate indifference. If, for example, it was the wife's turn to make a decision, the husband had no right to interfere. In this context he was obliged to be (or to pretend to be) relatively indifferent.

Thus, patterns of indifference or involvement determined the levels of resistance which the opposition has to overcome in cases of conflict. This was so whatever the type of conflict and whatever the preferences involved. Though at times effective as a peculiar kind of resource, indifference, or rather systematic patterns of indifference associated with, for example, patterns of authority and responsibility, also served to structure the world in which power (in the "one dimensional" sense) was exercised. This meant that the domestic contexts in which As got Bs to do what Bs would not otherwise do were already coloured by a set of common expectations of appropriate indifference. To some degree, then, these expectations determined the levels of resistance which A or B would have to overcome in order to secure a preference in case of overt conflict.

2. MATERIAL RESOURCES

I shall define material resources as those capacities which could be used to directly alter the physical or material environment; which could be used as threats, rewards or sanctions; and which were potentially relevant in a wide range of contentious situations. The respondents described four different forms of material resource: the threat of some kind of physical sanction; financial advantage; the ability to act independently; and nagging, sulking or shouting. Each of which were used in characteristically different circumstances.

Physical threat

Several respondents described instances of overt dispute in which they and/or their opponent made threatening statements of the form "you do that or else..". In these cases the dispute was apparently resolved before the threatened sanction was in fact realised. Indeed, in some instances, arguments were conducted with reference to what was presented as a "language" of symbolic rather than "real" violence. In the following example, the respondent describes how she and her husband "manage" their rows.

"We've had lots of them [rows]. He has thrown paint brushes at me and all sorts and so I've thrown rolls of wallpaper at him and we've both stormed out...We are not one of these couples that bottle everything up, we have a jolly good row and get it out of our system.."

Perhaps not surprisingly, there were no descriptions of the actual use of physical force or of sex as a resource (7). However, there is no logical limit to the range of issues which could, in theory, be resolved with reference to physical or sexual rewards or sanctions, and the threat of such reward or sanction could inform all kinds of contentious decision-making. While such strategies have this theoretically unlimited potential, much of the relevant literature emphasises the need to "consider violence in its social and cultural context" (Dobash and Dobash, 1980,

p15). It is not simply that husbands are likely to have superior access to the relevant physical capacity (ie. strength). What is important is that access exists in a world structured by certain beliefs and expectations about marriage and the family. To quote Dobash and Dobash again, "The husband... feels he has a right to control his wife's behaviour and authority over most, if not all, areas of her life; it is these beliefs, coupled with his desire to maintain authority, that lead to his first assault" (Dobash and Dobash, 1980, p94) (8). Though none of my respondents described the use of such resources as physical force or sex (a few making reference to threats of violence), it is important to acknowledge that, as writers on domestic violence have noted, such strategies are used in a highly ordered social context.

Financial advantage

While money was certainly used as a material capacity, its efficacy varied with other social factors. The mere possession of cash (say, the housekeeping) did not in itself give an individual a financial advantage. Such advantage depended on the right to spend what was seen as individually disposable money (9). Definitions of individual rights to spend what was normally presented as "our" money varied depending on an individual's personal income and on methods of financial management. The following example illustrates the relationship between earning and the right to make financial decisions about the use of the "family's" money in the context of a personal preference dispute.

"He's talking about getting a video but we havn't got round to it yet we are just looking at the prices and hopefully that is as far as it is going to get. I think they are a waste of money. I keep thinking of what else we could do with our money, but he has earned it I suppose so if he wants a video then it is up to him really.."

As will be seen in chapter 9, respondents' perceptions of independent spending capacity depended on their method of financial management as well as on their actual income. For example, wives who had an allowance paid

into a separate account usually found it much easier to think of that money as "their own" compared with those who had to use a joint account. Though neither group had their own independent income those with an allowance were able to behave as if they did. The following examples illustrate the point.

"If I want anything I just buy it. I have my own cheque book and my own account. I get an allowance every month... once the money is in my account he thinks of it as mine. I suppose it is his really but we don't think of it like that."

"If I want anything I would say "Oh I've seen ... is it alright" and then I'd just get it. It is a joint account, he, he doesn't say, he just gets whatever he wants."

As was seen in the previous chapter, "individually disposable" money could be used to determine the outcome of certain kinds of "matter of preference" spending decisions and was a necessary precondition for particular forms of "unauthorised" behaviour. However, the ability to pay was not usually enough to secure an individual preference in the context of a debate about a major item of expenditure, or about expenditure related to areas of domestic responsibility. These arguments involved appeal to the family interest, personal expertise, and/or experience, as well as to rightful financial advantage. In practice, the efficacy of an ability to spend was often modified by these normative themes of proper behaviour. Though money was clearly a material capacity, its conditions of use were hedged around by a set of conventions about legitimate methods of resolving particular types of dispute. In theory, those with money could spend it as they wished. However, it seems that independent spending power was in fact used much more cautiously, and often only as a means of securing a desired outcome in relation to disputes which were seen to be of the "matter of personal preference" type.

It is, of course, difficult to identify occasions on which A's knowledge of B's financial dependence (or independence) informed the outcome of a particular dispute. However, there is some evidence that an awareness of

financial superiority (or inferiority) had effect as a generalised resource in relation to conflict not directly related to questions of immediate expenditure. In the next example, for instance, the respondent describes how she made use of the fact that she earned more than her husband when she was in a "nasty mood".

"All the money goes in together so there is no [problem], unless I tell him like unless I start getting into a nasty mood, no but we don't argue about money."

Though difficult to demonstrate, it is likely that knowledge of financial dependence (or independence) also informed the way in which routine spending decisions were presented. For example, those who had to ask permission to spend the family's money had no choice but to discuss their buying plans. Such decisions might pass unnoticed, and so remain unchallenged, under a different system. In such circumstances, the nature of the associated advantage varies depending on the nature of the husband's and the wife's preference. In other words, the fact that the wife has to discuss her spending plans need not necessarily mean that she is put at a disadvantage. Such a financial system only has the effect of disadvantaging the wife if she is unable to secure a particular preference because of that system. If she is able to by all she wants then the system has no particular advantaging or disadvantaging status. I shall consider such issues in more detail in chapter 9.

In conclusion, then, superior access to independently disposable money allowed individuals to get their way in relation to certain arguments about "matters of preference". The value of such a capacity was limited in relation to more complex spending issues which involved reference to notions of expertise or the family's interest. Though difficult to detect, it seemed that an individual's knowledge of their position of relative financial dependence also informed the course of a wider range of domestic disputes and, perhaps more important, served to order the way in which

choices were presented for joint discussion.

The ability to act independently and against the other's wishes

The interview material contained several examples of "token" conflict about events which had already happened. In some of these cases, the argument concerned what B defined as A's illegitimate behaviour. A's ability to behave in this illegitimate fashion usually depended on a series of "material" resources which, in combination, allowed A to directly affect B's material environment and to get B to do what B would not otherwise do: namely, accept A's "misbehaviour". In the following example the wife was unable to prevent future "misbehaviour" on her husband's part because she was apparently unable to produce any effective deterrent. Her husband was able to secure his preference because of his generalised ability to act independently and without regard for his wife's wishes.

"We have a lot of arguments because he drinks a lot really. It is a row everytime about drink, nothing else, always drink. He comes home late, drunk and can't see anything wrong. It's gone on for 10 years.. it won't change, and he's always said well he says "I don't have to rule him" really he can do anything he wants so I have to do as I'm told. We both won't give in, neither of us will give in."

Other respondents described how they (or their husbands) booked holidays, chose pets, or bought new furniture, all against the other's stated wishes. The ability to act in these ways was a particularly effective resource as the action literally secured the desired option. Opponents could merely respond with claims about what should and should not have happened, with threats about the nature of their response in case of a re-offence, or with immediate recrimination, none of which did anything to alter what had already taken place. Providing the offender retained the ability to act against the other's wishes, the other could do nothing but register his/her objection to every such event. Not surprisingly, then, arguments which followed the "use" of this form of generalised resource tended to recur.

In practice, this sort of "fait accompli" tactic allowed individuals to

behave in ways which the other deemed to be "wrong" and was characteristically "used" as a means of securing a preference in the context of an argument about appropriate behaviour. Several respondents described occasions on which they had lost disputes about matters of responsibility or delegated responsibility because of their opponent's ability to simply misbehave.

"I lose my temper because I can walk in the room and not be able to sit down because there are books and there is a paper, there now look, books and papers on every chair"

"There are lots of jobs that never get finished. I keep on at him but it doesn't seem to make much difference."

Thus, the ability to act independently and against the other's wishes allowed victory in relation to disputes about matters of preference as well as in relation to disputes about appropriate behaviour. In theory, the relevance of such an ability was only limited by the availability of issues which could be resolved by an "unauthorised" individual action.

Nagging, sulking and shouting.

I have chosen to describe nagging, sulking and shouting as "material" resources on the grounds that such behaviour has an immediate impact on the other's domestic environment. While the content of a nag, a sulk or a shout usually involved some kind of "normative" appeal of the form "You should/shouldn't do", the style of that critical comment meant that the challenge also made some material difference to the home environment. To sulk, nag or shout was to "deliberately" contravene normal codes of conduct as a means of disrupting the other's social world and so "wearing down" their resistance. The difference between, say, nagging and "reasoned argument" is that the nagger offers the opponent a negative kind of reward for compliance. If the opponent gives in the nagging will stop. The style therefore adds a "material" dimension to the challenge, whatever the "content".

Though all were able to nag, sulk or shout, the value of such action depended entirely upon the opposition's reaction. If the opposition ignored the sulking or was indifferent to the nagging, the style of the appeal had no additional value. The following examples illustrate the extremes of effective sulking and apparently ineffectual shouting.

"I win. I just sulk and then he'll turn it (TV) over and that is it."

"He doesn't do anything about it, no, he'd just shout about it .. but him shouting, no, that didn't ... it used to upset me, he still says I'm a slob, it annoys him that I don't clear up after him all the time, but no, he just used to shout.. It didn't do any good."

Such characteristically unreliable resources were typically used as a "last resort" (or as the only resort) when all other methods failed. The need to behave in this way was therefore partly determined by an individual's access to, or lack of, more effective methods of securing their preference. The use of one tactic rather than another (ie. sulking rather than nagging or shouting) varied depending on the contentious issue's location in the past, present or future. Nagging was used as a future orientated resource in what was usually an attempt to get the opposition to do something or to behave in a certain way.

"I just nag. I've been going on about a coffee table for a long time. You know "I want a coffee table." That is all I say. I just keep saying it."

In comparison, sulks were characteristically used in response to a past event. Some followed occasions of non-compliance and were presumably "intended" to deter future "misbehaviour"; others simply provided the sulker with a means of expressing displeasure at what was seen to be an inevitable outcome.

"I have my moan. I have to have my little moan. I mean it wouldn't be fair if I didn't have. I usually give in because it is only fair but I have to have a little moan. I have to voice my opinion. I wouldn't be trodden down."

While nagging and sulking were both used as generalised means of expressing displeasure, shouts were typically tied to an immediate issue.

"I just sat and shouted at him. I said 'It's none of your mother's

business what we do."

Although I was unable to examine the ways in which different sections of the sample went about their arguments in any detail, it is important to observe that there were stylistic differences. None of the respondents in the H1 category (10) claimed to have shouted at their husbands, just as none of the husbands were reported to have adopted the nagging strategy. It is, of course, difficult to tell whether these patterns reflect individual access to other more effective capacities, general sub-cultural expectations of the way in which domestic dispute should be conducted or assumptions about what should be confessed to interviewers!

Characteristics of material resources

By definition capacities which could be used as material resources had a direct impact on the opponent's physical environment. Yet their effect was not independent of any social or cultural context. Definitions of relevant "material" capacities were "made" with reference to conventions of appropriate arguing style, a conception of the subject at issue, and a knowledge of the opponent. Second, and perhaps more important, all material capacities had effect as resources as a consequence of an elaborate cultural process which specified, for example, the meanings of independently disposable money, of nagging as opposed to rational discussion, of legitimate and illegitimate volumes of debate, etc. etc. That is not to say that there was no genuinely material base line of, say, physical, material or financial advantage. That may well have been so. Nonetheless, the material resources described in relation to domestic disputes about matters of preference, and, to a lesser extent, in relation to arguments about the meaning of appropriate behaviour, were defined and used in a highly ordered context of beliefs about acceptable methods of dispute.

3. NORMATIVE RESOURCES

In this section I shall consider use of appeals to what were believed to be shared conventions of what ought to happen. In making such an appeal, A emphasised the "rightness" of A's position and (presuming that B shared the same beliefs about appropriate behaviour) illustrated the illegitimacy of the position adopted by B. If B could be convinced of the justice of A's claim, B had no choice but to give in.

The interview material illustrates the use of two types of normative appeal. First, there were appeals to what were conventionally agreed to be good reasons why one particular option should be chosen and not another. These beliefs were about proper decision-making styles and procedures. They did not prescribe one rather than another particular outcome though they did specify the kinds of reasons which could be used to justify preferred options. Second, there were appeals to what was presumed to be a shared definition of proper behaviour. These appeals directly referred to a model of what should happen in the circumstances and were used in arguments about the allocation and control of domestic responsibility. In both cases the efficacy of a normative appeal depended in part on the degree to which husband and wife shared the same conventions of appropriate procedure or behaviour, and in part on their relative abilities to resist normative pressures.

Good reasons

The interview material provides evidence of the use of three types of "good reason" in cases of conflict about what were usually "matters of preference". These were:

- a) appeals to a notion of mutual interest and/or convenience
- b) appeals to some kind of special knowledge or expertise
- c) appeals to a procedure of turn taking or compromise

Mutual interest and convenience

The definition of a sensible, rational or convenient option depended on establishing a common interest in relation to which that option made sense or was convenient. Described appeals to themes of rationality or convenience were made with reference to what was expected to be a shared notion of the family's interest. If A can claim that only one choice makes sense from "the family's" point of view there should be no further debate. The outcome of arguments involving claims about more or less convenient or rational options therefore depended on what could be deemed to be in the "family's interest".

The definition of an option which was in the "family's interest" was the product of an evaluation of the range of perceived alternatives with reference to a set of "family priorities". In this context conceptions of mutual interest and convenience were strongly influenced by expectations of gender/role appropriate behaviour and informed by a very general vision of normal family life. As illustrated by the following example, an appeal to the "family's interest" was expected to have more effect than an appeal to a personal preference. In this case, the wife argued that she was able to contribute to the family income without having to delegate "too much" gender inappropriate labour, and was therefore able to portray her personal "need" to work as a "need" which was in fact in the family's interest. She was able to secure her preference with the aid of this normative appeal.

"He doesn't particularly care for me to go out to work but what choice have you got? He said he'd pack up smoking rather than me go out to work but I just said 'Oh I'm starting Monday'. He had the children to look after, so he wasn't very pleased ...I just thought well I'll just have to get on with it, we need the money and that is it. Actually I needed the job as much to get out a bit as for the money. The money is still necessary, it still goes."

Those who were able to present their own preferences as preferences which were "in the family's interest" were able to use this notion to their own advantage, for opposition was, by definition, either selfish or irrational.

Expertise

Those who were able to claim some kind of special knowledge or expertise were also able to argue that they were in the best position to make the most rational choice (ie. the choice that was in "the family interest"). It is important to distinguish such claims of expertise from generalised patterns of authority based on expert status. If someone is known or expected to be an expert and is accorded authority on that basis then they already have the right to decide. This serves to preclude debate. Here I am concerned with specific appeals to expertise in cases in which there was no already established pattern of authority and hence no model of who should decide or what should happen. In other words, I am only concerned with appeals made in the context of a dispute about what began as a matter of personal preference. It is only in this context that both sides believe, at least to start with, that neither have any special right to make the final choice. Individuals who referred to their expertise in relation to a preference conflict therefore either revealed a previously unknown skill or found themselves embroiled in a dispute about the relevance of particular areas of expertise. The case quoted below is an example of the latter.

"Well this three piece suite is totally wrong for here. It was the best we could afford at the time but it is quite wrong for this house so we are looking for another but like I said he has got no sense of what would be suitable. If we go and look at one all he is interested in is the joints. He wants to turn it over and see where it was made and all this sort of thing whereas I would be thinking how will it fit in the room. I found one that would do nicely but he said it wasn't very well made so we are still looking"

Because husband and wife have different kinds of suite buying expertise, each has access to a set of different but equally "good reasons" why the couple should choose one rather than the other option. Unless they find a piece of furniture which fits both criteria they are likely to have to upgrade their disagreement into a debate about the relative priority of

what the husband sees as "good craftsmanship" versus what the wife sees as "good design".

Revelations of previously unknown skills almost always served to secure the claimants preference provided that the opponent accepted the expert claim and the notion that such expertise was, in this case, relevant. Here, for example, the husband managed to secure his preference having made reference to a newly acquired area of expertise.

"He chose the washing machine. He'd just bought one for his mother, well not bought it but he'd found one for her and so he knew what there was and so I just left it to him that time. The one before that I chose but this time I just left it to him really."

Compromise and turn-taking arrangements

Those who agreed to take turns to make decisions agreed to give way on the promise of the right to expect the other to give way in relation to some future, equivalent decision. If there was dispute about the outcome of that equivalent decision, one party could claim that they had a legitimate right to decide (ie. they had a localised form of authority) because it was "their turn". The formality of the described turn-taking arrangements varied enormously. Some respondents had very rigid "deciding rotas", others described such practices with reference to a more diffuse notion of "give and take".

"That is what it (marriage) is all about isn't it? Share and share alike, a bit of give and take. Well it should be."

Even informal systems justified a particular outcome on the grounds that it was the preference of the temporarily legitimate decision-maker. Compromise agreements were rather different. If A compromised, A gave way on one aspect of a decision in return for an equivalent concession from B with respect to another aspect of that same decision. If one side was prepared to modify their preference a little, it was seen to be unjust if the other did not behave similarly. Provided that husband and wife could define the meaning of "equivalent" concessions, they were able to negotiate

around otherwise insoluble problems. Of course, compromise was only possible if the issue was such that preferences could be modified, and if the couple agreed about the boundary of the decision in question. For example, those who viewed a decision about lounge furnishings as a single issue had to negotiate a different form of compromise compared with those who treated the acquisition of each item of furniture as a separate event. These next two quotations illustrate just such different forms of negotiated concession.

"We managed to compromise over the lounge really because he has liked older traditional things and I sort of like contemporary things. The lounge is a sort of mixture really. The suite is his. There is a wall unit in there that is mine, and that [chair] is mine as well.."

"I'd been planning to have maybe a Chesterfield, something like that and er when we went to the Ideal Home exhibition we saw a leather swivel chair which Brian liked. I would never have picked that in a million years and so we ended up buying a leather settee. So I adapted a bit so, you know, it does work both ways a bit."

Arrangements of the form "If you give in on x I'll give in on y" were temporally isolated and, unlike turn-taking arrangements, had no future implications.

Having considered the forms of "good reason" which were expected to justify the selection of one rather than another viable option, I shall now consider the described use of direct appeals to models of what ought to happen.

Proper behaviour

Instances of domestic deviance or misbehaviour were identified with reference to what was presumed to be a shared model of proper behaviour. Appeal was made to this same model as a means of reforming the deviant and was effective only in cases in which the other shared the same set of beliefs. The outcome of arguments about appropriate behaviour which were not solved by such appeal, for example, those in which husband and wife held different conceptions of proper behaviour or in which those

conceptions were internally contradictory or vague, varied depending on the ability of one to persuade the other of the justice of their position, of one's ability to resist the other's normative pressure, or of one's ability to resort to more effective strategies of "persuasion". These are the key characteristics of all types of normative appeal. In practice, of course, the content of the appeal varied from subject to subject and from respondent to respondent. I shall review the respondent's conceptions of appropriate behaviour in chapters 5 to 9 and so document the range of beliefs which could be used or appealed to in case of overt dispute. For now, it is enough to make the above observations about the general character of appeals to a notion of proper behaviour.

Characteristics of normative resources

Accepted procedures for identifying "good reasons" for the selection of one from the range of viable alternatives clearly ordered the outcome of certain preference disputes. For example, those who could claim that their preference was in the family's interest had immediate access to one of the most culturally effective arguments in favour of that particular outcome. Though the described models of family interest, the specification of expertise, and the turn taking arrangements varied widely, all served to label one option as the "better" or, in some cases, as the "only" practical or sensible alternative. Similarly, appeals to a notion of what ought to happen were effective provided that both parties shared the same definition of proper procedure or proper behaviour. The fact that most couples did so does nothing to modify the theoretically limited utility of all such normative appeals.

I shall end this chapter with two rather different kinds of conclusion. The first set of concluding remarks concern the relationship between types of choice, types of decision, types of conflict, and now, types of

resources. These observations effectively take the case presented in the conclusion to chapter 3 one stage further. The second set of remarks revolve around the meaning of potential power, and the relationship between access to potentially relevant capacities and an ability to secure a preference. Both strands of argument are informed by the preceding analysis of empirical material about domestic decision-related dispute, and by an underlying argument which is of relevance in a much wider range of decision-making circumstances.

The relationship between types of choice, types of decision-making, types of conflict and types of resources

In this chapter I have described the contexts in which material and normative capacities were reportedly used and considered some of the characteristics of each strategy. Material capacities, especially financial advantage, nagging, sulking and an ability to behave independently were typically used in attempts to secure a desired outcome in cases of dispute about matters of personal preference. Disputes of this "preference" type were also ordered with reference to a set of normative conventions about proper decision-making criteria. Those who could present their personal preference as one which was supported on grounds of expertise, convenience, or rationality were expected to be at an advantage. Provided the other accepted the legitimacy of that appeal, the claimant was likely to be able to secure his/her chosen preference. Not surprisingly, arguments about appropriate behaviour almost always involved reference to a model of proper behaviour. Given that both parties shared the same model, one was usually able to persuade the other to modify what was agreed to be deviant or inappropriate behaviour. In cases where such normative strategies failed, A and B were likely to make use of material capacities whose efficacy did not depend on the other's views or beliefs. Disputes about decisions in which there was apparently "no choice" only involved

reference to anything like a resource if there was disagreement about the "no choice" status of the decision itself. In those circumstances, each side made reference to a model of family priority which produced what seemed to be the inevitable (or less than inevitable) outcome. In other words, each made reference to a vision of proper family behaviour.

I can now relate this account of the kinds of capacities typically used in particular forms of domestic argument to the earlier discussion of types of conflict and types of choice (chapter 3). Essentially, I want to suggest that it is useful to review decision-related conflict with reference to a logical sequence of structuring factors. I began by classifying choices according to the initial perception of the range of viable alternatives from which a final selection had to be made, thus arriving at a list of three types: the "open"; the "limited" and the "closed". I then ordered types of decision according to the type of choice involved. This produced a list of three types of decision: those about matters of preference which involved an "open" type of choice; those about appropriate behaviour in which the type of choice was "limited" and those in which there was apparently "no choice". I went on to identify three types of decision-related conflict, each of which was associated with a different type of decision. Finally, I considered the kinds of capacities which were typically believed to be relevant in relation to each of the three types of decision-related conflict. On the basis of this analysis I want to argue that the respondents' definitions of relevant capacities varied depending (in part) on their initial perception of the type of choice associated with what proved to be a contentious decision. This is really no more than saying that perception of the means which might allow A to secure A's preference relate to perception of the kind of dispute at issue. Though I have explored the stages of this argument with reference to material on domestic decision-making, the following diagram could be used to describe decision-related conflict in any number of social contexts.

FIGURE 5

Types of decision	Types of conflict	Types of resources
(defined in terms of perceived choice)	(which arose in relation to types of decision)	(which were used in the context of different types of conflict)
Open	Matters of Preference	Material or normative - good reasons
Limited	Appropriate Behaviour	Normative - proper behaviour
Closed	No Choice	None or normative - proper behaviour

The diagram maps the relation between types of conflict, types of resources, types of decision-making and types of perceived choice. In practice, of course, the actual issues, beliefs, expectations, and material capacities which inform the course of family decision-making combine to fill out this abstract framework in a particular way. Later chapters will explore these characteristics of specifically domestic decision-making. For now the point is to present an essentially abstract way of viewing instances of overt conflict which incorporates an analysis of resources, that is of the capacities deemed to be relevant as means which allow A to get B to do what B would not otherwise do, and which therefore permits subsequent analysis of the context of dispute with reference to a basic typology of kinds of choice.

The relationship between power, potential power, capacities and resources

I observed earlier that resources were the means which actually allowed A to get B to do what B would not otherwise do and that capacities were means which might or might not count as resources depending on the nature and the circumstances of conflict as seen by those involved. A can be said to have exercised power when A gets B to do what B would not otherwise do, and A can be said to have potential power if it can be shown that A could get B to do what B would not otherwise do. We can think of two levels of potential power. In a general sense, those who have access to capacities are likely to be able to control others. This is an extremely broad conclusion for capacities, in this sense, would include almost all abilities to affect others, only some of which, in certain circumstances could be used to get B to do what B would not otherwise do. More immediately, we can think of potential power as a situation specific ability: in circumstance x, A would be likely to get B do do what B would not otherwise do. Provided that expectations of relevance and of legitimate styles of argument remain more or less constant, it would be possible to conclude that those who had access to capacities which were likely to count as resources in relation to particular kinds of dispute had potential power, at least in relation to those kinds of decision-making contexts. If there was dispute over y, and if A had more of capacity x than B (11), then A would be likely to be able to secure A's preference. Following this line of argument, those who have more of capacity x (compared with their potential opponent) have what might be described as potential power with respect to decisions y and in typical circumstances z.

It is important to be clear about the meaning of capacities if I am to reach any conclusion about the relationship between the distribution of potentially relevant capacities and the distribution of potential power. First, and as I described above, there are certain social limits to the

potential value or relevance of particular kinds of capacities. For instance, appeals to a vision of what should happen are quite ineffective if the other does not share the same definition. In comparison, material resources, which by definition allow A to directly alter B's environment without reference to B's beliefs or views, have almost unlimited potential relevance. At a very general level, different types of capacities have social qualities which determine their potential as resources and, by implication, those who have superior access to capacities with a relatively unlimited potential (eg. material resources) might be said to be in a potentially powerful position. In practice, the described use of both material and normative resources was rather more complex. To have formal access to, say, independently disposable money was not to have the right to use it as a means of securing a preference wherever theoretically possible. In the domestic context, the use of both material and normative resources appeared to be ordered by a set of conventions about appropriate styles of argument. Though I did not have enough information to explore these conventions in any detail, it was clearly necessary to take them into account when describing the reported use of such capacities as financial advantage or the ability to behave independently and against the other's wishes. Particular capacities, though potentially relevant in any number of contentious contexts, were in fact used very selectively.

This means that I would need to know about the conventions which ordered the actual use of such capacities before I could estimate their likely, if context specific, relevance, and hence before I could begin to consider the "potential power" (in the immediate sense) of those who had access to such capacities. If I had such knowledge I could conclude that superior access to certain capacities would probably allow an individual to secure (or to try to secure) their preference in cases of a particular type of domestic dispute. For example, an individual who had more independently disposable

spending money would be likely to be able to overcome opposition in cases of conflict about a matter of preference. They would have potential power with respect to certain specific issues.

However, it is not possible to leap from this position to the conclusion that certain categories of person who tend to have superior access to certain capacities (with respect to others) are likely to realise their potential power. After all, the ability to use independently disposable money is only a resource if this allows an individual to secure his/her preference in opposition to the other. Those without such means were only at a disadvantage if they were therefore unable to get their way in case of overt dispute. Furthermore, that capacity, independently disposable spending money, is only a source of potential power (in the immediate sense) if there are, or are likely to be, opposing preferences. Access to independent spending money was immaterial to those who never wanted a new coffee table, or a "better" winter coat, or whose husband never opposed such wishes (12). While I can document the distribution of capacities (and shall do so in later chapters, especially chapter 9), I have to acknowledge that there is an enormous and complex gap between potential power and its realisation in case of overt dispute. Two of the most obvious factors which order the realisation or otherwise of potential power are the respondent's preference and the nature of the opposition. Given that I cannot presume that all respondents shared the same preferences or that all faced the same type of opposition, I cannot presume that in documenting the distribution of capacities I am thereby documenting patterns of power. While a review of the distribution of capacities might allow me to conclude that certain individuals or even certain categories of person would be likely to secure their preferences, either in general or in particular circumstances, I am unable to reach any conclusions about the likely realisation of that potential on the basis of that survey alone. In sum, the above discussion of resources is valuable in as far as it draws

attention to the complexity of the relationship between potentially relevant capacities and effective resources, and the relationship between potential and actual power.

CHAPTER 4: NOTES

1. It is often difficult to identify the conceptions of resources which lie behind accounts of power, not least because different writers variously classify sub-types of power including those which are based on influence, authority, force etc. (Wrong, 1979) or choose to incorporate "power" as one amongst other methods of "significantly affecting" others. From this view, alternative methods might include, for example, authority, force, influence etc. etc. (Lasswell and Kaplan, 1950). Those who adopt the first strategy equate resources with the bases of power while those who adopt the second define different means of securing compliance with reference to different "bases" and so have no need for a separate conception of resources. I am not especially concerned to document these differences for it seems that they are essentially symptomatic of more fundamental differences in the analysts' view of power in the sense described by Lukes (Lukes, 1974).

2. If A has authority (in relation to decision x), then, as I shall use the term, B has accorded A the right to make decisions about x.

3. B may well end up doing what B would not have otherwise done because of A, or rather, because of A's status as an authoritative figure. However, to say that is not to say that B necessarily ends up doing what is against B's interests because of A's authority. Relations of authority do not necessarily equal relations of power if power relations are defined in terms of A's ability to get B to do what's not in B's interests. Similarly, relations of authority do not necessarily equate with relations of power if power relations are defined in terms of A's ability to get B to do what B would not otherwise do. After all, B might have done x regardless of A's authority. Relations of authority are therefore neither the same as, nor necessarily opposed to those of power unless, as Bachrach and Baratz argue, the very fact of their legitimacy precludes incorporation in an oppositional account of power. Rather, relations of authority generate capacities which might, or might not be used to further particular

interests.

4. Bachrach and Baratz suggest that capacities only have effect as resources if the following conditions are met "the person threatened is aware of what is expected of him.... the threatened sanction is actually regarded as a deprivation by the person who is so threatened" and the person threatened is "fearful that A will deprive him of a value or values which he regards more highly than those which would have been achieved by noncompliance" (Bachrach and Baratz, 1970, p23 and p24).

5. I have defined resources as capacities which were "expected to allow" A to secure A's preference so as not to distinguish between the threat of a sanction and its actual application. As can clearly get Bs to do what Bs would not otherwise do "even in circumstances where those who "threaten" the sanctions [ie. As] have not actually invoked them" (Bachrach and Baratz, 1970, p26). At a more general level, capacities can be seen as means which might conceivably allow A to get B... whatever the particular circumstances of that event.

6. Some capacities were potentially relevant (in the immediate sense) in relation to a range of different types of conflict. In addition, there was evidence that different sections of the sample adopted different styles of argument and so drew upon different resources in relation to otherwise similar types of conflict.

7. Dobash and Dobash write "Most women do not tell anyone when their husbands first begin to slap, shove, and hit them, and in our sample over half also remained silent when the beatings became more systematic and severe." (Dobash and Dobash, 1980, p165). There was no reason to suppose that I would uncover the use of such violent strategies even if they were in fact adopted. A similar silence was to be expected in relation to the use of sex as a means of control.

8. Dobash and Dobash use the term "authority" rather loosely. Authority, if defined as the legitimate right to decide, cannot be maintained with the

aid of physical force.

9. This point is often overlooked by writers who presume that those who have formal access to money also have the right to spend that money.

(Pahl, 1980; Yeandle, 1984; Chesler, 1976; Hunt, 1980; Stamp, 1985)

10. As described in chapter 3, I shall use the terms H1, H2 and H3 to locate respondents in terms of their housing category.

11. A's capacity is, of course, judged relative to that of B and not with reference to some absolute measure.

12. Of course, A might never get as far as wanting a coffee table because that was "known" to be an unrealistic preference given the current financial position. However, I cannot explore the processes which structure the creation of overtly recognised wants without also making certain presumptions about what people would want if it were not for certain apparently fixed features of the social and material world. In other words, I would need to presume that A would want a new coffee table if A had the money and if that were seen to be a realistic proposition. As I have said earlier, I do not intend to take such steps or to make such definitions of my respondent's "real interests".

PART 2

INTRODUCTION TO PART 2

In this short introduction I want to relate the themes developed in chapters 3 and 4 to those which are the subject of chapters 5 to 10. So far I have tried to present respondents' descriptions of overtly contentious decision-making in such a way as to develop an abstract account of the relationship between types of conflict, types of resources and types of decision. Essentially, I have argued that perceptions of choice set the scene for particular types of conflict, in relation to which particular types of capacities were likely to count as relevant resources. Accordingly, initial perceptions of choice type structured the course of associated conflict and hence of particular applications of power. In addition, certain beliefs and expectations served to order described perceptions of choice such that the chances of debate, let alone dispute, were minimised. For example, patterns of authority (informed by beliefs about family and gender appropriate behaviour) bracketed together otherwise debatable domestic issues, removed them from family view and so ordered both the occurrence and the form of family argument. The case, then, is one about the structure of conflict and about the relationship between the elements of perception of choice, course of conflict and definition of resources. I have tried to explore the general role of beliefs and expectations about family life and to examine the theoretical significance of the respondent's initial perception of choice, but as yet I have had no need to describe the content of those beliefs or perceptions.

The next four chapters are designed to address those issues of content with reference to the case presented in the preceding discussion. They are informed by the belief that a review of described perceptions of choice, along with a survey of relevant expectations of proper family behaviour, will reveal something of the world in which domestic decision-making disputes do and do not develop. By implication, variations in reported

perception of choice reflect variation in the context of power. For if x was seen to be a matter of preference, and if there was disagreement, then capacities a and b would be likely to count as resources. Alternatively, if x was seen to be an argument about appropriate behaviour then capacities c and d would be likely to count as relevant. So, the next task is to attend to respondents' perceptions of the kinds of choice associated with a set of common decisions and to describe their definition of the proper allocation of domestic responsibility, so as to map the similarities and differences in the family contexts in which conflict did and did not develop. Having outlined the theoretical importance of perceptions of choice I can now describe the substantive content of those reported perceptions.

As mentioned earlier, I chose to ask respondents about the ways in which they dealt with a series of discrete family decisions. The next four chapters provide an account of those responses under the headings of Family and Career (chapter 5), House and Home (chapter 6), Leisure (chapter 7), and Holidays (chapter 8). Discussion of respondents' accounts of such clear cut decision-making is followed by an analysis of interview material relating to the allocation and control of areas of domestic responsibility. Chapter 9 reviews decision-making practices and patterns of responsibility associated with family finance while chapter 10 documents the ways in which different sections of the sample allocated areas of domestic responsibility and so demarcated areas of normally taken-for-granted decision-making.

In the first part of the thesis I have developed an account of the relationship between types of conflict, types of decision-making and types of resources. I have consequently had no need to systematically describe variation in the responses provided by different sections of the sample. However, that variation is critical in chapters 5 to 10. Although I

completed and transcribed 64 interviews, 12 of these were "duplicates" in the sense that I had already met the quota of two for that particular category. I excluded these 12 duplicates from all percentage calculations, though I drew upon all 64 transcriptions when selecting illustrative quotations. Of course, there were also times when only a sub-section of the comparative sample of 52 had first-hand experience of a particular decision. In these cases I have stated the size of the relevant sub-sample.

The following chapters, then, are concerned with variation: the task was to find out how respondents' perceptions of choice or beliefs about proper family behaviour differed, and to explore the areas of overlap and similarity. As described in chapter 2, the sample was structured with reference to the variables of housing (which notionally stood for material difference), child-related age, and wife's employment status. In principle I was able to order my analysis with respect to some or all of these dimensions. In practice I chose to review the interview material with reference to "housing", "age" or "work" on strictly pragmatic grounds. For example, the material on decisions about furnishing and accommodation differed more dramatically with reference to the "housing" variable than with reference to wife's employment status. Chapter 6, on decisions about house and home, is structured accordingly. In comparison, chapters 7 and 8, on holidays and leisure, include sections on child-related age differences as well as on those related to housing categories.

Whatever the method of organising particular chapters or particular sections of chapters, it was important to locate respondents in terms of their position in the sampling frame. I shall reference the illustrative quotations used in the next four chapters with the aid of the following terms (see chapter 2 for fuller details).

H1 = respondents in the Housing 1 category

H2 = respondents in the Housing 2 category

H3 = respondents in the Housing 3 category

No children, younger = childless respondents under the age of 35

No children, older = childless respondents over the age of 35

Pre-school age = respondents whose youngest child was of pre-school age

School age = respondents whose youngest child was of school age

16+ = respondents whose youngest child was over 16

Where relevant I have also noted the wife's employment status, though most quotations are simply concluded with a reference of the following type:
[H3, no children, younger], [H2, 16+], etc.

To sum up, chapters 3 and 4 highlighted the importance of initial perception of choice as a factor which orders the course of domestic decision-related conflict. The typologies of kinds of choice, kinds of decision, kinds of conflict and kinds of resources reflect that informing conception. The value of ordering analysis of overt conflict with reference to that theme will become clearer in the following chapters which borrow the same scheme of classification but use it to order analysis of uncontentious decision-making. The argument is that variations in described perceptions of choice, and in conceptions of appropriate allocations of domestic responsibility, reflect variations in the domestic worlds which structure the course and occurrence of domestic dispute. Chapters 5 to 9 are designed to document those variations.

CHAPTER 5

FAMILY AND CAREER

This chapter examines the interview material which concerned decisions about family and about career. Such decisions had untold consequences in terms of many other aspects of the respondents' domestic lives and so provide a convenient starting point for the following analyses of less evidently influential types of family decision-making. Essentially, the chapter documents respondents' perceptions of choice associated first with decisions about having children and second, with decisions about paid work. As I shall suggest below, the literature on parenthood, work, and especially on womens' work rarely attends to the associated decision-making processes. This chapter focusses on these issues, and sets out to explore variations in the perceptions of choice described by different sections of the sample. The aim is to discover how different groups perceived the "same" issues, on the grounds that those who believe their choices to be either "open", "limited" or "closed" would (if there were any disagreement) become engaged with a correspondingly different sort of conflict, and would, furthermore, count different sorts of capacities as relevant resources. More pragmatically, I have chosen to combine analysis of decisions about family planning with discussion of employment related choices because it seemed that both were informed by a similar vision of a "proper" family career. Part of the task, therefore, is to explore the meanings of a "proper" family life cycle and to consider the ways in which those visions variously affected choices made by husband and wife.

Curiously, the relevant literature on parenthood, motherhood, family planning, paid employment, dual career families, womens' working lives, and husbands' careers, very rarely attends to the question of how individuals come to be in the position of working mother, factory worker, doctor,

manager etc. etc. Rather, the common task of this descriptive work is to explain or understand how individuals cope with their current position as incumbent of one or more of those roles (1). Attention has mostly been directed towards the kind of question: "How do married women workers/pregnant women/managers/factory workers/doctors etc. manage their domestic lives?", rather than towards the question "What were the decisions involved in becoming a pregnant woman, a doctor, a factory worker etc.?" (2) Accordingly, relatively little of that literature directly relates discussion of domestic decision-making.

However, in as far as writers such as Oakley (1979), Graham (1977), Pollert (1981), or Callan and Ardener (1984) attend to the ways in which domestic strategies are informed by underlying ideologies of family and work, they give some insight into the world in which those unexplored decisions must have been made. Thus, in my own research, respondents' decisions to try to conceive, and subsequent decisions about trying to have more children, were clearly ordered by a set of beliefs about the nature of a proper family. Equally, choices about changing jobs, stopping work, and returning to it, were described with reference to a notion of normal career, and, more important perhaps, with reference to a notion of the relationship between that normal career and a normal family life. There is, therefore, some connection between the existing literature and the material presented in this chapter in the sense that both explore the relationship between described or observed behaviour and an informing culture or ideology (3).

I shall consider respondents' accounts of decisions about starting a family and about final family size in the first two sections of the chapter. Decisions about employment, about changing, stopping and returning to work were apparently informed by a related but different set of generalised expectations about family life. These are the subject of the third and fourth sections which explore the relationship between conceptions of

family obligation and the kinds of choice seen to exist in relation to decisions about the wife's and the husband's employment. Throughout the chapter I shall be concerned to explore the detail of the described decision-making processes and, at the same time, to document the beliefs and expectations which variously informed the choices made by different sections of the sample.

1. THE DECISION TO START A FAMILY

No one can decide to start a family in the knowledge that they can and will consequently have children. In this section I shall review respondents' accounts of what were really decisions to take all possible measures to maximise (or minimise) the chances of conception. Of course, those who wanted a family, as well as those who wished to remain childless, were unable to predict whether or not they would be able to realise their goal (4). Respondents who turned out to be unable to have children had therefore made just the same decisions as those who actually produced a child. Though there was always an element of uncertainty, choices were made "as if" the outcome was predictable. Given this "as if" context the decision-making alternatives were clear. The couple simply had to decide whether or not to try to have a child. Those who decided to try then had to make choices about the exact timing of that attempt.

The two key questions were therefore a) whether or not to try to have a child and b) when to try to have it. The respondents described only two different perceptions of choice about these issues. They either chose to (or chose not to) start a family or, more commonly, they simply presumed (ie. they did not believe that there were any alternatives) that they would become parents. Similarly, they either "planned" when to have their first child or they discovered that they had "no choice" about that issue.

There were, therefore, four described positions.

1. There was "real" choice about whether or not to have a child and "real"

choice about when to have it.

2. There was "real" choice about whether or not to have a child though the timing came as a surprise.

3. There was "no choice" about whether or not to have a child (ie. respondents simply presumed that they would) though the actual event was deliberately planned.

4. There was "no choice" about whether or not to have a child (either respondent's presumed that they would, or they found that they couldn't) and "no choice" about when to have it. (ie. they "became" pregnant.)

The described positions can be presented in diagrammatic form:

FIGURE 6

	DECISION TO HAVE A CHILD	DECISION ABOUT <u>WHEN</u> TO HAVE A CHILD
POSITION 1	CHOICE	CHOICE
POSITION 2	CHOICE	NO CHOICE
POSITION 3	NO CHOICE	CHOICE
POSITION 4	NO CHOICE	NO CHOICE

I shall consider the characteristics of each position in turn.

1. Perceptions of "real" choice about both whether or not to have a child and about when to have it

Only eleven respondents (all H1s) said that they had any real doubt about whether or not to start a family: the rest of the sample simply presumed that they would. Those eleven therefore faced the unusual prospect of actually choosing between what were seen as the real alternatives of childlessness and parenthood. Six of the eleven decided that they would

try to have a family while the other five concluded that they would prefer to remain childless. The six who positively chose to have a child necessarily believed that they were able to control their fertility. Because they made the "in principle" decision to have a child from a baseline of "chosen" childlessness, they conflated the issues of when and whether to have a family. In other words, to decide to have a child was also usually a decision to try to do so now, as in the following example.

"It was a joint decision, yes, we did think about it, we didn't just rush into it... we did think about it and we decided that we did want a child, so we had Anna. We just went ahead."

[H1, school age]

Four of these six decided to alter their default couple status before it was emotionally and/or physically "too late". As they described it, the prospect of remaining childless "forced" a decision about both issues.

"I think if we'd have left it much longer we wouldn't have had a family at all because we'd have decided that we enjoyed our lifestyle too much to give it up"

[H1, no children, younger]

"I was 30 when I had my first child which was quite late to start a family. He would have been quite happy to just have gone on and had none because we had been married 6 years and had a very good time and we had done a lot of travelling and we had a very good social life. I think he was quite, you know, it was a bit of a shock when he discovered that I thought that I'd like all that to come to an end."

[H1, 16+]

Though all claimed that the decision to start a family was a "matter of preference", and hence one which was potentially contentious, none described any real disagreement. The decision to have children was made in a social context which positively favoured that choice, and while a couple of husbands were reported to have had slightly different preferences (both were more in favour of the childless option) neither attempted to interfere with what seems to have been seen as essentially their wife's decision.

"Well we weren't going to have any children er and then I decided that perhaps we ought to, but we decided that we'd only have one which we've got. We aren't having any more...I just felt that it was a, sort of an experience that seemed sort of a shame to miss out on really er so we thought we'd just have one. I think he would have been quite happy to have done so so it was really me but he is not er, he is a good father."

[H1, pre-school age]

Those five who "deliberately" chose not to have a child had made one of two types of decision. One respondent described what was seen as a permanent and principled decision in favour of remaining childless.

"The only reason that I'd have to stop work would be if I had any children but I don't intend to have any, so really as far as I am concerned I am working for all of my life unless anything critical came up like I was put out of work or something. But we've decided that we aren't going to have any children, so I won't have to give up for that reason."

[H1, no children, younger]

The other four had made this "decision" without ever having reached such an "in principle" conclusion. This sub-group simply never arrived at a point at which the the "family" alternative seemed more attractive than the continued state of childlessness. Two of the four claimed that they had put off the decision until it was "too late" and so, in a sense, had "no choice" about the matter. That "no choice" was, of course, the product of a sequence of "real" choices, each of which had favoured the childless option.

"Well that's something we've never been able to make our mind up about, that's why we haven't got any,...I think once you get past the early 30s you've left it too late. I used to think that I wanted children but at first I couldn't think how they would fit into Brian's life. He's not very patient with children. I think he'd love the idea of a son to teach things to but I don't honestly think he could tolerate all the trouble that children cause,...I just don't think he'd adapt to it...I couldn't, I just couldn't make my mind up about it, er when I was about 21, 22 I was dying to have children, to get married and have kids ...I loved the thought of it, but as you get older I suppose you get sort of set in your ways....I don't think we ever discussed it [before marriage] it was just afterwards and we couldn't make up our minds. We always said that it would be a great help if birth control wasn't ever introduced because then if it happened it happened and if it didn't it didn't you know when you've actually got a decision in your hands you think 'Oh dear'...I mean I like children but I've never thought that that was the only thing in life."

[H1, no children, older]

The above example illustrates the arguments and counter arguments typically advanced by those who had so far put off the decision to start a family (in effect, these respondents decided not to decide) while the previous quotations illustrate the views of respondents who had made what they saw as a rather more positive decision about their family planning. In all cases the respondents believed themselves to have personal control over their family or childless status.

2. Perceptions of "real" choice about whether or not to have a child, but "no choice" about when to have it

This was an unlikely combination. Most of those who claimed to have made a positive choice to have children believed that they could control the timing of that event. In any case, many of the positive "in principle" choices to have children were made in relation to some kind of imminent deadline. Only two respondents had definitely chosen to have children but had been so unspecific about the timing that the fact of their pregnancy was reported to have come as a "surprise", as in the following example.

"I decided that I wanted to stop taking the pill because I'd been taking it for 10 years and Dave agreed with me and we weren't entirely happy with other forms of contraceptive so by a gradual sort of process of elimination er the baby [the respondent was pregnant at the time of the interview] came along and er we weren't entirely surprised although sometimes its difficult to anticipate. It wasn't a conscious decision and in a way it happened sort of slightly askew you know it wasn't entirely the best timing."
[H1, no children, younger]

3. "No choice" about starting a family but "choice" about the timing

Those who presumed that they would have children usually had a fairly broad idea about when they would begin their family. Decisions about timing were apparently made with reference to a model life plan which set out what "ought" to happen, in what order, and by when. Though the content of the models varied, their effect was the same. All served to specify conformity and deviance and to mark out the points at which controlling pressure

and/or criticism should be directed to those who had started their family either "too early" or "too late". Respondents from all housing groups believed, for example, that couples should spend some time together before embarking on full family life. All those in the H1 and some of those in the H2 category expected husband and wife to wait until they "knew each other better" before having their first child. This was supposed to take something between three and five years, as described below.

"Certainly I wouldn't want them for a few years yet, we have only been married for 2 years. I think you need time to get to know each other. Not that we don't already but I'd like to enjoy a few more years of just us being together I think, and be able to do things that we obviously won't be able to do together when we've got children. That is the main reason."

[H1, no children, younger]

"I think we probably assumed at that stage that we would have children eventually although not in the immediate future I think we thought of it as a long term decision and certainly we wanted to get fairly well established. I think that it can be very tricky suddenly being a threesome before you have got used to being a couple er... I do really feel that it is important that you should establish a relationship with your partner before you start introducing somebody else into it. I know its not always a matter of choice but it can be nowadays."

[H1, no children, older]

Many of the remaining H2s and nearly all the H3s also expected to wait before they had a family. However, these respondents believed that couples should not start a family until they were materially, as opposed to emotionally, established. The length of the waiting period partly depended on the time it took to acquire a suitably furnished home and, perhaps, some capital. Because the decision to start a family was also a decision to sacrifice the wife's wage, aspiring parents had to be able to stand that drop in income and yet maintain what was counted as an adequate standard of living. These demands produced a more or less precise definition of the point at which it was "possible" to have a child. As the following examples illustrate, the exact meaning of "being able to afford" varied from case to case. However, many of the H2 and H3 respondents presumed that prospective parents would have to save up for a family.

"Ian is saving his [wage] for the future when I leave work when he takes the mortgage on he will have to reduce it a bit, you know with

only the one wage coming in er and well it will be a struggle, we are trying to save it up and Ian is working out budgets and what we will need. I think we should get by. I think we'll have to cut back a lot,..but next year we should be able to [start a family], by next year."

[H2, no children, younger]

"Well at the moment we are saving for the rest of the stereo, then I would like a colour telly before I finish work,...I don't know when I'm going to finish work, I'm not very good at saving,..but we've talked about it, we've discussed it and we've decided that well we've got a rough idea [when to start trying]. It's September at the moment."

[H3, no children, younger]

Both those who waited until they "knew each other better" and those who felt that they had to save up before having a child were highly critical of people who "rushed in" and started a family before they were "ready". Those who waited "too long" were subject to just as much disapproval. Several currently childless respondents were aware that others had concluded that they had established a home "by now" and hence expected them to have started a family.

"Well I think you are always under a social pressure aren't you. People look at you and think why haven't they got any, how old is she? Ooh poor thing perhaps she can't have any er I suppose you always get that don't you from everybody. I must say our parents have never been that bad. You get some that are don't you. I mean some parents do, but ours have just let us get on with it I suppose, hoping that eventually we will [start a family]."

[H1, no children, younger]

"There's none from him [husband] but my mother keeps on. She always says 'Have you got anything to tell me dear, you are looking a little plump and I do want to be a grandmother before I die'. There could be nothing more direct. And my grandmother, she is another one she is always saying 'You'd make a good mother, you are the mothering type'. So I don't know, there is a lot of pressure from the family, but not so much at work. I think if I lived closer [to family] I'd have to get cracking but I can fend them off for an hour or so every month."

[H1, no children, younger]

Providing that both husband and wife expected to have a child within the agreed period (ie. not "too early" or "too late"), the decision about actual timing was seen to be relatively unimportant and was usually left up to the wife. Most said that they had picked one moment rather than another on the grounds that it seemed to be a good point at which to interrupt or finish their career. The following examples were typical.

"We always said 2 or 3 years, and I'm getting peeved off at work, that is one reason, I hate work."

[H3, no children, younger]

"We just drift on because I enjoy my work, my friend's just had one [child] but she never liked her job."

[H2, no children, younger]

In conclusion, expectations of "proper" timing were usually vague enough to leave the couple with a "real" decision about precisely when to begin their family. While that choice was seen to be a matter of preference it was also seen to be a relatively unimportant decision and one which could be left up to the wife.

4. Perceptions of "no choice" about whether or not to have children, and

"no choice" about when to have them

Respondents who had no choice about either issue presumed that they would have children at some time and had then found that "time was running out", that they "were" pregnant, or that they could not conceive. Those who claimed that their children "just came along" or that they came as a "surprise" concluded that they had been unable to determine the outcome of the decision about whether or not to start a family and/or the decision about when to start trying. Given the inevitable element of uncertainty, even those who set out to maximise the chances of a pregnancy were "surprised" when they actually conceived. The retrospective perceptions of family "planning" varied depending on the degree to which events went according to schedule. For example, several respondents, including the two quoted below, argued that their children were not "planned" although they had taken steps to maximise the chances of conception.

"Well neither of them were planned. We'd only just moved in here actually. We had decided we were going to have them. I wanted them I think a bit more than Tony did but we could have done with another year. We decided to try for a family after Christmas and I caught on in September so I wasn't...I'd come off the pill and everything but it was a bit I don't know it was a bit of a shock, but it didn't really matter."

[H2, pre-school age]

"Er right from the start we said we were going for a family as soon as possible but we didn't expect it to happen so soon and we got married in August and I was expecting him in November it all happened so quick...No, how people can plan their families I don't know because we couldn't."

[H3, pre-school age]

Though surprised, this group retained at least some belief in the theoretical possibility of family planning. Respondents who failed to conceive in the time "expected" had to revise their whole notion of "decision-making" and were forced to re-examine what had been a taken-for-granted expectation that they would have a family soon after they had decided that that was what they wanted. Because the planning and decision-making were so clearly separated from an essentially unpredictable outcome, the event, when and if it happened, was almost always seen to be accidental. In this context, conception was both unexpected and yet planned; the greater the deviation from the plan the greater the eventual amazement.

"It was one of those things, he went, he was in the Navy and of course we hadn't had a ..We were married 10 years before we had Jennifer and er as I said he was abroad and I wrote and said I would go for the doctor. He said 'No, let nature take its course'.. Well when he came back from abroad nothing happened then but it happened on the next leave and er so that is how it happened. I never had any more before nor since, never any more...I wouldn't have minded a boy but you know we got one [child] and I think I was lucky to get one. You see Jennifer, now she has been married 12 years and she's no family. She's off a family that haven't had families you see, two of my aunts haven't had a family.

[H2, 16+]

Most of those who failed to fulfil their family plans according to schedule presented themselves as unlucky or unfortunate because they were unable to control the outcome of their family decision-making in what they believed to be the "normal" way. Others were less concerned about what they came to see as their lack of choice. Indeed, some had "deliberately" abandoned the notion of rational planning and had chosen to leave the "decision" up to nature. These respondents may have taken just the same actions/inactions as those who saw themselves to be positively trying to have a child. The point is that their perceptions of choice differed. Some of those who "let

nature take its course" claimed that they had chosen to forego what they saw as their freedom to decide exactly when to start a family and had so resolved the dilemma of when and whether or not to give up their childless existence. The following quotations provide an illustration of this position.

"We keep considering it and we keep putting it off. I was brought up to a career..Well I've got quite a successful one, you know, I've got quite a way. It is a lot to give up er, actually making the decision...A happy accident would be nice, but to actually force it, but I wouldn't be disappointed or upset, just rather pleased..I think we'll try, well not really try, just wait and see, then you don't actually really decide do you?"

[H2, no children, younger]

"Yes, that [the decision to have children] is sort of fairly mutual, the door is neither open or shut, its ajar. We'll just wait and see what happens. As I say the door is ajar, so I suppose we'd cope because that is when you sort of, I mean you sort of lose your independence. Especially the woman, and unless she's got a good career that is sort of worth keeping on so she can sort of earn lots of money to pay for nannies or things like that...I mean if I had a wonderful career I don't know whether that door would be ajar or not I really don't know, its difficult to say."

[H2, no children, younger]

Others had simply "waited to see" in the expectation that "something would happen". The decision to leave it up to nature, or to not take all possible precautions against becoming pregnant was as much a decision as any other although, in this context, all outcomes were, by definition, a "surprise" (5). Those who claimed that they had decided to "wait and see" usually chose to abandon their family planning responsibilities in a context in which the "accident", if it happened, would be "happy". In other words, these respondents, including the one quoted below, had chosen when to be "negligent", if not when to try to have a child.

"No, no that wasn't planned, no neither of them were planned. They just appeared...We weren't in that situation really well with Brian being in the RAF we knew that if we did have a family, we lived in a flat initially which we knew we couldn't have children in but we knew that if we did have children then we could have a quarter. So I mean we, there were no worries about that. We had no worries about setting up a home, or no worries about anything really I mean in that sense we weren't setting up a home. I mean otherwise we would have been a little bit more worried about having a family but really it didn't bother us."

[H2, school age]

In comparison, respondents who had what they described as "total accidents" found themselves at one extreme of the "no choice"/choice spectrum. This group "became" pregnant at a time when they were trying not to have a child. Only H3 respondents and the older H1s and H2s described such complete surprises. All of these expected to have a family at some point but found that the timing came as a more or less inconvenient "shock". These two respondents describe such an experience.

"Well I caught on. Well I mean we didn't have to get married you know but I caught on with him [son] in the March and when I told him he..we were just living together and he said er I says to him if he wanted to go he could. Anyway we decided to get married in March so we did."
[H3, pre-school age]

"No there was no decision. They came along. No, they came along that's maybe why the great big gap in the middle of them. No, really, if the truth be known we never planned any of them. They came along and so they were to be looked after and that was it. I did my job but I won't say that I ..er I loved them that was it but I've never considered myself to be cut out to be a mum"
[H3, 16+]

Some expected to have such an accident (6). This group did not believe that they could control their family planning such that they could realistically select options and expect to realise those goals and so felt unable to make decisions about what was seen to be an essentially unpredictable event.

So far, I have considered accounts of "no choices" which were associated with some kind of "accident". However, five respondents observed that they had "no choice" about when to start their family yet believed that they were in complete control of their family planning. This group concluded that they had "no choice" but to have a child straight away because "time was running out". Either the couple had reached what they saw as a "now or never" crisis or, as in the following example, felt that they "needed" to produce a child of their own as soon as possible.

"So when I got with Pete [husband] and Gary was four and a half when I had Mark, and he has children from his first marriage, so it was, with me losing the other baby [second child of her first marriage] and with him [first son] at the age he was we more or less had to have a child straight away you know, after we were married. We obviously wanted one between us so...."

[H3, pre-school age]

Finally, those who presumed that they would have a family but who found that they could not conceive, had "no choice" but to accept that they had selected an impractical option. In theory, the options of adoption and abortion might have complicated perceptions of "no choice" about the issue of when and whether or not to have a child, though not of course about when and whether or not to become pregnant. Though three of the involuntarily childless respondents had thought of trying to adopt a child, their husbands had refused to consider the idea.

In conclusion, then, most respondents presumed that they would have a child at a time when they were "ready" but before it was "too late". In this context neither the "to have or not to have", or the "when to have" a child decisions were particularly contentious. Those who deviated from the normal pattern either made an overt decision to do so (ie. they decided not to have a child or chose not to have one until x..etc) or found themselves to be the subject of a family planning "accident". All of those who believed that they were able to make definite family planning decisions and who had positively decided to have, or not to have, children (ie. those who saw the decision as a matter of preference) were from the H1 section of the sample. At the other end of the scale, those who said that they had "no choice" about whether or when to start a family were from the older sections of the sample and/or from H3. As will be seen in the next section, these perceptions of control parallel those described in relation to decisions about final family size. In that context too, H1s typically believed that they could "design" their family whilst H3s were characteristically convinced that family planning decisions were more or

less beyond their control.

2. DECISIONS ABOUT FAMILY SIZE

50% of the sample had more than one child and many more respondents had made an "in principle" decision to try to achieve that goal. Such expectations and desires were described by those who had already started a family as well as by those who were currently childless. Despite the inevitable uncertainty, decisions to have more than one child, like decisions to start a family, were made as if the desired outcome were more or less predictable, although the degree of anticipated predictability varied depending on the respondent's previous family planning experiences. In general, though, most respondents presumed that a family consisted of two children and most presumed that they could make family planning decisions "as if" the outcome were predictable. In this section I shall consider accounts of decisions to have what was commonly agreed to be a "normal" family of two children, and descriptions of decisions to deviate from this basic model.

Decisions to have two children

30% of H1s, 63% of H2s and 57% of H3s had or expected to have a family of two children. Even these figures under-represent the extent of the two child ideal, for some respondents had "unwillingly" produced more than two, had been unable to have children at all, or had been unable to have a second child although that was their aim. Most parents argued that they had "no choice" but to try to have a second child since it was necessary to protect their first from being spoiled and/or lonely. Parents were presumed to be dedicated to their child's welfare and were therefore expected to try to save it from both these "unpleasant" fates. The following examples illustrate such beliefs.

"Two not one, no, because it would be lonely, twins preferably, I fancy twins and there's twins on both sides of the family. That'd get it all over with in one go."

[H3, no children, younger]

"Two or three, I don't just want one, I think they tend to get spoiled if they are only ones. No I'd not have an only one."

[H2, no children, younger]

"Oh no I didn't want him to be an only child, no, no. I always had brothers and sisters and I felt when he'd got to school and they all had brothers and sisters, it would be hard for him to accept that he didn't have anybody.."

[H3, pre-school]

Only three respondents re-considered their initially taken for granted expectation of a two child family and so had any real doubt (and hence any "real" choice) about whether or not to try to have another baby. All reviewed the position after the wife had an especially difficult time giving birth to the first child.

"Well we'd decided to have two but I think we will have this one first and see how things go. I can't say I've enjoyed being pregnant but I might feel different in two years time."

[H3, no children, younger - but pregnant at the time of the interview]

"We both decided when I was having Peter that we wanted another one, er, and it was my decision to have Sarah you know. It was after I had Peter, I had a rough time with him. Then when he was about three I decided to try for Sarah. He [husband] said he wasn't bothered either way because I'd had such a rough time with Peter. He wasn't bothered."

[H3, pre-school age]

Those who presumed that they would have a second child, plus those few who actually considered the only child alternative but who chose to try to have a second, then had to decide when to try to increase their family. Decisions about spacing, like decisions about when to start a family, were informed by a set of conventions about appropriate timing. These conventions specified a fairly broad period within which parents were expected to produce their second child. Most thought that a two year gap was ideal.

"Oh yes, when he is about two, [the respondent plans to have another child]...it is nice when they are young together. I wouldn't leave it any later than that."

[H2, pre-school age]

While the ideal family models set the outside limits of a normal or proper "gap" between first and second children, there was still room for real choice about exactly when to start trying. However, providing that the parents planned to have their second child within the relevant period, the precise timing was not generally seen to be particularly important. At this stage, some respondents discovered that they could not be sure that their family plans would work out. While they had their first child according to schedule, the second did not arrive as predicted. This group, like those who had failed to start a family in the way they expected, had to revise their perception of family planning decision-making. What had been seen as a matter of preference, or taken-for-granted as a stage in a normal career, was re-defined as something about which there was really "no choice".

"It was about 18 months after we started trying for her I took that long to catch on with her. We'd started giving up we said 'Oh we are just going to have one, and that's it' you know, and the next thing I fell pregnant with her. But we were happy when it happened and we were even more happy when we found out that it was a girl."

[H3, pre-school age]

Finally, a few of the older respondents and the H3s were as surprised by the "arrival" of their second child as they had been by the first.

In conclusion, decisions to have a second child were typically made with reference to a notion of the proper family. This consisted of a mother a father and two children, one girl, and one boy, born about two years apart. Decisions to have more than two children and decisions to have only one were described with reference to this model.

Decisions to have more than two children

The contexts in which this decision was made (both "in principle" and in detail) varied so widely that it would be impractical to document the associated perceptions of choice. However, different sections of the sample advanced characteristically different reasons for having more than

the "normal" quota of two children. H2 and H3 respondents were particularly concerned to have both a son and a daughter. The fact of having either two sons or two daughters therefore constituted a "good reason" for having a third in the hope of properly "completing" the family. This is the view advanced by the respondents quoted below.

"If it's a girl [planned second child] then that would be it. If it is another little boy then we might have one more because I think I'd like a little girl. Yes I think we'd probably try for a girl."
[H2, pre-school age]

"We had two girls and then we had Julie who I'd hoped would be a boy at the time and it was a girl. He said 'That is it, we could go on forever like this'...waiting for a boy because I'd have liked four then."
[H1, 16+]

Those whose first and second children were of different sexes had achieved what was seen as the ideal. If they went on to have another child that was, from this view, a matter of personal preference rather than a kind of family "duty". These "lucky" respondents, as well as those H1s who were not especially concerned about the sex of their children, were simply able to choose whether or not to have a larger family. In these cases, the husband tended to go along with what was presented as the wife's preference provided that the couple agreed that the option was financially viable. In this context, reported debate centered on the question of the financial sacrifice involved. Three H1 respondents gave priority to the idea of "the family" and argued, as in the following case, that money should be a secondary consideration.

"Oh yes it's a lot of work. Yes. Oh but I loved it. I would have had six if the economics were alright. Yes, I like large numbers..it's a lot of hard work, physical hard work, not much sleep at nights ...but the finances are only a small part, finances are the thing yes but you know you sort of think of the finances but you adjust your lifestyle."
[H1, school age]

Others were less convinced of their ability to manage without also infringing what they saw as their existing children's rights. In this context family planning decisions were effectively decisions about the meaning of appropriate child care and about the family's financial

priorities. Interestingly, this financial theme ordered the decisions of those in the H1 as well as the H3 categories. Consider, for example, these two cases.

"[money]....thats the main reason why [why she'd not have any more children]. I'd rather educate them privately because you can be a bit more sure of that. If they were at a state school you'd be able to move them if it wasn't a very good one..but I'm a bit torn because I'd really like quite a lot of children. I'd really like four children and I feel this really strongly. It seems to be really sort of deep well, we could manage to ... particularly if the children went to local schools and were day children. It is a lot cheaper and also it means that you've still got an influence on them...so I feel really that the sort of not so grand private school in York when we live so near would be perfect. If Queen Annes goes comprehensive and the staff stay on, if it is a good comprehensive then perhaps we could have four children and send them all there. I can't see us managing to afford to send four to all private schooling..we might manage to pay for two so I must admit but I think ones gut reaction to have more of a family is a stronger more important thing because schooling isn't just going to private schools it is how much the parents put into it as well and I think unless you're very unlucky with the state school you can influence your child quite a bit."
[H1, pre-school age]

"No thats it for now, isn't it? Taking everything into account, financially, and our freedom isn't it? If we had another we'd be back where we were before. No, I want to give them the best we can and go on holiday and things like that so no."
[H3, pre-school age]

Though the specific meaning of "afford", "reasonable sacrifice", and "adequate child care" varied, all sections of the sample expected to make decisions about having "extra" children with reference to such considerations. The key issue was the welfare of the child. Those who wanted more than two children and who were able to make what they saw as a planned choice had to balance "family" and "financial" costs. Because it was wrong to let the children "suffer", family ambitions could only be appropriately fulfilled if there was proper financial backing. However, some respondents had "no choice" and went on to have more than two children whatever their financial circumstances. Several of the older H3 respondents expected that they would have large families whether or not they could "afford" it in the sense described above. In this case, for instance, the respondent simply observes that she "had" her family, which happened to consist of seven children.

"I've had five girls and then my two boys, I've worked all my life,...every time I was having a baby I stopped off and had me baby and then went back you see....I haven't had a very exciting life but I've enjoyed it.. you make the best of it dont you ..I've had my family they grow up and you get your enjoyment out of them and then you've got your grandbairns and you enjoy them its like having your family all over again watching them grow up...I wouldn't be without them they are good to me and if I need anything they are there."
[H3, 16+]

These H3 respondents never faced a decision about whether or not to have more children, and hence never had to make a choice about the nature of their family and financial priorities. They just had to cope as best they could.

In conclusion, most decisions to have more than two children followed a sequence of related decisions about family finance and sacrifice. The notion of acceptable sacrifice was critical. Though I cannot compare different conceptions of what respondents believed they could, or could not, "afford", it was clear that different sections of the sample had different family priorities. Two respondents had, for example, given priority to the "need" to try to produce the "missing" son or daughter and had modified their perceptions of what they could afford accordingly. Others made what was seen to be an essentially financial calculation. H1s mostly concluded that they could have as many or as few children as they wanted, while H2s and H3s observed that their family plans were positively constrained by their present material circumstance.

Decisions to have only one child

Five H1s chose to have no more than one child, as did one H2 respondent. Four explained that they felt unable to bring up more than one child in the way that they would like and, as in the next example, presented their decision with reference to a notion of the child's welfare.

"Once Helen arrived, we felt that we really had to give her the best life that we could so therefore we felt we could never really afford to have any more because Ian's salary has never been particularly high er,..especially in the forces so er we felt that it really wouldn't be

fair to herit's a big thing it is and they can be very expensive as they get older. I feel they become social outcasts if they've not got you know they want the same as everybody else... if they've not got a bike, if they've not got whatever the other kids have got and if they haven't got the frilly petticoats and the ...you know its important to them and I wouldn't want her to think she was an odd one out."

[H2, school age]

"We'd like him [son] to have a good start. I mean you can't rely on er I mean I havn't been in touch with the schools but I mean its such a waste of time going to er well I don't know about it here but I mean as I say if you have to if you want them to have a good start in life you have to pay don't you.."

[H1, pre-school age]

In both these cases the principle that parents should give their child as good a start in life as possible outweighed the perceived disadvantages of spoiling and loneliness. The conceptions of welfare which informed the decision to have just one were clearly different from those which influenced decisions to have two children. The idea of spoiling (being both a social and a financial issue) highlights the contradiction. Those who chose to have two children were able to ensure that financial resources were not concentrated on one child to its social disadvantage. From the "one child" point of view, such a strategy worked to the financial disadvantage of both. Though they had to share (which was "good"), each got less than it would have done if it had been an only child (which was "bad"). It seems, then, that the parents of a single child felt obliged to either increase their family or to ensure that they had no more children depending on their interpretation of the child's welfare. Only two respondents, both H1s, advanced what they presented as an alternative "selfish" argument in favour of having just one child.

"I don't think so [she doesn't think they will have any more children]. I intend returning to work and that is very important to me. If I'm seriously considering continuing my career I don't think I would really be able to arrange it successfully... It is a selfish decision to make but I mean I know families with two or three children where it has proved more than difficult [for the wife to continue her career]."

[H1, no children, younger - but pregnant at the time of the interview]

Both these H1 respondents were unwilling to give up the time and energy which would be required to bring up another child and decided to limit

their family on these grounds.

Decisions about having children and about family size

Although respondents' models of a proper family career varied and although some were more flexible than others, all implied an ideal sequence: marriage, a proper gap, the birth of the first child, another proper gap, followed by the birth of the second child. Choices in line with this model were often so taken-for-granted that they barely figured as genuinely debatable issues. Most respondents simply presumed that their family careers would follow this or some very similar pattern. Accounts of deviation from such a sequence, and hence of "real" decision making, were presented with reference to the normal model, and, in particular with reference to the informing themes of selfishness and of the welfare of the child. The descriptions offered by those who finally decided that they ought to start a family, like those of the few who chose not to become parents, were coloured by the notion that the decision to remain childless was, simultaneously, a selfish decision and a decision to deny oneself the pleasures of parenthood. "Selfishness" was also a theme in reports of those who had chosen to have only one child on the grounds that they simply did not want a larger family. In this context, the charge of selfishness was related to equally prevalent claims about the welfare of the child. As I have shown, interpretations of the meaning of welfare varied, some producing "no choice" but to have another child, others leaving just as little choice in the matter of limiting the family. Either way this issue ordered respondents' definitions of possible and viable family planning options, and, as I shall suggest in the next section, of possible and viable employment opportunities.

Though the notion of the ideal two child family and the less specific informing conceptions of the welfare of the child and of individual

selfishness were common and generally relevant themes, detailed perceptions of choice varied depending on respondents' views of their ability to control fertility and on their previous experience of the outcome of family planning decisions (7). The patterns of described uncertainty varied with respect to both housing and age: H1s and younger age groups typically believed that they were more in control than, at the other extreme, H3s and older age groups. In combination, general conceptions of family career, associated areas of choice and taken-for-grantedness, and particular definitions of the ability to control the outcome of family plans, produced a context in which H1 respondents seemed to have rather more room for real debate about the design of their family than either the H2s or H3s.

In the next section I shall consider the ways in which themes of selfishness and of the welfare of the child/ren permeated respondents' visions of the relationship between home and work and their perceptions of the types of choice associated with decisions about their own and their husband's employment.

DECISIONS ABOUT EMPLOYMENT

In the second half of this chapter I want to consider the relationship between perceived family obligations and perceptions of choice about employment related decisions (8). To some extent these perceptions of choice reflected what are undoubtedly general cultural and material patterns. Respondents' definitions of viable options were, for example, clearly ordered by beliefs about appropriate forms of employment for husbands, wives, and mothers, as well as by the immediate and practical characteristics of a particular kind of labour market. However, such structural characteristics and such general beliefs had different implications for different sections of the sample. In other words, the cultural and material "constraints" (9) described in the feminist and other

literature were "filtered" by respondents' particular domestic and cultural circumstances, and so had systematically different implications for employment decisions. In the next two sections I shall consider variations in the domestic contexts in which such general factors had effect. Section 3 documents respondents' accounts of choices about their own employment while section 4 reviews their accounts of choices relating to their husbands employment.

3. DECISIONS ABOUT THE WIFE'S EMPLOYMENT

This section, on decisions about respondent's work, tangentially attends to some of the same issues as those which have engaged such authors as Zweig (1952), Scanzoni (1978), Rapoport and Rapoport (1971, 1976), Yeandle (1984) and Pollert (1981). These writers have mostly been concerned to examine the effect of women's work on the family, or, from a slightly different perspective, to document women's experiences of paid employment. The focus has been on the ways in which women cope with their work, or with their work in combination with their family obligations, rather than on associated decision-making processes. The other strand of relevant literature is that which sets out to document or explain women's position in the labour market and/or to review the characteristics of what has come to be called "women's work" (Breugel, 1979; Barron and Norris, 1976; Mackie and Pattullo, 1977; McNally, 1979; Burman, 1979). This literature, which identifies and sometimes sets out to explain the structural problems faced by working women, like that which considers the ways in which women cope with these difficulties, provides a general background against which to view the decision-making experiences described by my respondents. While the social world is no doubt ordered in the ways described by these writers, there is still room for social actors to make choices. I am interested in described decision-making processes and in respondents' perceptions of choice in as far as those perceptions order the form and

course of related domestic dispute (if any). In addition, I am concerned to document systematic variations in described perceptions of choice, for these reflect systematic differences in the ways in which general cultural and material patterns inform domestic decision-making processes.

I shall explore these questions with reference to the interview material on choices related to wife's employment (10). Respondents described four kinds of work related decisions, each of which was informed by a characteristically different set of criteria and each of which was seen in a typically different way by the different sections of the sample. The work related decisions were:

1. Decisions associated with the initial "choice" of work
2. Decisions about changing jobs
3. Decisions about stopping work
4. Decisions about whether or not to return to work

I shall consider each in turn.

1. Initial "choice" of work

All respondents had first hand experience of this choice and all had made it before they were married. By definition, then, the decision could not have been the subject of domestic conflict (in the family of marriage) nor could it have been directly informed by a notion of current family responsibility. However, there seems to be some relationship between initial perceptions of choice about employment and subsequent perceptions of work related decisions, and some variation in the views described by different sections of the sample.

75% of H1 respondents claimed to have chosen a particular field of work in advance of any detailed knowledge of local job opportunities. Most of these respondents expected to complete some form of specialist education before they began their chosen career. Hypothetical careers were therefore

selected from a range of what were seen to be equally distant, yet, in theory, equally viable possibilities.

"I wanted to do it [become a biologist] from being very young actually because er my friend, her father worked in a lab and I well initially I think it was because it sounded ever so romantic, you know, all sort of floating around in white overalls and of course it wasn't at all romantic but I did enjoy it."

[H1, no children, older]

Though the plan did not always work out, these respondents believed that it was normal and possible to choose a "career" and to make a whole sequence of educational and work related choices with reference to some ideal model of the future. They had a fairly well defined notion of what they wanted to do and set out to realise those aspirations. By comparison, 84% of H2 and H3 respondents claimed that their first job choice was determined by the state of the labour market at the time when they left school. These initial differences of approach were reflected in all accounts of subsequent employment related decision-making. Most H1s described their employment decisions, even those which represented a change of heart, with reference to that ideal career. Some, as in the case quoted below, were also positively committed to a work-related identity and saw themselves as doctors, teachers etc. even when they were not working.

"I went through training and then did house jobs really I worked full time until my pregnancy..I don't want to stop work completely because you really do get out of touch and it would be very difficult to go back you know and it seems such a waste of my medical training, and also I think your, sort of, your brain rots."

[H1, pre-school age]

In comparison, H2 and H3 respondents usually continued to make employment decisions with reference to the range of job opportunities which happened to exist at the time when they were looking for work and had no permanent work-related identity. The following account is typical.

"I was originally a supervisor telephonist. Well no, when I first left school I went into a factory for three years, then I left there, then I went to tech to train as a typist, then the girl who was switchboard went sick where I worked. They couldn't get anybody else to do it so I had to stay on telephones and now well this is the only job I can find [as a shop assistant]."

[H2, pre-school age]

To sum up, H1s, like their husbands, saw themselves as independent agents who were able to "choose" a career and then find suitable work. H2s and H3s, on the other hand, tended to believe that their working lives were determined by factors beyond their control.

2. Decisions to change jobs

Forty respondents had first hand experience of this decision. The remaining twelve of the comparative sample of fifty-two were either working in their first job or had given up work after it.

Decisions to change jobs were made in a variety of employment contexts and for a variety of different reasons. It is useful to distinguish between choices about changing jobs which were primarily presented with reference to the respondent's wish or need to change:

- a) hours of work
- b) type of work or the "content" of the job
- c) place of work

This division highlights what were presented as the main reasons for changing jobs, though inevitably it simplifies a complex range of inter-related issues. Nevertheless, it does serve an heuristic and expository purpose, permitting discussion of the form and subsequent implications of particular sorts of decisions (11). I shall begin with a discussion of choices which were made with primary reference to hours of work.

a) Decisions to change jobs in order to work different hours

Nine respondents had changed their job on these grounds. Of these nine, six chose to change their jobs in order to reduce their working hours, while the other three did so in order to work full-time.

Four of the six who chose to reduce their working hours were from the older childless section of the sample. These women had worked full-time after

leaving school/education in order to help establish a home and save for a family. They, like many others, expected to "have to" stop work when they became pregnant. Because they were denied this "natural" interruption they had to make a "real" decision about their working future. In comparison, those who chose to take part-time employment as a half way stage between full-time work and retirement made what was seen as an entirely normal decision in the course of an entirely normal career. H1 respondents in either situation (older childless or pre-retirement) claimed that their final decision to give up full-time work was determined by factors of personal preference. The following quotation is from a respondent who based her decision on purely personal grounds. She changed jobs because she was "fed up".

"I felt I'd done enough. I got gradually more and more fed up with teaching and I just thought if I don't get out of this soon I shall go completely round the bend like most teachers but I was in a fortunate enough position that I was able to do that so now I'm a part-time self employed person earning not very much."
[H1, no children, older]

Both H2's who had experience of this decision claimed that they had "no choice" but to reduce their working hours because they presumed that it was inherently undesirable for wives (themselves included) to work full-time. This was something that only had to happen while a married couple saved up for a house and family, or when there was extreme financial need. In all other circumstances wives were expected to work part-time, if they worked at all.

"Well I was working at Rowntrees. I was working full time but well I found that it was too much with a house and a husband to look after and then I looked for work which was only mornings and I must be honest, my husband went into management at about that time so my wage wasn't so important. I could afford to only work mornings."
[H2, no children, older]

The three women who chose to change jobs in order to work longer hours only contemplated this option when they felt that they would still be able to meet what they saw as the "fixed core" of their domestic obligations. Each had a different definition of that "fixed core" and hence each perceived

the option of full-time work differently. In addition, the need to fulfil at least some basic domestic obligations limited the range of what was seen as "possible" full-time work.

b) Decisions to change jobs in order to change the type of work

Twenty-five respondents had first hand experience of this type of decision.

Only two H1 respondents claimed to have even considered changing their chosen field of work. Both described their perception of alternative work options as a consequence of a "change of heart" and, as in the following example, saw that decision as one which demanded, or was the consequence of, some kind of self examination.

"I decided to do psychiatric nursing well I started to. I went on a training course but after a year I decided that I wasn't cut out for that. I didn't really like it very much so I gave that up then I got a job as a dental nurse as a dental assistant which suited me much better."

[H1, 16+]

H2 and H3 respondents had much more frequent "changes of heart", so much so that the term hardly applies. Several of the young childless H2s and H3s chose to change their jobs and their type of work when they got "fed up". They switched, as in the next example, from shop assistant to office work to seasonal work as a means of generating excitement.

"I've been in offices, I've been in shops, I've done all sorts of jobs to get by, all sorts of things..yes I've had a go at anything, I like the variety."

[H2, no children, younger]

"I've done thousands of different jobs. I've done clerical work, er assistant librarian, er I've done a lot of selling work, I've worked for a double glazing company, I've been an insurance agent for two companies, er the Pru, and then a company out of York. I've done just what I fancy really.."

[H3, no children, younger]

Those who saw "no choice" but to take the first suitable job they found tended to define "suitable" with reference to the number of hours, the location of the job, and the rate of pay, but not with reference to the type of work. H2 and H3 respondents consequently found that they had "no

choice" but to change the kind of work they did because such change was an inevitable by-product of some other employment related decision. The following examples were typical.

"Night work was hard to get, I just took the first job that came along, jobs were so hard to get it was just a matter of taking what there was."

[H2, pre-school age]

"When she was 18 months I decided that I'd just go in the evening you see, so that they (family) aren't neglected...but now they are growing up I would really prefer more hours....its only, well its mainly Rowntrees or the hospital that's got a 6pm to 9pm shift, and that's 5 nights a week."

[H3, pre-school age]

c) Decisions to change the place of work

Seventeen respondents had decided to change their place of work.

Few of the H1 respondents were prepared to take on work other than that for which they felt that they were especially suited because of their training and/or educational background. These specialist demands limited the range of what were seen to be possible alternative employers. Some, as in the case quoted below, were literally "unable" to change their employer without also moving to another part of the country.

"I just feel like I could do with moving but I think we'll probably stay put for a bit now. I still fancy staying in Operational Research and well this is the only Operational Research department in York."

[H1, no children, younger]

In comparison, H2 and H3 respondents tended to have less specialist occupations and were therefore able to define a broader range of suitable, alternative employers. As the next case illustrates, there were, for example, plenty of alternative sources of cleaning work.

"I've done just cleaning work in shops and at the Department of the Environment. I was cleaning offices there you know its been more or less cleaning generally. Before this last one [job] I had you see I was on contract work and these contractors the pay was very poor so I put my name down at the University.."

[H3, 16+]

In this context it is not surprising to find that all those who positively

chose to change their place of work were from the H2 and H3 sections of the sample. The remaining eleven of the seventeen claimed to have "no choice" but to change their place of employment either because they had moved house or because they had to change jobs for some other reason, most commonly because they needed to work fewer hours.

In conclusion, it seems that respondents' decisions to change jobs were informed by a wide range of family obligations. Few changed jobs on grounds of personal preference alone and, unlike their husbands, few made choices which were primarily informed by the "need" for more income or for promotion. Wives' decisions were informed by the "need" to keep up with changing demands of family life and to find "suitable" work which would fit in with and/or around those obligations. Decisions which were presented primarily with reference to the place or type of work rather than the hours were less overtly informed by family demands, though, many such changes were the consequence of other decisions made with reference to the "family's interest". For example, none of the working wives felt that they had any choice but to change their jobs if the family moved so that the husband could get promotion or a better job. While respondents' working careers and their perceptions of possible employment related opportunities reflected changes in their family career and in the nature of the associated obligation, those common family related demands took different forms depending on the respondents' view of the importance of their employment as well as on such material factors as their education, their qualifications, and their notional "career". Of course such factors ordered choices in an already structured world of "opportunity", and it is important to remember that respondents could only select jobs which were actually available and for which they were formally suited. Accordingly, notions of family obligation affected the work related decision-making of different sections of the sample in different ways.

Family obligation also ordered perceptions of choice associated with decisions about stopping work and about returning to paid employment. Respondents' interpretations of their family obligations and the reported role of those commitments (in terms of the relevant decision-making processes) varied just as widely in these contexts as in relation to the decisions about changing work described above.

3. Decisions about stopping work

Forty-one respondents had first hand experience of this decision.

62% of them observed that they "had to" stop work because they were pregnant. In these cases the decision was seen to be more or less significant depending on the respondent's long term "career" plan: those who returned to work as soon as possible barely recognised a discrete "stopping work" decision while those who decided to devote themselves full-time to home and family acknowledged that they had literally given up paid work. Whatever the respondent's intention, there was "no choice" but to have at least a short break from paid employment. Another eight respondents claimed that they had "no choice" but to stop work when they got married. Five of these claimed that at that time there was no work for married women, while the other three observed that they had to give up work because their husbands expected them to be full-time housewives. The following quotations illustrate both positions.

"You see when we got married you see you couldn't go back to work. You had to finish and that was it, and then when you'd had any children you couldn't go back after your children were born either so no, I have never worked.... Well you couldn't you see, there was no other jobs, you couldn't, they wouldn't accept married women, they wouldn't have them back you see, I couldn't have done even if I had wanted to."
[H3, 16+]

"No, my husband objected to me going to work. I went to work at, seasonal, at Terrys for two years when we were first married. Just for a month. My husband didn't like it at all. It was a pal of his that said let her go, and er of course the money was very poor in those days and er there was one year I brought a machine [sewing], and another year I brought him a greenhouse so that we got the benefit. It wasn't much because in those days things were different....anyway,

he would have objected. He wouldn't have allowed me to be, he wouldn't allow me to carry on, I was quite happy, quite happy about it"
[H2, 16+]

Only three respondents had positively chosen to give up their job. One, from the H1 section of the sample, made this move on the grounds that she no longer enjoyed her work, while the other two, both H2s, decided to stop work because they no longer "needed" the money. These two had missed what they saw to be the "normal" opportunity to stop work to have a family and so had to make some "real" decision about their working future. Because they presumed that no one would want to work if it were not for the money they chose to become full-time housewives.

In conclusion, decisions to stop work were almost always made with reference to an immediate family obligation. Accordingly, few respondents believed that they had any choice about the matter.

4. Decisions about returning to work after a period at home

Thirty-four respondents had made a decision about whether or not to return to work. Twelve of these decided to stay at home while the other twenty-two went back (12).

Decisions to return were easy to identify. They had a real impact on the family's daily life and were apparently easy to remember and certainly easy to discuss. The point at which someone decided not to return to work was much less clear. However, most respondents advanced some view about when mothers could return to work and about whether or not they should do so if the opportunity existed. These general policy positions ordered individual perceptions of viable alternatives. Though the meaning of "adequacy" varied, all believed that mothers could only think of returning to work if they were able to ensure that they had made "adequate" child care arrangements. It was therefore impossible to separate judgements about the possibility of returning to work from definitions of "adequate" childcare.

In other words, a mother's perception of the returning to work option depended above all on her image of proper child-care, of a "good mother", and of normal family life. Accordingly, I shall first explore perceptions of adequate child-care and then respondents' definitions of the circumstances which did or did not justify a return to work. The described definitions and expectations advanced by different housing sections of the sample varied quite dramatically. I have chosen to order the following discussion so as to highlight these differences thus emphasising variation in the detail of the domestic contexts in which choices about returning to work were set.

Five of the nine H1s who had returned to work were able and willing to pay a child minder or to put their children in a nursery. To quote just one example:

"I worked in Malaya because you see we had two servants and one gardener, and Jeremy had to go to the nursery because it was so hot, so it would have been that [work] or playing cards or you know, and that just didn't suit me so..."
[H1, 16+]

This arrangement, unlike most others, allowed wives with both school and pre-school children to work during the day time. Though the other four of the nine worked whilst their children were at school, all the returning H1s were prepared to delegate their child-care and some of their household responsibilities to "non-family" employees and, in that way, to free themselves from at least some of their domestic responsibilities. The following quotation illustrates the point.

"I always used to be terribly worried about whether I should go on working because I didn't have time to keep the house even reasonable, you know, and then if I did do some housework, Jack [son] always wanted to play and I felt that, you know, you should play while they are still young, and if I said I couldn't, he would cry and get upset and I felt, you know, I'm getting my priorities wrong you know. What on earth does the house matter compared to the children ... you've only got them such a short time...so I would leave the house...but at times, especially when people come in and you know you feel really ashamed of it being so sort of dirty and unpleasant. I would be very torn....now everything really slots together...I do really very little housework on top of what Mary does...er its more just tidying up."
[H1, pre-school]

Such characteristically H1 arrangements were only possible given a) an ability to pay (or a willingness to define such expenditure as a financial priority) and b) a definition of "adequate" child-care which could encompass care by "non-family" members. Though the non-returning H1s believed that they, too, could make formally adequate child-care arrangements, they argued that their performance as a good mother would be impaired if they took on paid work. The claims made in the next two quotations were typical.

"I don't think it would be fair to my own children. Especially teaching because it is too draining."
[H1, school age]

"I think you should be there if they need you"
[H1, school age]

In any case, "good mothers" (as defined by the non-returners) should positively enjoy their child-care responsibilities and, as the next respondent argues, should therefore choose to stay at home in order not to miss out on that enjoyment.

"Well I think really you should enjoy them They grow up so fast and I think well if you go out to work you miss such a lot."
[H1, 16+]

Those who shared these very general conceptions of "adequate" child-care and proper motherhood concluded that only a committed and full-time mother could provide the service which they believed was necessary. In summary, then, most H1 respondents believed that non-family members could provide adequate child-care and only a few concluded that the mother's role demanded full-time attention.

In comparison, H2 respondents were unable and/or unwilling to pay for child-care. This meant that those with pre-school children could only think of returning to work if they could find an appropriate free child-minder and a "suitable" job. The husband was usually the only candidate babysitter so, as in the next case, "suitable" work was work which "fitted in" with his working hours.

"I was thinking about going to Asda [supermarket] because me friend does that, and she works Wednesday, Thursday, Friday night, but you see I couldn't do that Friday night because my husband is out"
[H3, pre-school age]

Those who had school-age children were able to consider day work provided that they could resolve the school holiday problem. Some worked school hours (as dinner ladies), others were able to take their children along with them (cleaners) and a couple, including the next respondent, managed to organise friends or family to "babysit" for the holiday periods.

"My sister in law used to come and stay, or my mother in law, or she (daughter) has gone to my sisters. One time she went to my sisters for her holiday."
[H2, school age]

Those who could not devise an "appropriate" solution were either "stuck" with evening work or were unable to work at all. The following quotation illustrates the nature of the problem.

"Oh I'd have to go evenings, I don't believe in going during the day, I couldn't anyhow because I've got nobody to look after them during the school holidays. I'd never be able to get out during the day really unless I got a 9 to 12am job, and put them in school and picked them up...I couldn't go in the afternoon because they come home for lunch and as I say I've no one I could turn to and say can you have them for 6 weeks, I've no family around, and I couldn't ask anyone else."
[H2, school age]

Even these few quotations reveal a range of different opinions about proper child-care. Some of the H2 mothers of school age children were prepared to work during the day provided that they could find someone to take care of their child/ren in the holidays. Others refused to contemplate even this possibility on the grounds that they were obliged to be at home at lunch time and/or at other key periods of the day. Indeed, some of the non-returning H2 respondents believed, like some of the non-returning H1s, that the mother's role demanded full-time attention. While it would be possible to make adequate child-care arrangements, the fact of the mother's outside commitments would, they argued, preclude the proper fulfillment of her more general child related obligations. These respondents believed that mothers should stay at home however good the possible child-care options.

Though H3s and H2s subscribed to much the same definition of "adequate" child-care there were three areas of reported difference. First, several of the H3 husbands worked shifts. Accordingly, a couple of H3 mothers of pre-school children, like the one quoted below, were able to go out to work for a few hours during the day time.

"I always gave my children a year to 18 months and then I used to work it with my husband that there was always somebody here with the children."
[H3, 16+]

Second, several of the H3 respondents had been willing and able to rely on their mothers for full-time child-care. This arrangement allowed the wife to look for full-time day time work.

"My mother took care of Angela. She was her first grandchild, and my mother sort of more or less brought Angela up till the age of 5 so therefore I was able to continue working."
[H3, 16+]

Finally, H3s were more restricted in acceptable babysitters than H2s. Most of the H3 respondents were only willing to delegate this job to members of the immediate family. As the following dialogue illustrates, some of the older H3s positively disapproved of those who were prepared to allow "strangers" to look after the children.

she: "I've worked all my life really. Yes, well we had an auntie living here for a while when they were small. She helped us. We never thought of a child minder did we?"

he: "No, no. Oh no, that wasn't on the cards at all. No I wouldn't have stood for that. No, you've never had a job that has meant the children were being neglected have you? You've had to work in with them."
[H3, 16+]

Though definitions of possible child-care arrangements were characteristically more specific (no strangers, no friends etc.), H3s seemed to have more working opportunities than H2s as they tended to have more available kin and they seemed to find it easier to get work which fitted in with their husband's working hours. While a couple of the non-returning H3 respondents thought it was wrong to work before the youngest

child went to school, none had any principled objection to the notion of returning to work. Indeed many expected that they would do just that. The only issue was when.

"When he is older I'd like to go back full-time if I could er, when he is about school age then I'll go back you know I don't believe in leaving them when they're that young."
[H3, pre-school age]

In the three preceding sub-sections I have outlined what each housing section of the sample defined as "adequate" child-care. However, the mere provision of "adequate" care was not, in itself, enough to justify a return to work. Those interviewed went on to advance a whole array of arguments about returning to work. I shall review them so as to complete my account of the cultural world in which respondents' made choices about whether or not to return to work.

Arguments in favour of a return to work

Most of the H1 respondents who went back to paid employment claimed that they did so in order to further their career or because they wanted some sort of intellectual stimulation. Indeed, several of those with "careers" had viewed their non-working status as temporary. Their return to work was therefore one stage in what was seen to be a long-term career plan.

"I think any longer than that [a year off] and there would be a danger of losing contact with the profession so it is a compromise you have to accept if you want to continue your career."
[H1, no children, younger]

Other H1s argued that it was better for the family if the wife/mother was happy, interested, and at work. This could be used as "good reason" for returning whether or not that decision was seen in career terms.

"I think it is better for all of us if I do a bit of work. I am clued into what Robert is talking about and doing and I feel a bit more self respect I think you sort of feel a bit of a dead loss if you don't do something else as well [that is as well as being a mother]"
[H1, pre-school age]

In comparison, H2 respondents usually referred to "money" as a, if not the, key argument in favour of a return to work. Though this additional income

usually had particular advantages for the wife all those who went back to work claimed that they were working for the "family" rather than for themselves. The following example is typical.

"When they were both at school I though well what shall I do now and then this job turned up and it fits with the hours so I took it. It is nice to have the money."
[H2, school age]

Nearly all H3 respondents expected to work again because they expected to "need" the money.

"I think I'll have to get a part time job. I think finances would force us to go back. I think most folks have to go back now."
[H3, pre-school age]

As I observed earlier, these respondents did not really have to decide whether or not they should return to work. All they had to decide was when to go.

Given that a return to work was a possible option, respondents from each of the three housing groups presented the choice of returning or not in characteristically different ways. All H1s felt able to make the choice on grounds of personal preference. H2 respondents were also able to choose, though these choices were made in a context in which the financial advantages of returning provided a "good reason" for selecting the work option. Most H3 respondents saw "no choice" about the matter; they simply expected to return.

Arguments against a return to work

Non-returners were especially keen to define the circumstances which, in their view, did and did not justify a return to work. Though there were a range of alternative arguments, there was no obvious housing related pattern to their use. H1s, H2s, and H3s alike drew upon one or more of the following themes when talking about why they believed that mothers, themselves included, should stay at home even if they could make adequate provision for their children. Most commonly, non-returning respondents

observed that, in their view, "boredom" did not constitute a sufficient reason for a return to work. The implied argument was that those who fulfilled their domestic obligations "properly" would have no time for such feelings.

"This is my job, to keep the house clean. It is my job to see the man who comes to the door and to pay the milk man. Really it is my job. If I ever got bored I'd have to start making toys or something. I've no time to get bored though."

[H2, school age]

"I am usually busy actually like Jan [friend] she says the same about all these women going out to work. She says they can't find enough to do at home. She says I do. She has enough and I mean she has no family you know what I mean."

[H2, school age]

Others concluded that they would not return to work because they would not choose to land themselves with the "double burden" of domestic and outside work. Though this was presented as a personal choice rather than a "should" position, it does presuppose a view of the "proper" standard of domestic work or, as in the case quoted below, an acknowledgement of the husband's view of that standard.

"I don't think he would like me to work and he would never come home and prepare the meal. There would be no way that I could work and er not have a meal ready and not have the house clean and tidy. I think to be honest, he has often said that he thinks it is a good thing, but I think if it came to the crunch he well it wouldn't work now. I think if I had done it earlier on in life then well perhaps..."

[H1, school age]

Finally, a couple of respondents claimed that they would not return to work even if they had the chance because their husbands would disapprove. This expected disapproval seems to be, in part, a reflection of a general view about working women and, in part, a specific formulation of the belief described above.

"Peter says "get your own house in order before you go out to work". And I think that is the sensible thing to do isn't it. I'm sure its easier since I've got that attitude."

[H2, school age]

While most of the non-returners accepted that some mothers had to work for the money, they argued that this was only legitimate in cases of "real" financial need. Several housewives presented very rigid definitions of

the types of "need" which would and would not justify a wife's return to work.

"I would like to see more mums at home, the young mums. It is sad to leave the children. Unless sometimes they fit a job in on a night but even then money isn't everything is it? I mean the money isn't, you wouldn't expect to... well you could cope without it. There is always a way to manage so really there isn't always a need for money. Cars, cars, that is it mainly and holidays. I hear people say to me they need it to keep going and a lot of it goes on smoking which is sad but why should I work. You know there is no reason for me to really is there? I'd enjoy working, yes, but I shouldn't be bored at home should I?"

[H2, school age]

However, some acknowledged that extra income could benefit the family as a whole and the children in particular. This group were prepared to consider work provided that financial advantages could be shown to outweigh child-care and other domestic disadvantages.

"I don't want to work because I'm career minded or because I'm bored with my house or bored with my children. I only want to work to provide us with the well not extras but things for the children and holidays because we will not do without our holidays. So that is the only reason why I'd go back."

[H2, pre-school age]

Arguments in favour of and against a return to work evidently drew upon similar themes. Some respondents believed that it was for the good of the family and/or the children if the wife went out to work. Others marshalled just the same notions in support of an argument in favour of staying at home. What is interesting is the prevalence (in whatever form) of claims about a) interests of the family, and b) welfare of the children.

In conclusion, then, debate about returning to work, like much of that about changing jobs, was, in effect, a debate about the meaning of respondents' family responsibilities and hence about the point at which they were free to engage in paid employment. Different housing groups tended to define their child-care obligations in different ways, and to have different types of financial "need". As a result they perceived different sorts of employment related choice. H1s, for example, tended to believe that they had some real choice about their career. Their

definition of child-care was such that there was scope for delegation, and their vision of parenthood typically allowed for the wife to work should she wish to do so. Finally, they rarely saw themselves to be under such financial pressure that the wife's wage was "essential". H2s and, even more, H3s were unwilling to pay for child-care services, and perhaps unable to do so anyway. Yet these groups were also likely to acknowledge the real financial advantages of a second income. The resulting practices reflected the variety of ways in which respondents coped with the competing strains of "no choice" but to return to work and "no choice" but to stay at home. H2s usually faced the most complex decisions, believing both that they ought to be at home for the sake of the children and, equally, that they ought (though, perhaps, did not "need") to increase the family income for the same reason. The choices described by H3 respondents were simpler because of what was seen as an unavoidable financial "need". In this context there was no choice but to return to work, though there might have been some choice about the timing of that event.

Decisions about the wife's employment were clearly ordered by what were seen as her family obligations. Viable working options changed as the children got older, and, to a lesser extent, as the family's financial position changed. Though these changing perceptions of possibility took different forms in each of the housing sections of the sample, all acknowledged that the family/work relationship was more complex for wives than for husbands. Only the wives had to ensure that their home was properly cared for and their children adequately looked after before they could consider going out to work. Only they made decisions about stopping and returning to work, and only they chose to change jobs in order to find work which fitted in with a complex set of family demands.

I shall now consider the ways in which family obligation informed perception of choice about the husband's working career. The following

account is short, partly because I was only able to interview the wives and partly because husbands seemed to make fewer work related decisions.

4. DECISIONS ABOUT THE HUSBAND'S EMPLOYMENT

In this section I shall consider respondents' accounts of decisions about their husbands employment. Again there is very little literature which directly attends to this sort of decision-making, though there are plenty of studies of occupations and of occupational communities. As with the literature on women's employment, attention has focussed on the experience of doing particular kinds of work (13), and/or on broader questions about changes in the occupational structure (14). In this context an individual's occupation is taken as a fixed feature rather than as the product of some kind of decision-making process. In addition, much of the literature attends to the world of employment in isolation. Exceptions to this pattern (15), like literature which explores the relationship between work and leisure or which examines workers' conceptions of the relationship between family life and paid employment, typically attends to the "effect" of one area (work) on another area (family) with reference to general questions about expenditure, lifestyle or attitude, but not with reference to more precise questions about domestic decision-making. Other writers consider the impact of husbands work on the family and/or on the wife (16). While this literature attends to certain areas of decision-making, especially to career decisions involving geographical mobility, it does so with a view to documenting the ways in which wives and/or families cope with what is typically presented as a given fate. In this section I want to consider the kinds of choices seen to be associated with decisions about husbands employment. The fact that most respondents concluded that there was, in practice, "no choice" about such issues does not alter the distinctive decision orientated nature of the enquiry. Once more, the point of the discussion is to establish the nature of the decision-making

context which would order instances of overt conflict should they arise.

Husbands reportedly made fewer kinds of decision about their work than did their wives. For instance, none of the respondents' husbands had decided to stop work or to return to work having had a spell at home. While nearly all had decided to change their job, none had done so on the grounds that they wanted to reduce or increase the hours which they spent in paid employment. So, described decisions were about changing jobs in order to change employer or in order to change occupation, or at least the type of work.

Such choices, like those relating to the wife's employment, were almost always presented with reference to a notion of family obligation. Of course, that obligation had different implications for the employment related decisions of husband and wife. As described by respondents, their husband, as breadwinner, was obliged to earn as much "for the family" as was possible. In this context income was the key priority, although one which might be modified by other family considerations: a couple of husbands had refused to consider night work, despite the better pay, on the grounds that it would disrupt their home life. However, the informing family/financial priority did not vary in direct relation to, for example, the birth of a child, or with respect to the child's position in the educational cycle. In other words, husbands were seen to work for money, whatever the state of their "family" career. Virtually all decisions about employment were presented with reference to that theme.

In this context, then, there was "no choice" but to accept a higher paid job providing that there were no overwhelming disadvantages. Accordingly, 89% of described decisions were seen to be matters about which the couple had "no choice" because it would not have been in the husband's (and hence not in the family's) interest to refuse promotion and/or the opportunity to advance his career. Seen in this way, there was no difference between the

husband's interest and that of the family. Indeed, wives almost talked of "our" job when describing their husband's career.

"He wanted to be a GP so we moved to Macclesfield. Then we thought well we'll go into the RAF while we sort out what we wanted to do"
[H1, school age]

Although this was a common view, the domestic worlds in which it had effect varied widely. While details varied depending on the actual occupation in question, most H1 respondents expected their husbands to change jobs in order to progress up some kind of career ladder. Husbands from other housing sections, however, were less likely to encounter such a structured sequence of work related choices. Although all changed jobs in order to increase their income, their opportunities to do so varied systematically.

In detail, 60% of those who claimed that their husband had "no choice" but to change work because he was offered promotion or because he had found a "better" job were from the H1 category. While other respondents shared the same financial/work related priorities, only this group had the opportunity to realise their ambitions on such a scale. Indeed, some of the H1 husbands, as in the case quoted below, worked in a context in which there was a recognised career ladder with recognised job moving obligations.

"You have to be prepared to move around when you are taking junior jobs, then you get to be a senior registrar, then you start looking for a consultancy then that is about it."
[H1, pre-school age]

"To get anywhere you've got to move. So we moved. Basically it is dead mans shoes, you know, so you haven't got any control over it at all, not really if you want promotion."
[H2, pre-school age]

Not all "obligatory" moves involved promotion. Some employers simply moved their employees "sideways", leaving them with the choice of unemployment or employment in another part of the country. Three H2 respondents and three H1s had this experience. Those whose husbands worked for the armed forces were able to predict the move; others had to go at a moments notice. Either way, the breadwinning priority produced a perception of "no choice".

The following examples illustrate the position, and mirror the picture described by Finch (1983) and Cohen (1977) (17).

"We moved every two years till Andrew was six. Then we thought we ought to settle down so we came out [of the army] and he applied to do teacher training."
[H2, school age]

"They said you are going to the shop in York. We had been in Whitby for 4 years but they are like that they just send you where they want you."
[H3, pre-school age]

H1 and H2 husbands who had no choice but to change jobs, either as a condition of employment or in order to get promotion, usually had to change their place of work and perhaps their employer but not their formal occupation. In comparison, several H3 husbands found that they had to change their occupation if they were to look for a better paid job. The described careers were consequently varied, as in the case quoted below.

he: "I came out of the airforce. I came out, I did a series of jobs. I'd never had a trade that I could use outside so I wandered from job to job. I've got very different experiences but mainly in the building trade."

she: "He finished up as a messenger at the corporation offices taking messages"

he: "I've done a variety of jobs you know I've worked at Rowntrees to no great success. It was no good to me working indoors. I didn't like it. No, apart from that I just took what I could. Just what was if it was a bit better pay then I'd get that."
[H3, 16+]

In the cases documented so far, respondents have claimed that their husband had "no choice" but to change his job because that was what was in the family's financial interest. However, there were a couple of instances (both H3s) in which the husband was able to choose between alternative equally paid jobs. In these cases the decision was seen to be a matter of "preference" rather one about which there was "no choice".

"He was a butcher at Wrights but then he heard about this job at the railway carriage works and he fancied doing that so that is where he is now."
[H2, school age]

Interestingly, one of the H1 husbands had also made what was seen as a "preference" type choice about his career and had elected to take what he

expected to be a more satisfying, but lower paid, job. This was believed to be a viable alternative because the drop in income was reported to make very little difference to the family's lifestyle: they could still afford all that they wanted.

"He works in private practice in Leeds. He did work with the railway but he had some personal clashes and it [the work] didn't suit his temperament. He changed jobs for personal reasons, not for financial reasons really. In fact he had to take a drop in salary."
[H1, no children, younger]

In conclusion, decisions about the husband's work, like those about the wife's employment, were made with reference to a particular notion of family commitment and obligation. The husband's breadwinning obligation clearly informed most of the decisions about career and job and the apparently self evident value of earning more money produced a perception of "no choice" in nearly all circumstances. While this was a common theme, the range of occupations, career opportunities, and work related perceptions of identity structured the detail of the way in which that general belief had effect.

FAMILY AND CAREER

In the first two sections of this chapter I described the ways in which models of proper family life informed respondents' perceptions of choice about family design. The outcome of the relevant decisions was in part determined by these models, in part by the respondents' ability to control their fertility, and in part by housing specific variations in conceptions of proper behaviour. Much the same could be said of decisions about paid employment. Again, themes of child welfare and of family and domestic obligation were generally relevant, and, again, they had different implications in different domestic contexts. For a variety of complex and inter-related reasons, H1 respondents tended to have what they saw as more room for choice about both family and working careers than either of the other sections of the sample. At the other extreme, H3s described

themselves to be in the most limited position of all. Few concluded that they had ever had a set of clear personal family or employment ambitions which they then went out of their way to realise. Rather, their accounts of decision-making were filled with reference to things which "happened" to them, leaving them with "no choice" but to cope or respond as best they could. In theory, then, H1s, perceiving more choice, had rather more scope for genuine domestic dispute than other sections of the sample. However, in this context, as in others, husband and wife appeared to share the same basic model of ideal family and working career, even if that model was more "flexible" than others, and even if it allowed for personal interpretation at the edges. Indeed, the decisions of nearly all respondents were made with reference to a set of various, but equally taken-for-granted, beliefs about what should happen. Accordingly, they only faced what was seen as a "real choice" if they deviated from this normal career. These general beliefs effectively minimised the chances of real decision-making and so left respondents with little scope for overt dispute even though their influence was variously filtered by individual domestic and material circumstances. Finally, what is perhaps most striking about described decision-making processes relating to choice about family and career, is the degree to which informing conceptions of proper family life overlapped and so mutually reinforced each other with respect to what might appear to be quite different kinds of choice. At a very general level, decisions about both work and family careers were made with reference to a similar model of family life. In detail, the inter-relation was even more evident.

CHAPTER 5: NOTES

1. There is, of course, a body of literature which is concerned with historical and/or demographic questions about occupation and about family size in addition to that which considers issues of family and work as part of an analysis of class structure. Not surprisingly, this work does not attend to patterns of decision-making.

2. See, for example, Oakley (1979) Bernard (1975), La Rossa and La Rossa (1981), Comer (1974), Graham (1977), Finch (1983), Callan and Ardener (1984), Pollert (1981), Westwood (1984), Scanzoni (1978), Yeandle (1984), Breugel (1979), Barron and Norris (1976), Pahl and Pahl (1971), Rapoport and Rapoport (1971, 1976, 1978), Gerber (1983), Cain (1973), Goldthorpe and Lockwood (1969), Salaman (1974).

3. Much of this literature, especially that produced by feminist authors, describes expectations about family life, parenthood, motherhood, womens' working lives etc. with reference to a notion of family ideology and an account of the ways in which that ideology systematically works against the interests of women. Accordingly, it presumes that such beliefs and expectations have a mystifying role which serves to maintain gender inequalities. While beliefs about proper family careers etc. evidently order and inform choices, they can only be defined in terms of inequality if the observer is prepared to make some kind of presumption about the nature of social life in the absence of these particular ideologies. As I have said earlier, I do not wish to make such a claim. Rather, I am content to discuss patterns of ordering and structuring without reference to the advantages or disadvantages such patterns might be said to produce.

4. Most respondents believed that there was less certainty about becoming pregnant than there was about preventing a pregnancy.

5. In theory, there are two possible outcomes. Either the respondent could become pregnant, or she could remain childless. However, given that the childless state was a continuation of the present it was not defined as

"surprising" or "accidental".

6. This is not as paradoxical as it seems. The respondents were simply sure that they could not be sure about their family planning.

7. As Owen writes "reproductive ideologies can only be the background against which individual couples will make decisions...the translation of cultural ideologies into individual action is always mediated by the subjective interpretations of these ideologies, situational exigencies, negotiation and consequently, change." (Owen, 1982, p85)

8. I shall focus on respondents' perceptions of possible jobs rather than on the detailed decision-making process associated with the selection and rejection of particular job offers.

9. Again I do not intend to classify these ordering cultural and material factors as necessarily "constraining" or as necessarily limiting, though that is, of course, the position taken by many feminist writers.

10. Different sections of the sample had experience of different types of employment related decisions, and respondents from different age and housing brackets had made employment choices in a range of different social and economic circumstances. Because I was interested in respondents' views of the range of possible options and not in the "actual" list of alternatives, that inevitable social/historical variation was not particularly important. However, because I had caught respondents at different stages of their employment careers, the volume of relevant "first hand" interview data inevitably varied from employment topic to employment topic. I have stated the size of the relevant sub-sample where appropriate.

11. If, for instance a respondent changed her job because she was unable to continue working full-time, she had "no choice" about that move, and only limited choice about subsequent work options. In comparison, those who simply wanted to work for some other employer had a rather more "open" choice about whether or not to change jobs, as well as about their

subsequent employment.

12. In fact I shall review the accounts provided by the thirty-two respondents who had had a child (or children) in their time away from work. Another two gave up work with a view to having a family but returned when they failed to conceive.

13. See, for example, Cain (1973), Hollowell (1968), Gerber (1983), Dennis, Henriques and Slaughter (1969), Tunstall (1962), Beynon (1973), Lockwood (1958).

14. See, for example, Salaman (1974), Goldthorpe et al. (1969)

15. See, for example, Rapoport and Rapoport (1975, 1978), Bailyn (1978), Salaman (1974), Goldthorpe et al. (1969)

16. See, for example, Callan and Ardener (1984), Finch (1983), Cohen (1977)

17. Finch writes, "The pressures upon a wife to acquiesce to a mobile lifestyle are both cultural and economic. If the husband is the sole or principal breadwinner, there are powerful economic incentives for a wife to adopt a mobile lifestyle, either to continue to make his breadwinning possible, or to enhance his earning capacity. Thus where the choice is between staying immobile with a lower standard of living or increasing it by moving around, the pressures are all upon the wife to accommodate herself to a mobile lifestyle, rather than deny a better standard of living not only to herself but also (and perhaps more powerfully) to her husband and children." (Finch, 1983, p48)

CHAPTER 6

HOUSE AND HOME

This chapter attends to essentially the same kinds of questions as those addressed in chapter 5. Here, too, I shall be concerned to identify respondents' perceptions of the kinds of choice associated with a series of common decisions, and to explore the factors which appeared to inform those described perceptions of choice. Once more, the aim is to document the domestic worlds which order the occurrence, form and course of overt decision-related conflict. In particular, this chapter reviews respondents' accounts of decisions about moving house, about the selection of a particular house, and about interior decoration and furnishing.

There is very little literature which, even indirectly, concerns processes of choice associated with the selection of a house and/or with decisions about furnishing. That is not to say that housing has been neglected (1). In their different ways anthropologists and sociologists have continued to emphasise the social significance of housing, neighbourhood, and community. In addition, many studies incorporate residential area as a crucial variable on the grounds that housing type, in combination with social/geographical location, reflects and generates certain important cultural and material differences (2). Whatever the primary focus of this work (family networks, community relations, class structure, etc.) housing, or, more precisely, residence, is taken as a fixed given. Researchers study the contents of a neighbourhood, a village, or an estate with very little regard for the decision-making processes which led Mr and Mrs x to that address. Implicitly, those families live in that area because that is where they "belong". An area is taken to represent a certain sector of the population, and residents are therefore presumed to belong to that sector. From this perspective, details of the personal housing careers of individual residents are, typically, irrelevant.

Although no one under-emphasises the social importance of the final outcome (neighbourhood and community relations etc. are significant issues), questions about individual choice and decision-making are rendered invisible.

Much the same could be said of the sociological and economic literature, where housing is treated as a commodity. Some of those who emphasise the significance of the home as a site of consumption are concerned to decipher the conventions of what is seen as a "language" of social comparison. Accordingly, writers such as Veblen (1899), Douglas (1979) and Goffman (1971) attend to the ways in which individuals are placed in relation to others with reference to such complex status symbols as address, furnishing, and decor (3). Many more writers attend to the "home" with reference to a particular argument about the economic role of the family (4). This literature explores patterns of acquisition and examines issues such as the creation of demand for, and the financing of, "consumer" items. Both the "social" and the "economic" versions of consumer based accounts take as their subject themes which the neighbourhood/community style literature takes for granted. From this view, the social meaning of residence and of furnishing style, as well as the financial and economic structure of property and commodity markets, are real and significant topics. However, while the resulting accounts emphasise the importance of consumption (necessarily identified after the event), there is still no discussion of associated decision-making processes. Accordingly, even this literature is of indirect relevance to the following discussion which centers on decision-making involved in the selection of what are acknowledged to be socially important possessions.

In this chapter I intend to consider decisions associated with the selection of a house and of its contents. The task is to map the domestic worlds which would order the form and development of instances of overt

conflict related to decisions about house buying and furnishing. Choices about housing were characteristically believed to be determined by factors beyond the individual's control, while choices about furnishing and decoration were described with reference to a set of taken-for-granted conceptions about appropriate colour, style, and design. As I shall show, different sections of the sample tended to present different conceptions of house and home and these various informing visions of appropriate style had the common effect of ordering respondents' conceptions of possible alternatives. Paradoxically, most respondents believed that their house and its contents reflected what were essentially personal tastes, yet, at the same time, they acknowledged that choices about these items were more or less constrained (5). In the three following sections I shall consider described perceptions of choice and the various views of house and home which informed decisions about moving house, about the selection of a house, and about interior decoration and furnishing.

1. DECISIONS ABOUT MOVING HOUSE

Forty-six of the comparative sample of fifty-two respondents were owner occupiers, five were council tenants and one lived in privately rented accommodation. In most cases, then, the decision to move was also a decision to sell a house.

83% of the sample had first hand experience of the decision to move house. All but two of these respondents claimed that they had "no choice" but to move either because of their husband's job or because they had changed space requirements. Different sections of the sample explained what they retrospectively saw as their housing "fate" with reference to characteristically different causes. Not surprisingly, most of those who had to move because of the husband's job were from the H1 and H2 sections of the sample. Given that these respondents agreed that the husband had no

choice but to change jobs in search of promotion, and given that the opportunity existed, there was no choice but to accept the consequences. If that job move meant that the family would have to live elsewhere, then that was what would happen. In these circumstances the decision to move was, in effect, a part of the decision to change jobs: those who did not want to move house could only offer token opposition to what was basically agreed to be an inevitable fate.

The second most common reason for having to move house was that the present accomodation was "too" small. In some cases the definition of overcrowding was made with reference to the belief that brothers and sisters should not share the same bedroom. This view, held by the housing department of the local council as well as by many of the H2 and H3 respondents left some with no option but to move to a larger and more "suitable" form of family accomodation. The following quotations illustrates the position.

"We're living out of suitcases at the moment, waiting for the council to move us. When we got married we went to the council and told them that my mum had turned us out and we got the keys the next day to a guest house owned by the council. Then we moved to St Mary's then we got this house. We are going to have to move eventually with having one of each so we might as well move now before she [daughter] starts school. We are hoping that the house we get this time is the one that we shall have for good."

[H3, pre-school age]

"We had to go because we had David. If we had two lasses then we could have stayed where we were but that is the way it worked out."

[H2, pre-school age]

None of the H1 respondents advanced this particular reason for having to move, but then, none of them lived in less than a three bedroom house. Others moved because they felt that they "needed" more space though they had no clearly identifiable "problem" as in the cases described above. Not surprisingly, then, definitions of need reflected respondents' expectations of a normal and practical life style and their perceptions of possible and desirable types of accomodation. For example, the two H1 respondents quoted below presented their "need" for a larger house with reference to the neccessity of more spare room or a larger mortgage.

"After Lucy was born we only had one spare bedroom so we had to look for a bigger house. We couldn't really have anyone to stay or anything in that house. We always knew we would have to move fairly soon anyway."

[H1, pre-school age]

"Well we thought this was ridiculous. We were paying so much tax we thought we might as well get a bigger mortgage so we looked around for a five bedroom house. There was no point in getting anything smaller."

[H1, no children, younger]

In comparison, H2s typically described their housing requirements with reference to the "need" to have less cramped living space.

"It was too cramped. Helen did not have her own room and she was getting to an age where she wanted to see her friends and play records and that sort of thing so we thought well can we afford to move?"

[H2, school age]

Given that respondents were committed to doing what was in the family's interest, they concluded that they had "no choice" but to move to a larger house if that was what was required and if that was a viable option. Moves to smaller houses, occasioned, for example, by the husband's retirement, were presented with reference to just the same themes of self-evident logic and hence inevitability. In sum, few respondents believed that they had had any real choice about whether or not to move. If it made sense for the family to move, not to have done so would have been perceived as irrational. Almost all decisions about moving were couched in these terms.

2. DECISIONS ABOUT CHOOSING A HOUSE

Having "decided" to move, respondents were then faced with a set of decisions about exactly where to live. As I observed earlier, most were living in owner occupied accommodation. Those who moved house therefore faced decisions about buying new accommodation. Such choices appeared to be located in a characteristic sequence of review, rejection, definition and re-definition of criteria, and finally of selection. I shall consider the implications of this procedure before examining the ideals which informed the decisions of different sections of the sample.

The character of house buying decisions

In theory, house buyers always had some choice, at least in the sense that there was always more than one house for sale within a given price bracket. However, few respondents believed that they had had any real alternative but to pick the house that they did. House buying decisions were clearly the product of a whole string of related factors producing what were retrospectively seen to be inevitable decisions. The end result was therefore seen as both accidental (this was for sale, that was what they could afford, this was the area, that the type of house available at the time) and, yet, inevitable: no other option made sense. The apparent discrepancy between choice, and retrospective definitions of "no choice" was in part a product of the "looking around" procedure. The "final" decision represented the culmination of a sequence of negative choices and only rarely involved the selection of one from a range of immediately available options. Respondents defined and re-defined their house hunting criteria as they "looked around", finally choosing the house which best fitted their latest specification. The process of choice therefore varied depending on the length of the "looking around" period. Several with very little room for manoeuvre, usually those who had to move because of their husband's job, had "no choice" but to select whatever seemed to be the best option that week or that week-end. The following quotations illustrate such a view.

"That decision was a bit pushed because my husband was starting work in January and by November we still hadn't found a big enough four bedroom house. We'd seen this one from the outside but I didn't like it on sight. It was drizzling. My husband came up two weeks later and said it is the biggest one inside that we'd seen and in fact we moved before I'd even seen it inside."

[H1, school age]

"I don't know really, we didn't choose really. We were told about these houses being built and we went down to the office to see about them. All the two bedroomed ones had gone and we had set a wedding date for the 3rd of April and we didn't want to live with either of our parents so we decided well we'd put our name down for this and then before we knew it it had all happened. It was more or less a

joint decision but we didn't really do a lot of talking about it."
[H3, no children, younger]

Those who decided that they would like to move to a bigger house, or to a house in another area of York were in a position to wait until the "ideal" property came onto the market.

"When we bought this one we looked around for quite a long time. We looked at quite a lot but we knew what we were looking for so when we saw this one we knew really, we knew that that was what we wanted."
[H2, school age]

However, when these respondents found a "suitable" house they concluded that they had just as little choice about whether or not to buy it as those who "had to" take the first viable alternative. If it met the ideal then that was it. "Looking time", then, ordered the range of alternatives which the respondents were able to consider and to some degree informed their definition of possible alternatives, but it did not alter respondents' retrospective perceptions of the inevitability of the final choice.

House buying criteria

Although all respondents chose what seemed to be the "best" house, there was considerable variation in the definition of the informing ideals. The definition of "possible" alternatives primarily depended on the amount which the couple felt that they could afford to spend. Though the range of perceived choice and the actual list of options were, in theory, separable (one depended on the time spent looking, the other on house hunting criteria and the state of the housing market) both were ordered by financial definitions of "possible". There were literally more houses in some price brackets than there were in others. In theory, then, the more money available for house buying, the wider the range of choice and the longer the list of possible options to consider at any one moment. However, if the richer sections of the sample wanted to buy the most expensive house that they could afford, they had relatively few to choose from compared with, say, those whose spending limit put them in the market

for small terrace houses. These two quotations illustrate the point.

"It just came onto the market. It is not very often that a house comes onto the market. There were four or five people interested in the house. There aren't many houses in York. It is very difficult, there isn't a selection really so we were lucky to get this one."

[H1, pre-school age]

"Oh there was loads and loads that we were looking at and eventually we got sick of looking because there were that many and they'd got that many different faults and different prices and all that. It was ridiculous. In the end we just got this one."

[H3, no children, younger]

Although the outer limit of the "possible" range was set by price, there was usually room for further specification. At this point, the general aesthetic traditions which ordered detailed decisions about interior decoration appeared to play some part in respondents' accounts of house buying decisions. H1s and a few of the H2s were, for example, concerned to buy a house which had "character" and/or which had some kind of special feel or quality which they liked. More than that, they wanted to live in a house on which they could "make their mark", which seemed, in some way, to be a reflection of themselves or for which they felt some kind of instant affinity. The following quotation is typical.

"Well we wanted something, we did not want a perfect house. We wanted something that had not been knocked about; something that had lots of old features and that we could do ourselves bit by bit. We were really lucky. This one has all the old tiles on the floor and the original staircase. It is just as it was really."

[H1, pre-school age]

These respondents therefore gave precedence to the criteria of personal attraction, feeling, and atmosphere. Several observed that they had "no choice" but to buy this house because this was the only one for which they had "fallen".

"We both knew what we were looking for. We came to see this one and without saying anything to each other we both knew that this was what we really wanted."

[H1, no children, younger]

"Well this was just what we were looking for. We tried a lot and didn't ever feel that they were sort of quite right and as soon as we came in here we saw that it was just what we wanted."

[H2, no children, younger]

The chosen house was the one which best met these "emotional" conditions,

and which was situated in what was counted as a "suitable" area. H1s and some of the H2s had their own transport and were unlikely to feel that they had to live near their immediate family. For these and other reasons they were more concerned with an area's reputation and status than with its actual geographical location.

"One we went to look at was a big old semi with a beautiful garden which is what we both wanted. A nice big garden but it overlooked the council houses on Tang Hall, really run down scraggy houses, so we didn't even bother to go in. We just saw the area it was in and thought Oh God and went away."
[H2, no children, younger]

In comparison, the remaining H2 and nearly all H3 respondents selected their homes with reference to such pragmatic features as the location of the intended house in relation to their work place and their immediate family.

"I wanted to be down this way because I had a sister over here. They gave you three areas you could pick and I wanted to be down this way. He didn't. At first he didn't because I mean he had got his own local and he had all his mates from the railway. Then when he saw the house and he saw the district, it was different then to what it is now, he liked it and he said alright we'll move then, and then he made another local."
[H3, 16+]

"We wanted something round this area. My mum lives in South Bank so we wanted to live here. In any case say I got a puncture or Barry got a puncture we wanted to be able to walk to work and you can walk into town and it is near enough to both our parents."
[H3, no children, younger]

Of course, "real" and "reputational" geographies often overlapped. In practice, H3s chose to live, for actual geographical reasons, in the very areas which H1s and H2s avoided on grounds of status. For now, however, the point is that house-buying criteria varied. In this respect, as in others, H3s emphasised factors of convenience at the expense of almost all else. This theme was also evident in accounts of preferred house types. Two of the H3 respondents and two H2s refused to live in anything but a new house. This was in part because a new house fitted a conventional definition of "nice" and in part because it was thought to be less "trouble" to run.

he: "We looked at a few second-hand houses didn't we? But we were not really sure about that were we?"

she: "No, no, I didn't want a second-hand house, no, I wanted a nice house. This was the first one that we found that fitted with what we could afford."

[H2, no children, younger]

As the following quotations illustrate, few of the H3s and only some of the H2s believed that the final selection of one rather than another house was especially important. Provided that the intended property was of the right type, in the right place and in the right price bracket, there was no reason not to buy it.

"We came in and I said 'Oh I like this one' but it was a bit damp. We said 'Well a bit of damp won't make any difference' and I liked the kitchen and bathroom with them being tiled so that was it. We got this one."

[H3, no children, younger]

"When we were talking about getting married we just started looking for a house and it you know the wages he was on this house just suited our price you know."

[H3, pre-school age]

It seems, then, that the different housing groups made choices with reference to a different model or vision of an ideal house. H1s wanted something on which they could make their mark or which they felt was distinctly "theirs". At the other extreme, H3s appeared to adopt a more functional view: the ideal house was one which "worked" and which was in a convenient location. Either way, almost all respondents observed that they had "no choice" about the selection of their home. This retrospective account is not surprising given that all were likely to claim that they had opted for the best possible alternative available at the time. That is not to say that there were in fact "no choices". As I have shown, different sections of the sample made decisions with reference to different financial and aesthetic criteria. What is interesting is the degree to which these prior and potentially debatable decisions about criteria are rendered invisible in the typical retrospective descriptions of "no choice".

3. DECISIONS ABOUT FURNISHING AND INTERIOR DECORATION

Choices about furnishing were evidently common domestic decisions which had important consequences in terms of the nature of the family's home environment (7). Unfortunately, there is barely any popular cultural analysis of styles of furnishing or types of interior design (8). Because there is no background against which to review the conventional themes which appeared to inform the choices described by my respondents, this section of the analysis is especially "exploratory".

While respondents believed that the contents of their homes reflected what were essentially personal tastes and preferences, furnishing choices were nonetheless informed by notions of appropriate style. In other words, choices were made from a selection of design options which were already structured (and more or less limited) by a particular conception of decorative propriety. In this section I shall consider respondents' accounts of choices about furniture and interior decoration with reference to two alternative conceptions of design: the "abstract" and the "concrete". This strategy allows me to consider variation in detailed perceptions of choice and in definitions of viable alternatives and, finally, variation in described expectations of interior design expertise. In the course of this discussion I shall inevitably touch on questions about cultural conceptions of "the home" and questions about the role of the wife as "home-maker". However, my main purpose is to explore the nature of the domestic worlds which structured choices about furnishing and so ordered more general choices about the nature of the domestic environment (9).

In detail respondents' accounts of possible furnishing and decorating options varied widely. This was hardly surprising. Much depended on the nature of the house or room in question and on what many saw as personal factors such as taste or style. Yet these apparently idiosyncratic choices

were structured by a general underlying pattern. H1s and about half of the H2s adopted what I shall describe as an "abstract" approach to interior decoration. In comparison, the decisions of H3s and the remaining H2s were ordered by what I shall describe as the "concrete" approach. Each of these two informing perspectives on interior design produced characteristically different definitions of the status of particular decorative components (eg. pictures or pieces of furniture) and characteristically different definitions of appropriate ordering themes.

The "abstract" approach

Those whose choices were informed by this approach to furnishing expected component items to have some sort of inherent quality. In other words, such objects were believed to have a certain value in themselves. This point is easiest to illustrate with reference to respondents' accounts of decisions about the selection of pictures and furniture. Because an item was expected to have some independent and timeless quality of style or design, and because aesthetic judgements were unlikely to alter, H1s and some H2s were able and willing to buy "expensive" pieces of furniture in the knowledge that they would always appreciate those items and that they would always fit in with the decorative order of the home environment. In other words, each component could stand on its own as an abstractly desirable object though all were united in a common, unchanging, conception of "good taste". In addition, those whose decorative decisions were informed by an abstract vision of style tended to select pictures with reference to a related and equally abstract notion of "art". Most H1s believed that pictures had (or should have) some "artistic" quality which transcended the detail of subject matter, colour scheme, or size. Because these respondents could not conceive of, say, a slightly less yellow version of Van Gogh's sunflowers or a rather more cheerful Munch, there was no scope for compromise over the image itself. Either respondents secured

their preferred picture or they did not: there were no half measures.

While decorative items were believed to have some sort of inherent quality, and therefore had some kind of separate status, they were typically arranged with reference to a general and abstract coordinating principle. H1s and some of the H2s attempted to create rooms with a certain "atmosphere" or "mood". Decorating decisions were therefore informed by a general theme of the kind described below. In this case the respondent aimed to create a room which was "friendly" and "spring like", rather than simply green or yellow.

"This was a very dark dingy room. It's only got that one window which doesn't let in much light and I said I'd like to make it sort of, you know, almost like a garden room. You know, sort of spring like. I love the French Impressionists so I got these big posters framed and I've put this green strip round and.. I saw that [the green strip] in a magazine and I sent off for it. We already had the bamboo table and I was really thinking of it around the bamboo but it would also suit my grandma's old curtains. I think it has worked quite well it is a nice sort of friendly easy room."

[H1, pre-school]

Decorating and furnishing choices were clearly inter-related and were made as part of the more general project of controlling the ambiance of a whole room or even a whole house. The aim was to combine particular fixed and inherently desirable elements (eg. the bamboo table or grandma's old curtains) with easily manipulable background features such as the colour of the walls and floor so as to show off the particular items and at the same time create a generalised effect or feel.

In sum, the abstract approach emphasised the inherent qualities of particular items and demanded that they be incorporated into an overall decorative theme. Such decorative themes were designed to produce a generalised atmosphere and did not depend on a specific combination of colour or pattern. Furnishing decisions which were informed by such an approach shared the following characteristics. First, component decisions, for example, those about the paint, the paper, the carpet etc, were made

with reference to the goal of realising an abstract effect. Accordingly, options were reviewed with implicit reference to a vision of an overall integrity, rather than in terms of, for example, a colour specific notion of matching (10). Second, and perhaps more important, husband and wife were believed to have equal right to determine the outcome of interior design decisions. Because these choices were believed to involve questions of aesthetic taste, and because individuals had a right to their own opinion on such artistic issues, there was no reason why, for example, the wife should be able to determine the form of the home environment (11). Patterns of involvement were consequently described as if they reflected patterns of interest in the aesthetic qualities of the home environment rather than some inherent home-making talent.

"My husband chooses all them [pictures]. I mean I wouldn't bother about pictures as such. I like things on the wall to break it up but I would say Dave chose all those."
[H2, school-age]

Despite this theoretical equality, however, many of the H1 and H2 respondents had greater influence over the course of a wide range of interior decoration decisions than did their husbands. This was because they took on the job of doing the relevant "homework" and, as "researchers", were able to set the agenda for the family discussion. The next two quotations illustrate this process.

"Well I go around when he is away and have a look. We are looking for a carpet at the moment, for the hall. I went round and saw this lovely carpet so he came home and I took him to the shop 'gorgeous' he says 'lovely ..great', and while he's been away I've been round the carpet places, getting quotations and working out which is the cheapest and would do a nice job. Then he will come home and I will give him a list of all the carpet people. We pretty much agree on most things I don't think there is very much that we disagree about."
[H1, no children, younger]

"That's quite good fun actually ...I quite enjoy going round antique places, these places in sort of barns and places outside York. That is where we tend to go and I, we might have sort of discussed what kind of furniture might be nice and I would go, you know, with the children in the week and have a look. Then if I saw something that I thought was nice I would go and tell Roger and then at that week-end we'd sort of go and look at it and buy it if we thought it was... It is sort of, er, we tend to agree on that quite well"
[H1, pre-school age]

This sort of "responsibility" was allocated on what were believed to be temporary, expedient grounds of convenience rather than with reference to what were thought to be inherently womanly or wifely qualities. Accordingly, the husband retained the right to an opinion about the aesthetic qualities of the proposed purchase even though the wife was usually left to determine the list of options which were in fact considered. Although the explanations differed, these described decision-making practices were much like those reported below.

The "concrete" approach

Those whose furnishing and interior decorating decisions were informed by the "concrete" approach considered different options, evaluated them with reference to different criteria and went about the decision-making in a characteristically different fashion. In this perspective, component "items" had no special status and no intrinsic "artistic" quality. Pieces of furniture and/or pictures were therefore selected with reference to immediate physical demands (size, shape etc.) and/or to a temporally variable colour scheme. Decisions to replace key items of furniture were more frequent and of a different order to those described above. For example, H3s and a few H2s typically looked forward to buying a new suite on the grounds that this would have a revitalising effect on the whole home: partly because of a "knock-on" effect on other decorating decisions and partly because these respondents tended to value the "newness" as much as the style of their furniture.

"I want a new suite. That one, well it is not that bad. It is going a bit at the edges but we've had it ages and I want another one. He says there is nothing wrong with what we've got. But I don't know. It is time we had a new one really, we need a change in here."
[H2, school age]

Decisions about the selection of pictures, ornaments and furniture were informed by a notion that the spaces in a house or room should be "properly" filled. This meant that particular items were selected with

reference to such physical criteria as size, overt subject, and colour. The following examples all concern pictures and illustrate the importance of such criteria as size and overt subject.

"We are looking for a big one for that wall there. Trevor likes all these ships being wrecked and these tigers' heads which,.. I just say Oh its absolutely diabolical.. you know .. I suppose we will end up with my choice there. There's not a lot that would really fit there. We've not really started looking yet"
[H3, no children, younger]

"Er those well those he sent for, those ship ones and, er, the train he chose, and all the rest ...we've loads and loads of odds and ends and pictures and all sorts, it's just what fits in the space sort of thing and I don't mind. I quite like them, though it is usually he that chooses them."
[H2, school age]

The meaning of "properly filled" (12) (as described in relation to the selection of pictures) also varied depending on a conception of a room-appropriate image and on a more detailed notion of colour scheme. In the next example, the wife objected to the image proposed by the husband on that grounds that it was inappropriate for a living room.

he: "That's crap what we've got up there, we got that bought for us I don't like it."
she: "Well I do but it is.."
he: "I want that spitfire"
she: "He wants an aeroplane well I don't I like something like that, but I'd like something a bit bigger, we both decided on them pictures.."
he: "We bought them when we were engaged didn't we? But she won't let me have my aeroplane."
she: "I will not have a spitfire in the middle of our living room."
he: "It's a spitfire turning to the clouds and its sort of sunshine. I've seen it in this shop. She won't let me buy it its only £33 and we could have it up there it is great. It's all I want."
she: "You can have it in the bedroom or the bathroom you are not having it in here."
he: "I'll have it eventually"
she: "He eventually might. It'll not be in this house it will be in another house."
[H3, no children, younger]

In this context it was possible to argue about both subject and colour in a way which would have been inconceivable to those who adopted an "abstract" view of art. It was, for example, quite possible that husband and wife could compromise and so agree to accept a third picture which combined the qualities of subject and colour which both desired. In the next case, for

example, an image of a moving animal might well fit the bill.

"Oh we can't agree on that..no...we are looking for a picture for the fireplace and I like this one with a stag just standing looking at you...gorgeous...I'm animal crackers, Ian said 'no, it is too still'. He wants something with a bit of movement in it. He doesn't know exactly what, but something a bit more active sort of thing."

[H2, no children, younger]

Those who held this "decorative" conception of interior design were usually concerned to select components which "matched" their existing furniture, wallpaper, suite or carpet. Several respondents made reference to the proposed location of a picture as a real argument in favour of one rather than another option. In other words they did not just like it, they liked it because it went with x in the dining room, or y in the living room, or because it matched the bathroom carpet.

"It was in a sale in Boots, yes, that's right I thought that it would go rather nicely with this wallpaper that's the only reason ..I mean I'm not into art or anything like that I just thought, you know, things match. He always wanted a big picture there because it's a big expansein fact he wanted to buy two but I said 'Ooh no it would be too much', but of course when we got it back and put it up I realised that he was right we should have had the other one."

[H2, no children, older]

As I have already suggested, component items were valued because of their relation to other decorative objects rather than because of any special or inherent quality. In other words, elements were very definitely arranged and selected with reference to a co-ordinating theme. However, that theme was almost always one of colour or pattern and was often determined by the key of the suite or carpet. While it was important that components "matched" there was no attempt to inter-relate discrete items (whatever their colour or pattern) so as to create a particular ambience.

In sum, those who adopted the concrete approach to interior design accorded no special aesthetic status to pictures or pieces of furniture; their emphasis was on colour, size and pattern. Accordingly, elements were co-ordinated with reference to a specific notion of "matching" (13).

One of the most important decision-making implications of this perspective

was that it permitted, and even favoured, gender-specific allocation of responsibility for all furnishing choices. Because choices were made with reference to an absolute notion of propriety (things either did or did not match) it was possible to "evaluate" suggestions with reference to that baseline and so conclude that husband or wife were "better" at making such decisions. In other words, there was, implicitly at least, always a "right" combination rather than a series of combinations each of which met different but equally valid aesthetic criteria. In practice, almost all those who adopted a "concrete" approach to interior design concluded that women were likely to be better judges of matching than men. This meant that the wife was usually expected to take charge of the actual selection of pictures, furniture, carpets, and curtains even if the husband had a say in debate about whether or not to buy or replace those items. The following examples were typical.

"We'd talk about it [suite] and if I really needed it then he'd sign for it. He'd not pick it no, no, I'd go out and pick it and come home and tell him about it and if he thinks we can afford it then he'll say OK you go and get it."
[H3, 16+]

"Matching things like that I'd have to say 'Oh all the nets want changing' I don't think men notice things like that, he does take an interest but not that much of an interest. I mean if I wanted ornaments he'd never notice that I wanted them if I had a spare place he wouldn't think to put an ornament in where I would...these things just to finish the room off. We would choose the basic things together but making it look homely then I would be thinking of it. I've usually chosen the colours and things like that. Things that have to go with other things, you know, carpets to go with wallpaper, things like that"
[H2, pre-school age]

"He'd say 'Oh any colour suits anything', you know, and I'll say 'Ooh no !! that colour won't go with that'. He'd have red and white and blue or something like that. But no, I choose the colours and he lets me get it, and it is always suitable, so that is it."
[H3, 16+]

Those who presumed that women were better at making the necessary judgements often concluded that the wife ought to be responsible in her capacity as "homemaker". A few described a modified version of this position and expected their husband to take an interest in the selection of

"major" items (suites, carpets etc.) but to take a properly indifferent attitude towards decisions about wallpaper, paint colour, pictures and ornaments. Husbands who took "too much" of an interest infringed these conventions of appropriate indifference and, as illustrated in the next two quotations, threatened to undermine what was expected to be the normal relationship.

"He has a big interest. Maybe sometimes, you know, I think maybe too much..It tends to be large things but he also likes wallpaper because he thinks well I'm living here as well. But there again I've gone out and bought wallpaper and he's trusted my judgement. This time round I did that, the time before he came with me."

[H2, no children, younger]

"Carpets, all new carpets we had to buy all new kitchen units, we bought the suite, curtains you know we bought them all. We chose them all together..sometimes I think maybe he takes too much interest but he does..I saw this suite and I thought it was too expensive I showed it to him and I wanted it in pink so he said well you know we stood and talked about it and then I kept looking at it and I thought well maybe that colour [green]. Now whether he talked me into it I don't know but I did like it. We sort of chose everything together"

[H2, pre-school]

To conclude, the "abstract" and "concrete" approaches to interior decoration structured respondents' perceptions of possible alternatives and led to the adoption of particular organizing colour or stylistic schemes. Decisions about the selection of decorative components were made with reference to such schemes or ideal models. For example, the H2 respondent quoted below describes how the informing colour scheme limited subsequent choice about the range of viable lampshades.

"My main design was a pale rose coloured bedroom, with pierrot designs on the bedspread. Once we'd settled on that I got the curtains and the lampshades to match."

[H2, school age]

Once established, such ordering principles of colour or design left little room for subsequent choice. Respondents reviewed the range of possible options with reference to that model and selected whatever came closest to the ideal. As with the selection of a house, the decision was structured so that, in the end, there seemed to have been little choice but to select the best of the available options (ie. that which came closest to the

ideal). As outlined above, each informing approach to interior design also ordered the nature of the decision-making process and structured the world in which individuals took over responsibility for making decisions about the family's furniture.

So far I have presumed that respondents had some choice in that they were able to select one from a range of alternative furnishing options. This was not always the case. Different sections of the sample presented characteristically different accounts of their inability to refuse gifts of furniture or pictures and of their obligation to display such items as family photographs, souvenirs or trophies. The described problems varied depending on the informing aesthetic approach. For example, many of the H1s had to try to incorporate inherited objects into their overall design scheme having had "no choice" but to continue the family tradition.

"Er well a lot of the stuff has come to me from the family. There is my Welsh dresser, the clock ...antique old chairs and things like that. Things that I hope will stay in the family. You know what comes from the distaff side will go to my daughter and what comes from the male side will go to my son...whether they chop them up for firewood is their affair, once we've finished with them.

[H1, 16+]

In comparison, H3s and some of the H2s presented what were apparently similar "no choices" in a rather different way. They too had "no choice" but to accept furniture or pictures from their family, though in these cases the sense of obligation was often a consequence of a pragmatic decision that this furniture was the best that could be acquired. This group of respondents had no intention of keeping "old" furniture "in the family", rather, they expected to dispense with donated, second-hand items as soon as they could afford "better" replacements. The following examples illustrate what appeared to be a common pattern.

"In our home is merely what we've been given and we've just had to build our home on that."

[H3, no children, younger]

"A lot of it we've been given. We chose the fire. I think really that is all we've bought, that and the screen. We've had a lot of furniture given. We scrounged it. Because we haven't been married

that long we are still sort of replacing it. Well I'm getting another suite, another second hand one, a better one than this and this one is going to me sister's sister-in-law. It didn't cost us anything so we might as well give it to somebody who'll get some use of it. With having a big family you get a lot bought you see."

[H3, no children, younger]

Other perceptions of "no choice" were clearly ordered by rather different cultural conventions. For example, only H2s and H3s expected to display professional style photographic portraits of their family in the main living room. Though the content of the photographs varied (the younger respondents had pictures of their own weddings while the older ones had pictures of their children or their childrens' weddings), the location of such key images, as well as of other family trophies (football cups, school prizes or certificates) was constant (14). H1s did not share this particular set of expectations, though some felt obliged to display selected family snaps and/or their children's artistic efforts in such "private" spaces as the kitchen or the hallway.

In conclusion, few respondents believed that they had much "real" choice about the selection of a particular decorative component (15). The informing conventions of appropriate style and/or colour, in combination with the need to select components which were either "in sympathy" with each other or which "matched", produced a fairly clear "ideal" model with reference to which actual options were judged. The review and rejection sequence involved in the selection of furniture, wallpaper, paint colour, curtains, pictures, and ornaments as well as houses led to a final choice which was then cast as the only possible option. Looking back, it was the best approximation to the ideal.

However, different aesthetic principles systematically ordered perceptions of choice and definitions of the nature of the decisions faced by different sections of the sample, while conceptions of interior design also determined the way in which respondents were likely to allocate responsibility for the associated decision-making. Those who adopted an

"abstract" view equated decisions about furniture with decisions about "art" and so expected both husband and wife to have their own opinion. Those who adopted what I have characterised as the "concrete" approach believed that component items should be selected with reference to an absolute colour or pattern specific definition of "matching". This group also tended to believe that wives were better judges of this than husbands, and that they should, on this basis, be left in charge of such decision-making.

Whatever the general perspective, debate about interior design, and about the selection of a house was likely to take place, if at all, in the form of a debate about relevant criteria. There were remarkably few accounts of such discussion, perhaps because retrospective perceptions of "no choice" but to select the best possible option obscured prior choices about the meaning of "best". In any case, there was some evidence that wives were characteristically left to make the necessary decisions about criteria. Although the terms of explanation varied, prior decisions about the grounds on which furnishing decisions should be founded were often taken-for-granted and what remained was a vision of an apparently inevitable outcome.

CHAPTER 6: NOTES

1. Bassett and Short emphasise the importance and the complexity of the issue in the following terms. "The diversity of approaches to the study of housing is partly a manifestation of the complex nature of the topic. Housing is a heterogenous, durable and essential consumer good; an indirect indicator of status and income differences between consumers; a map of social relations within the city; an important facet of residential structure; a source of bargaining and conflict between various power groupings; and a source of profit to different institutions and agents involved in the production, consumption and exchange of housing. Such diverse characteristics make the study of housing a complex matter amenable to various interpretations." (Bassett and Short, 1980, p1)

2. See, for example, Young and Willmott (1957), Rosser and Harris (1965), Bott (1957), Edgell (1980), Goldthorpe et al. (1969), Shaw (1954), Tallman (1969) and Cohen (1977) on neighbourhood, estate life and community and family networks. The work of McDowell (1983) and Saegert (1980) provides an interesting background analysis of women's position in urban environments.

3. Douglas distinguishes what she calls "consumption classes" with reference to styles and patterns of expenditure. She argues that housing represents one amongst other indices of expenditure used to discriminate between different levels of an extremely complex social hierarchy. She writes "Food is a medium for discriminating values, and the more numerous the discriminated ranks, the more varieties of food will be needed. The same for space. Harnessed to the cultural process, its divisions are heavy with meaning: housing, size, the side of the street, distance from other centers, special limits, all shore up conceptual categories. ...Goods, then, are the visible part of culture. They are arranged in vistas and hierarchies that can give play to the full range of discrimination of which the human mind is capable." (Douglas, 1979, p66)

4. See, for example, Weinbaum and Bridges (1979), Zaretsky (1976) and Comer (1974) on the family as a site of consumption and the work of Busch (1983) and Cowan (1985a, 1985b) on the marketing of domestic technology, if not directly on the economics of furnishing. There are also surveys of expenditure; for example, the annual Family Expenditure Survey, and other essentially economic analyses which make mention of spending on housing and furnishing. In addition, there is a body of social/geographical literature on the housing structure of urban areas. The work of Bassett and Short is particularly interesting in that it also attends to the structure of the property market and to the process of financing, buying and selling houses.

5. As Coward writes, "Personal style - a strange paradox, individuals have it but we can all copy it.Personal style is, in reality, nothing other than the individual expression of a general class taste." (Coward, 1984, p65)

6. That is not to say that H3s "ignored" such variables, only that they did not explicitly present social area as a significant criteria, perhaps because their price limit left them with less choice about this issue. As Packard observes, "People used street names to designate social class" (Packard, 1960, p81). While all sections of the sample made reference to "imaginary" maps of reputation, only H1 and H2 respondents claimed that their residential choices were directly ordered by such factors.

7. Coward claims that the question of interior decoration is one which is especially important for women. She writes "Because the home has been made so important for women, the decoration of the home matters a lot to women, perhaps more than to men." (Coward, 1984, p71)

8. The work of Painter (1982) and Coward (1984) is virtually unique.

9. Accordingly, I shall not emphasise questions about the "concepts of art existing in relation to the works discovered" (Painter, 1982). Nor shall I attempt to provide an analysis of the ideology of the home, or of the ways

in which "taste" is constructed (Coward, 1984, p68).

10. Coward characterises the non-working class style of decor in these terms: "The walls are plain; there is minimal furniture; an absence of what is seen as clutter; and light, open rooms. Indeed the ideal home is very much directed towards a visual impact, and within this visual impact, towards a display of possessions.... Walls are painted with an eye to how to display an original painting or a framed print. Shelves and tables are arranged to show off expensive objects to their greatest advantage." (Coward, 1984, p68)

11. In this context it is interesting to observe that HIs rarely gave or received presents of pictures. It seems that they were typically unwilling to impose their personal artistic tastes on others and so only gave pictures when they were sure that the recipient would appreciate the gift.

"This picture my husband saw it, it is painted by a doctor and they had a medical hobbies exhibition and this GP had painted it. I thought I'd love to buy it for him...we'd just moved to York, because I know he likes it, it reminds us of one of our walks in Derbyshire when you look down on the mill towns and it's Halifax down there, and Rachel [daughter] said 'Oh well why don't you buy it because you will regret it if you don't' ...I'd never spent that much ever!! So that gives me a lot of pleasure because it reminds me of Derbyshire."
[H1 school age]

12. As Painter notes "Another factor in deciding what to put on the walls... was the contribution a work made to the decoration of the room". However, as he points out, the "acquisition of objects was generally carried out only once. The walls having been filled there tended to have to be a special reason for replacing things - moving house, for example. So, though the purchase of a picture may be influenced by the decor, the priorities may be reversed when the room is redecorated." The meanings of "properly filled" informed the selection of "new" decorative objects but were rarely so precise as to demand the rejection of an existing stock of pictures.

13. Again this picture corresponds with that described by Coward. "In working class homes, the pictures and colour are often on the walls, as

wallpaper, not framed as possessions. Items are often displayed not to demonstrate wealth but because they have pleasurable associations. Here are souvenirs - memories of a good holiday; snapshots - memories of family and friends; and pieces of furniture chosen, not for overall scheme, but because they were liked in someone else's home. This is a different modality of furnishing, not necessarily concerned with the overall visual effect." (Coward, 1984, p69)

14. As Painter observes, "many things that people had on their walls were there out of obligation rather than personal choice. There is a very real sense in which these objects tell us about what people have chosen to give to each other as distinct from what they have chosen to surround themselves with - more accurately, perhaps, they tell us about the things people have chosen to retain from among the gifts received, with all the associated pressures that that involves." The obligations associated with the "need" to display family photographs are similar.

15. Some had "no choice" in the sense that they felt obliged to display a gift or an object which had some special association with a person or a place (Painter, 1982). This is a rather different interpretation of "no choice" compared with that which informed say the selection of matching wallpaper although the decision-making implications are similar.

CHAPTER 7

LEISURE

In this chapter I shall consider respondents' accounts of decisions about the use of family leisure time. Again, I am interested in the described decision-making processes and in respondents' perceptions of choice on the grounds that these perceptions structure the occurrence and form of any associated domestic dispute. My task is to document the various ways in which different sections of the sample perceived choices about the use of leisure time (1). As I shall use the term, family decisions about "leisure" were decisions which involved both husband and wife and which were about the use of uncommitted time (2). Of course leisure decisions were made in a domestic context already structured by individual and family commitments, routines and habits. This chapter explores the characteristics of the domestic worlds which ordered respondents' perceptions of choice associated with decisions about the use of the remaining spaces of uncommitted time.

Such a decision-centered approach allows me to bypass many of the questions which have occupied sociologists of leisure. All I am concerned with is respondents' perceptions of the kinds of choice associated with the use of what was believed to be uncommitted time. This means that I have no need to explore the relationship between work and leisure (3), the history of leisure in general (4) or the history of particular leisure activities (5). Equally, there is no need to define "leisure" as a sort of activity, or as a quality of experience (6), although it is important to acknowledge that respondents' perceptions of possible uses of uncommitted time were broadly structured by such factors as the length of the working week, the availability of transport, the existence of particular sorts of "leisure" options (7) and the existence of particular conceptions of relaxation, "going out" and a "good time" (8). Literature on the sociology and history

of leisure therefore provides a general background against which to view respondents' accounts of their normal week-end and evening routines and their conceptions of appropriate ways of spending their leisure time, though it does not directly address the decision-making processes involved.

If I am to define "leisure choices" as choices about the use of uncommitted time, I shall have to consider the meaning of "uncommitted". As Dumazedier and others have noted, time is ordered by more and less demanding obligations. At one extreme, individuals have "no choice" about what to do. For example, they "have to" do the washing up after the evening meal. Other rather more "elastic" obligations may be fulfilled at any one of a number of possible times. As Dumazedier writes: "Domestic work splits up into a multitude of activities varying greatly in their obligatory character..". He goes on to note that some of these activities are "done willingly and considered by the individuals themselves as a form of relaxation. These semi-obligatory, semi-pleasurable activities we call semi-leisure... They do not fall into the same class of strict obligations such as cooking, dishwashing, and the like. They count, in varying degrees, as both obligations and as leisure; they overlap" (Dumazedier, 1967, p93). While I am not especially concerned with issues of pleasure, I have to acknowledge that different respondents will have more and less fixed obligations and so more and less room for choice about the use of time depending on the nature of their domestic routine. To quote Dumazedier again, "They who have and use leisure regard it as part of the dialectic of daily living, where all elements operate and interoperate" (Dumazedier, 1967, p14). The location and form of choices about the use of time therefore varied with respect to networks of more and less fixed obligation. Different sections of the sample had characteristically different conceptions of fixed and semi-fixed obligation and different week-end and evening habits. The "location" of leisure choices (that is choices about the use of uncommitted time) varied accordingly (9). Choices

about the actual use of such uncommitted time were evidently informed by taken-for-granted expectations and conventions about "normal" behaviour. It was as important to document these expectations as it was to consider the location of potentially debatable decisions about the use of evening and week-end time in relation to a context of routine, commitment and habit.

I shall suggest that different sections of the sample and, in particular, different housing groups, inhabited significantly different domestic worlds, both in the sense that each had a different view of what counted as a viable leisure option and in the sense that patterns of jointly committed, semi-committed or uncommitted time were systematically varied (10). In order to make this case I shall explore two separate but related issues. First, I shall consider respondents' descriptions of the ways in which they spent their week-end and evening time, so as to identify the ways in which that time was variously accounted for by individual or family commitments. This allows me to locate areas of joint uncommitted time and to pinpoint issues about which there could be real domestic debate. Second, I shall consider respondents' accounts of the way in which they would "normally" use such spaces of jointly uncommitted time (11) so as to find out what each section of the sample counted as a viable "leisure" option. Sections 1, 2, 3 and 4 of this chapter review the ways in which H1, H2 and H3 respondents, and respondents of different "domestic" age groups, reportedly spent their evenings and their week-ends thus addressing both of the two issues described above.

These sections outline the domestic contexts in which leisure decisions were made. Section 5 goes on to consider accounts of those few genuinely debatable decisions about the use of uncommitted time. In that final section I shall examine the relationship between domestic debate about leisure time and the ordering context of taken-for-granted habits,

routines, commitments and expectations about normal evening and week-end activity.

1. H1S' USE OF EVENING AND WEEK-END TIME

It is difficult to determine the degree to which individuals believed that their time was accounted for by more and less "elastic" social and domestic obligations. However, it seems that H1 respondents were less likely to organise their family lives with reference to a fixed domestic routine than were other sections of the sample. This meant that they had greater scope for time-tabling their obligations and their semi-obligations and so more room for debate about the use of actually or potentially uncommitted time. In general, H1s presented accounts of their evening and week-end activities as if these were selected on grounds of personal preference and as if such individually determined selection were in fact possible. In other words, these respondents suggested that their week-ends and their evenings varied depending on individual choice and were only marginally ordered by routine and obligation. In detail, spaces of jointly uncommitted time were structured by a network of individual as well as family expectations, obligations, and habits. Some of these routines and beliefs affected the use of time spent at home while others ordered the form and frequency of the couple's social life. In this section I shall consider H1 respondents' accounts of home based leisure and semi-leisure time as well as their descriptions of the choices and taken-for-granted routines and expectations which structured their social lives.

H1s at home

It seems that respondents from the H1 section of the sample were able to make time and to re-arrange obligations and semi-obligations to suit what were presented as their own preferences. Despite this "unusual" flexibility, H1s chose to fill their "spare" time with what, on the surface

at least, seemed to be the same kinds of home-based activities as those described by H2 and H3 respondents. For example, all sections of the sample chose to watch television. More specifically, however, both the pattern of leisure (routine or otherwise) and the nature of the viewing varied considerably. Only a few H1 respondents had any established television viewing routine. Indeed, H1s were characteristically concerned to emphasise the degree to which they made conscious decisions about the "watchable" status of each and every programme. In this context it is interesting to note that a couple of H1 respondents felt that they ought to make a special effort to resist the inexplicably addictive appeal of television and to ensure that their viewing was "properly" selective. In the next case, for example, the couple went out of their way to re-introduce decisions about precisely what to watch in order to avoid falling into what they saw as bad (ie. indiscriminate) habits.

"We didn't have a TV for a very long time we just never got round to it. We finally got one in Harrogate and we used to watch it because it's so easy. You just put it on if you are tired in the evening and so we got into the habit of watching it and we both of us really didn't like that. So when we moved here we decided we weren't going to have one. We didn't have one for quite a time and then for some reason, either it was autumn coming on or there was something coming up that we thought'd be really good you know a good serial or something. I don't know what the reason was but anyway we did eventually get one. We have got a little portable which is a sort of gesture, one that didn't dominate our lives and it lives upstairs partly because the reception is better up there and partly because we don't particularly like it sitting dominating the room in here so if you have to watch it, if you want to watch it, you have to really make a big effort to climb up all the stairs and go up there."

[H1, no children, younger]

Programmes which H1s deemed to be "worth watching" typically included "serious" documentaries, plays or serials. The following quotations illustrate their organising categories and associated emphasis on joint, organised and selective viewing.

"Well we do like serials we are dreadful suckers for serials, by which I do not mean Crossroads but I mean things like say Brideshead. Any of the serialized plays the classic serials like Barchester and all those we enjoy those. We get involved in them and I like to make a mental note that they are going to be on at such and such a time".

[H1, no children, younger]

"We only watch after 9.30 pm, then we look to see what's on unless we've got into something like Barchester Chronicles or the Irish RM, which we make a point of watching. We like good dramatized stories especially period ones."

[H1, pre-school age]

Other than "serious" drama, H1 couples usually watched the later news and sometimes sport. The rest of the television menu was characteristically condemned as "rubbish", and sometimes even seen to be "bad for you". Those who held this view routinely faced decisions about turning the television off on the grounds that the available menu was "not worth watching" and/or that they had better things to do. Interestingly, associated debate was pitched at a general level and concerned the meaning of "worth watching". Because this category was seen to be defined with reference to general aesthetic criteria, and because husband and wife usually claimed to share the same aesthetic values, overt dispute was rare.

Given that H1s were only prepared to watch what came under the jointly agreed heading of "serious" television there were never enough appropriate options to fill a typical evenings viewing (12). Accordingly, television viewing was seen as just one amongst other possible ways of spending an evening at home together. In this context respondents made what they described as special choices about whether or not to select this rather than some other leisure option.

"We are not avid TV watchers, we watch specific things..it often goes off after the news. Most of it is not worth watching."

[H1, school-age]

"Its such a time waster, its not important is it? We really dont watch it very much at all."

[H1, pre-school age]

As the above quotations illustrate, several H1s presented a somewhat disparaging view of television as a form of proper family entertainment and appeared to place as much if not more value on alternative activities. For example, many H1 respondents and their husbands had their own hobbies. Unlike the casual interests which occupied H2 and H3 wives (eg. knitting or

reading), H1 hobbies demanded full-time attention and a degree of personal commitment.

"I'm very keen on upholstery and patchwork so I sit and do patchwork"
[H1, 16+]

"I usually sew or do my lace, I do a lot of lacemaking in the evenings, and Ian has his painting, he paints up in the attic, well not the attic, the top bedroom. Oh yes we are very busy."
[H1, 16+]

There was a clear division between the interests of H1 wives and those of their husbands. Most of the wives' hobbies were home-based and occupied evening rather than week-end time. In comparison, their husbands tended to devote week-end time to what were usually outdoor pursuits such as sailing, bee-keeping or fishing. Either way, such pursuits demanded individual rather than joint time and commitment and so indirectly structured the form of family leisure. Some of the H1s counted entertaining as a joint hobby, though one with which the wife was typically rather more involved than the husband. Others entertained as a "way of life" and did not distinguish this as a special or personal interest. However such events were defined, all H1 respondents were involved in a self-perpetuating cycle of fulfilled and unfulfilled dinner giving obligations and indebtedness. This ensured that the providing and receiving of meals was a joint and a more or less regular social commitment.

"At least once a week, sometimes twice we have friends here for dinner. So I'd say that that was what we did most often, having people for dinner and then we are also invited by friends to their houses for dinner parties."
[H1, pre-school age]

"We have formal dinners about once a month and then we are always being invited out to friends"
[H1, 16+]

"We go out to see other people you know and we often, well I say often, we sometimes have other people round for meals, and people have us round for meals which we enjoy very much."
[H1, no children, younger]

Whatever the scale and formality of the occasion, H1s concluded that entertaining was an entirely normal home based leisure activity. In sum, H1s' decisions about home based family leisure were made with reference to

a) a shared notion of appropriate television viewing, b) a network of joint social obligation and c) a pattern of individual commitment to particular interests or hobbies.

H1s and the meaning of "going out"

Most H1 respondents presumed that they could go out in the evening if they wished to do so. Those who had small children had to plan such events in rather more detail than others but even they expected to be able to find suitable babysitters. H1s therefore expected to go out without their children and expected to be able to make the necessary arrangements to "uncommit" time as required. Few had a highly routinised social life and so most faced discrete and genuinely debatable choices about what to do and where to go. Of course, such choices were set in an ordered context of belief and expectation about the nature of a normal social life. For example, reciprocal entertaining obligations ensured that all H1s were invited out to dinner. Indeed, few visited their friends on any other occasion. Some respondents described "casual" visiting of the "coffee morning" variety, but even these encounters were set in a reciprocal cycle of being invited and then inviting back; the obligation was the same even if the enterprise was less time consuming than a full scale dinner party.

"We might pop out to a friends house just for a coffee, or a drink in the evening its easier than having to keep inviting people for dinner, and especially with neighbours it gets to be too much to keep up with so we might just go for a drink, or a coffee, or they might come here."

[H1, no children, younger]

It is possible that respondents' accounts under-estimated the scale of routine visits to friends or neighbours, since, for example, some evidently met up with friends when their children went out to play. Even so, H1s appeared to order their social world in a rather more formal way than the other sections of the sample. There was very little evidence of unannounced "popping in" on either friends or relatives and, in any case,

most H1s lived some distance away from their immediate family. So, H1s typically chose to make separate one-off arrangements to meet friends or relatives even if such arrangements were made with reference to a general expectation of reciprocity.

Eating out was another "normal" H1 leisure option although only a few had anything like a regular night for such entertainment. Most ate out when they "felt like it".

"We try to go out and eat in a restaurant once a week"
[H1, pre-school]

"We do go out quite a lot, especially in the summer when we just can't be bothered to cook so we do that. But even just going to ordinary places it can mount up and we do have to watch the money a bit. Fortunately we don't have high tastes anyway."
[H1, no children, younger]

It was hard to define the types of restaurants which H1s normally frequented. This section of the sample seemed to be prepared to eat a wider range of food types but some found that York had a limited number of what they would count as interesting and appropriate restaurants. Choices were therefore ordered by personal taste and by the actual range of alternative restaurants.

"For a meal in York we'll go to an Indian, or a Chinese, we like to try different places"
[H1, no children, younger]

"We like to go out somewhere where the food is good, we don't go to these places that provide "tourist" food. There is not much choice in York"
[H1, pre-school age]

Although familiar restaurant goers, H1s only rarely went out for a drink. Some, like the respondent quoted below, saw pubs as quite alien places only occasionally frequented by people like themselves.

"We don't go into pubs er because they are, they tend to be sort of noisy and hot and expensive and smelly and smokey and all the things we don't particularly like."
[H1, no children, younger]

While a few went out for a drink on such unusual occasions as a sunny lunchtime or when they had visitors to stay, only one couple had anything

like a regular local. Occasional H1 drinkers consequently faced decisions about where to go, though none saw these to be especially important.

Nearly all H1s counted joint trips to the theatre or to concerts as viable leisure options. Interestingly, many expected to go (especially to the theatre) regardless of the actual programme on offer. The respondents quoted below had, for example, fallen into a kind of theatre or concert-going routine.

"I like the theatre, we both go to the city opera, concerts they put on one or two times a year because usually they are more serious than the things the amateurs do."

[H1, 16+]

"Our main extravagance is opera. If there is an opera on, we will go to that, as I say that is our main extravagance nowadays."

[H1, 16+]

"We like going to concerts, we are going to two next week, and the theatre, we like going to the theatre."

[H1, no children, older]

This apparently unspecific approach to going out did not apply to trips to the cinema. H1s, like other sections of the sample, took a typically disparaging view of the movies on offer and only chose to go to the cinema if they and their husband especially wanted to see a particular film. The following quotations were typical.

"It has to be something special, there isn't a great choice now. We don't go regularly. I want to see ET whilst its here. I might go this week."

[H1, 16+]

"Suddenly they are starting to have good films on, we went last week to Heat and Dust."

[H1, school age]

The definition of films which were and which were not "worth seeing" consequently ordered perceptions of the possibility of cinema going. In this respect, H1s, like other sections of the sample, believed that there was a general category of films which might be "worth seeing" from which a final selection would be made with reference to such factors as personal preference or taste. Finally, many H1 respondents were independently occupied with meetings and/or other related events for at least one night a

week. Though some clubs/societies/courses were more "organised" than others, membership was usually associated with an obligation to perform, attend or get involved (13). Because husband and wife tended to belong to different clubs/societies/courses these organisations provided individuals with a chance (and sometimes an obligation) to go out on their own.

"For two years now I've gone to the Castle museum courses, the ones that they do for the WEA. It is a bit sort of, he calls it Noddy history. I have a habit of going to history things as well. The last one was the Georgians, they have different speakers...and the time before that it was Queen Victoria to the Beatles. They drag all the exhibits out of the museums so its quite good just anything really that takes my fancy. It is a nice break really."

[H1, no children, younger]

"Well I belong to the Welsh society. We have meetings and arrange trips and that sort of thing and John is involved with Probus you know that it is for professional people, so he has meetings."

[H1, 16+]

Joint membership was rare, but a few respondents, like the one quoted below, shared a particular interest with their husband and so belonged to the same club/organisation.

"Recently we both joined the Georgian society. We found out that it enabled you to go and visit some of the smaller houses .. rather than the big stately homes which are just show pieces ... you could go and visit houses where people actually lived and get inside places where people don't normally see. That seemed interesting and we've been on two of their outings and we enjoyed them enormously. We've booked up quite a few more and during the winter of course they have lectures at the King's Manor."

[H1, no children, younger]

Some were so involved with meetings and committees that it would be difficult to describe their activities in terms of a chosen use of "free" time. If individuals felt that they were "required" to attend, their joint leisure lives had to fit around these personal obligations. Even those whose commitment was minimal were "tied" to a weekly or monthly schedule of events and/or meetings and so, as in the following example, had "no choice" about what to do on, say, Friday night.

"I usually have at least one meeting a week that I have to go to, yes we are both very involved with meetings. He is in the Masons, so he always goes to a meeting on Fridays."

[H1, 16+]

Or rather, if there was a choice it was a choice of "Shall I go to the x or not?" rather than "Where shall I go tonight?" Although true of all "membership" arrangements, H1s tended to belong to philanthropic professional or educational organisations which demanded a particular type of devotion and commitment.

Generally, then, H1s claimed that they spent their evenings engaged with a set of "appropriate" activities, selected on grounds of individual or family interest and programmed such that no two weeks were the same. Most were also entangled in a series of more or less complex networks of obligation which ensured that there was only limited room for choice about the use of at least some "spare" time. While husband and wife expected to have their own interests, they mostly expected that they would go out together, as a couple, and without their children. This meant that they had to fit a joint social life around their independent activities and their domestic obligations.

H1s and the week-end

H1s tended to fill their "free" week-end time in much the same way as they filled their "free" evening time. Many "normal" leisure options such as eating out, going to the theatre, or entertaining were saved up for the week-end when there was more time to prepare and no need to get up early the next day. As mentioned earlier, several H1 husbands had outdoor hobbies which took up week-end rather than evening time. Because many of the H1 respondents believed that the family should be together at the week-ends, wives (and children) often chose to "tag along" and, if possible, join in with their husband's/father's hobby rather than stay at home or go out on their own. The next two respondents describe such expectations.

"We've got a boat on the Humber. He enjoys it a lot more than me. He is actually besotted with boats and I originally, I must admit I went along because I thought well there are so many husbands that go down there by themselves and their marriages break up and I think you know

when they are ...when a husband is away every available week-end I think it puts too much strain on your marriage. So I started going. I've got to like it better. I didn't at all at first actually I used to make myself enjoy it, but I enjoy it now. We had a lovely week-end down there this week-end and the social life is good and we've made a lot of friends."

[H1, no children, older]

"We are country people at heart. We tend to go out for walks over at Hareham and Helmsley you know where we always go for holidays. Graham is a member of a fishing club there so if the weather is reasonable we all go over there for the day. We try to be together at the week-end"

[H1, pre-school]

Finally, nearly all H1 respondents expected to spend some of their week-ends away visiting friends or relatives. As with entertaining, the visiting arrangements were expected to be reciprocal. Those same friends/relatives came for return visits and so occupied yet more week-end time.

"We go away one week-end in four, or we have friends to stay."

[H1, 16+]

"We have friends to stay, we have lots of friends from Cambridge, where we used to live they come up to see us and we try to get down to see them as often as we can. My brother and his family sometimes come to stay for a week-end. They live in Birmingham so its too far to just come for the day."

[H1, no children, older]

Only H1 respondents had a) the space, b) so many distant friends and relatives and c) the means and transport necessary in order that week-end staying could constitute a normal and practical use of free week-end time. Only they were therefore engaged in such networks of social obligation. Accordingly, few H1s had an unchanging week-end routine. Rather, they arranged their time so as to accomodate the interests and activities described above. While some had more "uncommitted" time than others, all felt that they could, if necessary, abandon their domestic responsibilities and go away for the week-end, or at least go out for the day. As will be shown later, this was a fairly uncommon view.

2. H2S' USE OF EVENING AND WEEK-END TIME

In this section I shall review H2 respondents' accounts of the ways in

which they spent their evening and week-end time. This suggests first that their time was rather more organised than that of the H1 respondents, and second that, in detail, their described conceptions of normal leisure options differed from those documented in the previous section.

H2s at home

H2 respondents, like H1s, claimed that they were selective about what they were prepared to watch on television. While they did not divide all television into the two categories of "serious" and "rubbish", as did the H1s, H2 respondents were usually keen to observe that they did not watch just anything. In detail, H2 perceptions of possible television watching were ordered by the less openly evaluative categories of "something" and "nothing" on. Some chose to turn the television off if there was "nothing on".

he: "The television goes off if she doesn't want to watch anything and I don't. We only watch what we want to watch"
[H2, no children, younger]

"We don't watch for the sake of watching. No, we'll come in here and watch the TV unless there is nothing on in which case we'll turn it off"
[H2, no children, younger]

Others had the television on all the time but only chose to "watch it" when there was "something on".

"We watch very little TV. It is always on but my husband will be sat reading, I'd be sat knitting, or whatever I'm doing, and Sarah will be reading. I'm bored with it now it is not really interesting. It is not often that there is anything on."
[H2, school age]

As I observed earlier, H1s tended to watch television together. In addition, husband and wife expected to share the same definition of a "watchable" television programme. In comparison, H2 husbands and wives often watched different television programmes and indeed, often expected to have different definitions of "worth watching" (14). Choices about joint viewing were therefore made in a rather different social context. For example, H2 husbands characteristically counted sports programmes and the

early news (5pm to 6pm) as "something on". The following examples provide an illustration of such viewing habits.

"He likes the newses, he'll sit and watch the newses, one comes on just after 5, then he'll catch the ITV and Tyne Tees news"
[H2, no children, older]

"Sport, thats what he watches. All the sport; every Saturday afternoon, and all the sports quizzes, he watches all of them."
[H2, pre-school age]

While H2 respondents occasionally watched these programmes as well, they observed that in doing so they joined their husbands in watching what were defined as "his" programmes. In the following quotations, the subject of the "joint" viewing was apparently determined by the husband rather than by the wife.

"Ah you see football, I'll watch that with him...cricket, anything, but not war films. Not because I don't agree with war, but I think its noisy."
[H2, school age]

"I'd sooner watch sport with him than all these things they put on, like er we've stayed up at night recently watching snooker. We both like that."
[H2, 16+]

The category "war" mentioned above, along with other "factual" categories such as documentaries or "enquiry" type programmes also counted as "something on" for the husbands. H2 respondents expected their husbands to have these tastes in television and expected to have different preferences themselves (15).

"Terry likes anything to do with war and nuclear weapons. I can't stand it."
[H2, pre-school]

"Mike watches shooting films and I don't like those. He usually wants to watch television and he's been at work all day so he has right of way. I love a love story but I don't watch war. Mike will watch it and I might bake a cake. I dont mind watching if there is love in it but if it is sort of hammering guns going then what is the point?"
[H2, school age]

The respondents' own definitions of "something on" nearly always included one or more of the soap operas. Some were committed to following each episode of what became "unmissable" television. This commitment accounted

for regular slots of their evening time in the same way that the early evening news typically held the husband's attention for some time between 5pm and 6pm. Both types of committed followers had "no choice" about how to spend those half hours of what might otherwise have been "free time" (16).

"I watch all the soap operas, Coronation Street, Crossroads, Emmerdale Farm. Its just a form of habit. I like all sorts of fictional stuff, he prefers the fact type of things."
[H2, pre-school age]

"I am not that bothered unless it's Dallas or something like that, something that I can get interested in and that I really want to watch."
[H2, school age]

H2 husbands and wives were typically committed to different types of television and video viewing (17). Nonetheless, the nature of the commitment was the same. Interestingly, those few programmes which received joint attention - for example, "comedy" or "family shows", wildlife programmes or "good" series - also tended to become established in the family routine. Again, H2s committed a regular period of time and so, compared with H1s, faced far fewer discrete decisions about what to watch. Similarly, the content of what were defined as "watchable" programmes varied between these two sections of the sample, as did the meaning of "viewing". H1s were reportedly turning their televisions on at the very times of day at which H2s (both husband and wife) had lost interest. Compare, for instance, the following remark with that provided by the H1 respondent quoted earlier.

"Its not very good is it? After about 8.30, or 9 pm we don't bother [to] keep looking after that. I'd never stop in to watch television, only if its any good"
[H2, no children, older]

"We only watch after 9.30 pm, then we look to see what's on..."
[H1, pre-school age]

Conceptions of the nature of television viewing varied just as dramatically. When H1s chose to watch a programme they intended to do just that. In comparison, several H2 respondents claimed that they gave the television only part of their attention even when there was "something on" (18). As I shall consider later, this expectation of partial attention

altered the respondent's perception of the significance of the "what to watch" issue.

Like H1s, several of the H2 respondents chose to pursue their hobbies rather than watch television. The following examples illustrate some of the reportedly "normal" home based leisure alternatives described by the H2 respondents.

"We tend to play records more than watch the television. We occasionally play cards or scrabble and we might open a bottle of David's home made wine."

[H2, pre-school age]

"I read a lot, if there is nothing on television I will read."

[H2, 16+]

Interestingly, none of these H2 home leisure options received the same kind of commitment which H1s claimed to devote to their chosen crafts or hobbies. While many of the H2 respondents knitted, this "interest" fitted around other activities and was not seen as a hobby in its own right. Altogether fewer H2s (compared, that is, with H1s) expected that they or their husband would be committed to specific and time consuming home based interests.

H1s and H2s also described characteristically different expectations of entertaining. Only 53% of the H2s counted this as an ordinary way of spending their free time, and nearly all of these described the decision to have people to dinner with reference to the economic advantage of this option compared with the "normal" alternative of eating out with friends. While the reasons for entertaining differed, the associated obligations and commitments were the same: those who were invited out to dinner had to invite their hosts back.

"Quite often, not regularly, we don't like regular arrangements, but well, they came last week, I can't remember when we went there but we go there for a meal or they come here for a meal to save on babysitters. Also we find it works out a lot cheaper than all of us going out for a meal. Your money goes a lot further at Hillards [supermarket] than if you went out for a meal. I begrudge paying a lot for a meal. I'd rather buy something nice and cook it at home."

[H2, school age]

It seems that the remaining 47% of H2s did not even contemplate entertaining. Some implied that the option was inconceivable, while others, like the two quoted below, went out of their way to explain that they did not entertain.

"We tend to stay in now. We don't drink at all not even at home. Only if we have someone in. If, say, my brother-in-law comes he'll [husband] say 'Do you want a drink?' but no, we don't have anyone that comes here like for a drink or anything like that we keep ourselves to ourselves."

[H2, 16+]

"No we don't have many friends. I've friends at work of course, but no, we don't have people calling in. No I couldn't stand that. We are just prepared to be friendly and that's it."

[H2, school age]

In sum, H2 respondents and their husbands appeared to have separate home based leisure lives. Certainly most had different television related commitments and a few had their own hobbies. While all H1s were engaged with a joint cycle of entertaining and being entertained, only some of the H2s were committed to such a sequence. In addition, H1s and H2s had quite different conceptions of exactly what might count as joint home based entertainment. Perhaps the most striking difference was the degree to which H2s evening time was structured by a series of what counted as "unmissable" television programmes. In this respect the accounts provided by H2 respondents were similar to those presented by the H3s.

H2s and the meaning of "going out"

H2s did not presume that they could go out as and when they felt like it. Indeed, some of those with young children faced insurmountable babysitting problems and were literally unable to create spaces of jointly uncommitted time (19). The respondents quoted below describe just such situations.

"There's no one to leave him [son] with. He [husband] won't even have him so I don't go out. We havn't been out together since well the last time his parents came to stay."

[H2, pre-school age]

"Sometimes we go out and visit grandmas, or friends but we have to be back. He [son] has to be in bed by 8pm or so, so you have to be back

by then. We go out once a month. We pay for a babysitter one Friday a month."

[H2, pre-school age]

Others were able to go out as a couple (or on their own) having made the necessary child-care arrangements. In this sub-section I shall review the kinds of normal "going out" alternatives routinely described by H2 respondents: providing that they could make the time, then, what might H2 respondents count as "going out"?

It seems that many expected to make more or less regular trips out to visit their relatives. Such visiting constituted a large part of the typical H2 family social life and most presumed that at least some of the evening or week-end time would be spent in this fashion.

"Friday we go and visit his mum, and every other week we go and visit my mum."

[H2, no children, younger]

"Visiting parents we do that quite a lot they live quite near, so we visit them, not every night, but well at least once a week."

[H2, school age]

This leisure option was physically possible because many of the H2s still lived only a few miles from where they grew up. However, as the accounts provided by those who had moved away illustrate, relative visiting was also an important part of the H2 culture. The respondent quoted below clearly misses the type of support such arrangements were expected to provide.

"All my family are in Scotland, his mum lives in Fulford, so we see her quite a bit. I get on fine with her but I miss like my sister she lives just near [her mother] and she can always get babysitters and she can just pop in for anything well we have to drive for hours to get there."

[H2, pre-school]

While H2s made regular visits, these were almost always "organised" in the sense that they took place at a pre-arranged time. None lived so close as to make "popping in" of the kind described by some of the H3 respondents a possible or socially acceptable practice. In terms of more formal excursions, H2s were much less familiar with restaurants than were the H1s and only ate out (if at all) on special occasions such as birthdays,

weddings anniversaries or mother's day. The following example was typical.

"We occasionally go for a meal. We went last night because I heard that I'd passed an exam. We went to a hotel because there aren't that many places in the town that do good what we call ordinary meals. Colin doesn't like all these like Indian places and all that, so if we go out to celebrate anything we usually go to Hudsons."

[H2, no children, younger]

However, this section of the sample often ate out as a couple in a bar or pub. Such meals were either seen as a part of an evenings' drinking or, more commonly, as events in their own right.

"What we do, we like to go out. We may meet some friends and go for a meal and a drink. We'll go out to one of the pubs and have a meal."

[H2, pre-school age]

This arrangement especially suited those who were on "their" (ie. husband and wife only) night out. As defined by the H2 respondents, this night out had to fulfil certain conventional requirements. Essentially, wives expected their husbands to take them out for a "good" meal. Given that meals which met the H2 definition of "good" (20) were served in pubs, and given that H2 husbands, and sometimes wives expected to drink beer with their food, there was really no better combination than that described below.

"If we go out on our own (ie. independently) we'd just go for a drink with friends but when we go out together on Friday night we often go for a meal. He treats me to a meal, just a basket meal. We try out different places its just finding a nice one isn't it really? We do like going for basket meals though don't we?"

[H2, no children, younger]

Those who were unable to have this sort of "night out", perhaps because of the child/ren, tended to make do with a substitute take-away meal. This way the wife was released from her cooking obligation for one night per week even if she was not taken out "properly".

So, most H2s went for a drink (and/or meal) on the occasions when they were able to go out together. Choices about exactly where to go were informed by a mixture of routine and experimentation. Those who were able to go out fairly frequently claimed that they liked to "try different places" whereas those who went out less often tended to be less experimental.

"We usually have a drink on Friday night and on Sunday. We might go out to the country if the weather is nice otherwise we tend to go to the Dick Turpin round the corner but we like to try different places and we like to go out in the car round all the villages you know."
[H2, pre-school age]

"We go to the pub every Friday night, for the raffle. They have a raffle at 10.30 so we just go for a drink at about 10. He's won three times now."
[H2, 16+]

The frequency and context of these drinking and/or eating and drinking outings usually depended on the opportunity to go out together at all: there was little competition from any other form of outside entertainment. Those few H2s who went to the theatre, to concerts, or to the cinema went because they decided that they especially wanted to see/hear what was on.

"I go to the theatre any time there is Agatha Christie on."
[H2, no children, younger]

The cinema, in particular, was subject to "value for money" scrutiny.

"There is no pictures worth going to, we used to love the pictures, we used to go a lot."
[H2, school age]

"All you get is flipping X's"
[H2, school age]

"We're not really bothered about seeing a film. Occasionally we go to the pictures but it is so expensive now that you may as well wait till it comes on telly."
[H2, school age]

Those who occasionally went to the cinema did so because they felt that a few exceptional films crossed this barrier and were in fact "worth paying to see".

"We don't go to the theatre and we haven't been to the cinema in Oooh years but er we are planning to go to Ghandi next week."
[H2, 16+]

"We don't go to anything but Disney films. Like we went to ET on your birthday [son] didn't we, but no we don't go I might take him to a Disney film but apart from that we don't bother."
[H2, school age]

Though H2 respondents were much less involved with meetings associated with clubs or societies than were the H1s, patterns of membership reflected the same gender divisions. There were no reported cases of joint membership.

H2 wives were typically involved with organisations associated with the church or with exclusively female groups such as the Townswomens Guild, the Ladies Fellowship or the Guides/Brownies.

"Monday I've a guide meeting, Wednesday I quite often have another meeting because I'm a Commissioner, and I'm going out on Saturday because another Guide district is putting on a play at Heworth. Sunday we have got a church parade because it has just been Thinking Day. And on top of all that I have a lot of work associated with being a commissioner, it is not so bad now, I have got it so that it more or less runs itself, but you have to keep up with it or it builds up very quickly."

[H2, school age]

"A week next Tuesday we have got a lady coming to talk about embroidering cushions, that should be interesting, so I'm planning to go to that."

[H2, no children, older]

In comparison, H2 husbands tended to belong to sports clubs, either as fans or as players.

"He's out all the time in the season, every Sunday morning, and all day Saturday, and then sometimes in the week as well. I'm a hockey widow from Autumn to Spring."

[H2, no children, younger]

H2 couples also expected to have their own social lives, their own friends and their own independent pattern of leisure. In practice, husbands and wives were more or less able to go out on their own or with their own friends depending on their ability to "uncommit" the necessary time, and on the existence of what were seen as viable independent leisure opportunities. Some respondents (and some respondents' husbands) were able to organise weekly nights out "with the girls"/"with the lads" (21).

"Wednesday I go out with the girls. We just do a round of the pubs in town."

[H2, no children, younger]

"I keep in touch with the girls I worked with 13 years ago. We've always kept in touch and we try to go out for a drink and sometimes a meal every now and then. About once a month or so we go. It's not always that. It depends it's not always easy to arrange a day. We've all got children now so you know some of them have to find babysitters."

[H2, school age]

Others went out alone much more irregularly and consequently described a different balance of independent and joint leisure.

In conclusion, H2s tended to have rather more routinised leisure lives than did the H1s. In addition, H2 husbands and wives expected to spend more time engaged with independent rather than joint leisure activities. For both reasons, H2s faced fewer potentially debatable decisions about the use of joint uncommitted time. In any case, there was, it seems, a rather more precise ideal of exactly what constituted a "good time".

H2s and the week-end

The notion of being together at the week-end was not as important for the H2s as it was for the H1s and H2 husbands and wives routinely spent much of this time doing quite different things. This was in part a product of such domestic rituals as the Saturday shopping and the Sunday lunch. Those women who were involved with such routines had very little truly "uncommitted" time as their week-end schedule was to some degree pre-determined and even those with a more flexible time-table expected to order their own activities around those of their husband and/or children.

"We have our Sunday lunch at tea time if he is away or if he is going to be real late back. If they've been to Doncaster we might have our Sunday lunch on Saturday."

[H2, school age]

"They aren't supposed to have a big meal before they go [children go rowing] so I usually do an early breakfast and then we all eat later with just a snack at lunch time."

[H2, school age]

While H2 wives were typically committed to their week-end specific domestic duties, H2 husbands were relatively free to pursue their own leisure interests. Most involved going out.

"He goes motorcycling. It usually involves Saturday morning because he is an instructor and it involves Saturday morning and occasionally Sundays or about two times a month, it isn't every week."

[H2, school age]

"He is in the TA so he is away with that at week-ends. I'm in the Guides so that takes up time, or I'm clearing up"

[H2, school age]

The husband's and/or children's local or home based leisure obligations, in

combination with the wife's fixed conception of domestic obligation, typically precluded "family" days out of the type described by H1s which were not, in any case, an especially important part of the H2 notion of week-end family life.

"We can't go away for the day at the week-end because Penny goes riding on Saturday and Steven is in the church choir on Sundays."
[H2, school age]

None of the H2s were engaged in a cycle of going away at the week-end and of having visitors in return. Few had the material capacity to do so even if they wished. Thus, H2 week-ends were even more "organised" than the evenings, and such organisation effectively precluded debate about the use of family leisure time.

3. H3S' USE OF EVENING AND WEEK-END TIME

H3 respondents described very few choices about the use of joint uncommitted time. Their lives were usually so structured that there was no room for debate or choice about what to do in the evenings or at week-ends. In this respect the described pattern of choice was similar to that outlined in the previous section. However, H3 respondents held characteristically different definitions of normal evening and week-end activities. While H3 leisure lives were as structured as those of the H2s, these two sections of the sample made characteristically different use of their uncommitted time.

H3s at home

Nearly all H3 respondents claimed that they watched, or, at least, sat in front of, the television if they were not otherwise engaged in some form of domestic labour. The same, it seems, was true of their husbands. That is not to say that H3 husbands and wives watched television together; having the television on and watching it were, as described by the H3 respondents, two quite different things. Most H3s had the television on all the time

but only "watched" it if they concluded that there was "something" on. In this context, H3s' television related decisions were about what to watch rather than about whether or not to turn the television on or off. The nature of these discussions varied depending on the commitment and interest of those involved. While television was important in that it provided a continuous stream of entertainment and because individuals had what they saw as "their own" programmes, in another sense, it was less significant because of its very continuity (22).

he: "I watch the telly, a lot of telly. I just watch whatever's on. I'd watch a dot me."
[H3, pre-school age]

"If its on I'll sit and listen to it. I just take it as it comes if it's on it's on, if it isn't, it isn't. As I say I just do my knitting and listen to whatever's on and, well I just try to imagine what it looks like. You see if you're doing an arran pattern you have to keep your eye on the pattern"
[H3, 16+]

Like H2s, H3 respondents expected that they and their husbands would have different viewing preferences. The following examples could just as well have come from H2 respondents.

"He likes horror stories but I won't watch them I'm a coward"
[H3, no children, younger]

"He likes murder, and blood and gore, but we like the same comedy things, and he likes a lot of sport"
[H3, pre-school age]

"I watch telly, Coronation Street, Crossroads and Emmerdale Farm, I always watch all of them."
[H3, school age]

"I like Coronation Street, Darren can't stand that but I always watch it."
[H3, no children, younger]

Though husbands and wives were expected to have different preferences, neither evaluated the other's choice as "rubbish" or inherently "not worth watching". Rather, it was just that what men/husbands or wives/women would watch was likely to be boring and/or distasteful to the inappropriate sex.

None of the H3s had alternative home based interests equivalent to the H2

and H1's hobbies and none invited friends round for meals.

H3s and the meaning of "going out"

H3 respondents were often able to rely on relatives (usually their mother or mother-in-law) to look after the children for at least one night a week. The joint night out was a normal part of the H3 respondent's lifestyle whatever their family status and, in this respect at least, the H3s were much like the H1s. However, unlike the H1s, H3s nearly always had routine nights out. While they were free to go out, that freedom only existed on, say, Friday night or Friday and Saturday nights. Again unlike the H1s or H2s, many H3 respondents had entirely predictable nights out with their friends instead of, or as well as, with their husbands. In this routinised context H3s had "no choice" about when to go out, "no choice" about who to go out with and "no choice" about where to go. They always went on particular nights, always with their husbands or with the same set of friends and, in many cases, always to the same place/s. Some of the H3 leisure habits were so entrenched that respondents (or their husbands) could almost guarantee meeting up with the same people at the same place each week. Though such groups of regular attenders did not actually constitute a formal "club", "members" of either type of social group had little choice about what to do with at least a portion of their "free" time. As with H1s and H2s, H3 husbands and wives tended to "belong" to different formal or informal groups. Formally, several H3 respondents were members of church related organizations or of single sex groups such as the Brownies or Guides.

"I'm a Brown Owl, so Mondays its Brownies, and Wednesdays its Bible class"

[H3, no children, younger]

"I help with the lunches for the pensioners. I we do sewing for bazaars and I belong to the church fellowship and we have sewing evenings."

[H3, 16+]

Informally H3 wives tended to belong to informal groups of bingo or whist playing regulars or to the working mens clubs of which their husbands were also members. As the following example illustrates, those who went out to the same place together (ie. with their husbands) kept different company and took part in different activities.

"We used to go to the club quite a lot, you know if there was a turn on on a Wednesday or a Sunday or a Saturday, or we'd just go for a drink with our friends you know. He'd have his friends and they'd play dominoes or something and I'd sit with all my friends but since he started to get a bad chest and the smoke affected him we stopped going"

[H3, 16+]

H3 husbands formally belonged to sports clubs, for whom they played, (usually football) or informally to a group of friends who met at a club or pub. Membership of sports clubs usually committed the husband's week-end rather than evening time, although those who were most involved, such as the one described below, were also occupied during the week.

"He is out on Wednesdays training, and Mondays is badminton. Mainly it's just training, he doesn't go drinking, he's just concentrating on the football now. When you've got a family you can't it's better if you stick to one [sport]."

[H3, pre-school age]

In comparison, trips to the club involved a different sort of commitment. The following examples illustrate the different ways in which such facilities were be used.

"He is a clubman, he likes to go out to the club. As we've got older he's stayed in a bit more but he usually goes out about 4 times a week"

[H3, 16+]

"He doesn't go out a lot now because he cant drink a lot and he is happy to sit in the house or if he feels like it he'll say "I'm just off to the club"

[H3, 16+]

This was the limit of H3s formal and informal group membership. None went to an evening class and none belonged to anything like the professional or charitable organisations which occupied the H1s and some of the H2s "free" time. Though none of the H3 respondents thought of going to the theatre or to a concert, several went to the cinema. Those who did not go to the

cinema claimed that this was because it was too expensive rather than because they disliked the films on offer. The following examples illustrate the financial nature of the decision.

"We go to the pictures quite a lot. There's been some good things on, we went to ET last week. I'd rather go out and watch a film at the pictures. At least it's a night out you're getting [compared with watching a video tape], I'd rather pay and get a night out really"
[H3, pre-school age]

"It always seems such a lot of money to go out to the pictures, no we don't go to anything like that. We're quite happy just sat at home if we're not going out"
[H3, pre-school age]

Essentially, H3s who went out expected to "go out" for a drink. This was what H3 respondents did when they went out with their husbands and when they went out with their own friends.

"We always do the same, we go into town and get paralytic. We go with friends, we go round the pubs in town. We can only afford so much for going out which is really only one night. He hates night clubs but we always go when the pubs shut, I make him go just for a bit."
[H3, no children, younger]

"I go out with girlfriends, not in great gaggles just 2 or 3, and we go round the pubs, its nice to be in women's company, we do that about once a month."
[H3, pre-school age]

Decisions about which pub to go to were as rare as decisions about whether or not to go for a drink. Many H3s (wives as well as husbands) had a "local" and only went there. Others had a normal "round of pubs" which they visited in sequence. Either way, H3 respondents did not usually face the same "Where to go" decisions as those made by H1s or, more commonly, by H2s. Although wives were generally keener on eating out than their husbands, the notion of shared leisure time was comparatively unfamiliar for both. The typical H3 notion of a joint night out involved an evenings' drinking in which eating, if included at all, was functional rather than social. Those few H3s who went to a restaurant therefore did so in the company of their friends rather than their husband.

"I don't drink Frank likes a, he is a clubman he likes a pint. I like to go out for a dinner. Frank doesn't you see but when we go home [she comes from Kent] we'll go out with my brother and his wife. Then he'll go, but no, I go. I often go out with the girls. I like a nice

meal. No I'm not a club woman and I've never drank."
[H3, 16+]

"Well sometimes we will go for a meal, sometimes we will just go into town and do a round of the pubs just come home you know and get a Chinko on the way home, and that's about it."
[H3, pre-school age]

None ate out with other couples and none even mentioned the possibility of entertaining. H3 respondents just did not share the kind of general conception of a "joint" social life on which such "couple" based activities depend. "Going out", then, normally meant going drinking together or going out to meet other people at the familiar venues of pub, club, or bingo hall. Going to visit relatives did not come under this heading though it did occupy much evening and week-end time. Some "visits" were so automatic that they barely deserved the title. Others were regular and predictable but less frequent.

"We always go visiting parents. We usually visit your mum on Friday night don't we? My mum lives just around the corner so we see her virtually every day."
[H3, no children, younger]

"I often take Alex [son] up to see his grandma, they all live near and we sit up there sometimes."
[H3, pre-school age]

"There's always mothers to visit, and grandmothers we like to see them while they are still here."
[H3, no children, younger]

"I'm out at one of my sisters on a Wednesday, and then I try and get to see my dad at least once a week because he's on his own now. He lives way out in Acomb [4 miles away] so I don't always get there in the week but we have him for dinner on a Sunday, so that's not so bad."
[H3, school age]

Routine visits fitted in around equally predictable nights for "going out" while less predictable "popping in" took place during the day time or in the early evening and so did not interfere with the "going out" routine. Evidently H3s' social lives were highly organised and often independent. This left very little room for family debate about the use of shared leisure time.

H3s and the week-end

The week-end pattern described by H3s was much the same as that reported by H2s. The wives were typically occupied with domestic responsibilities including (in nearly all cases) the task of preparing a proper Sunday dinner.

"Saturday morning I go through the house, Sunday I've the dinner to cook, my daughter and her two boys come for their dinner with us, and by the time they've gone I'm shattered"
[H3, 16+]

Week-end routines and hence commitments were, if anything, more elaborate than those described by the H2s. Almost all of Sunday was therefore occupied (for both husband and wife) by the ritual surrounding the preparation and consumption of the Sunday dinner. The wives Saturdays were spent "doing the house out" and/or going to town to do the shopping while their husbands entertained themselves.

"We go out every Sunday dinner time. I get up earlyish, not early, about 9am, 8.30, or 9am, on a Sunday. I get all my veg done and the roast in, parboil my potatoes because he always likes roast round the meat. I do that, I partly cook the veg, I make my yorkshire puddings and I get everything ready and I get the potatoes and the meat nearly done so I turn it right down on the gas to a half and we go out to the Crescent [working mens club]. We have a drink and a chat to our friends that we've made there. Ron buys me a drink and he has a drink and we have raffle tickets where you win a bottle of Whisky, and well we've won quite a few bottles. We were only one number off last week."
[H3, 16+]

"Saturday he is away, he plays football, I take these [children] to my mums for the day, and I go to town with me sister, or she has the kids and I go with me mum."
[H3, pre-school age]

Although the routines varied in detail, none of the H3s were at all uncertain about what they would be doing: one week-end was much like another. Such predictability precluded nearly all domestic decision making of the "What shall we do?" form about the use of evening as well as week-end time. In effect, then, H3s hardly ever made any real decisions about the joint use of uncommitted time, for their lives were organised such that this commodity barely existed.

4. DOMESTIC AGE AND PERCEPTIONS OF CHOICE ABOUT FAMILY LEISURE

As the preceding discussions have shown, different housing sections of the sample expected to use their free time in extremely different ways. Accordingly, respondents from the same domestic age groups (but different housing categories) shared very few definitions of possible leisure options. Young H2s had, for example, much more in common with older H2s than with their contemporaries from other sections of the sample. That is not to say that age made no difference to respondents' perceptions of decisions about family leisure time. The point is that the differences lay in the degree to which respondents had uncommitted time, rather than in their conceptions of normal leisure options. In this section I shall document the patterns of uncommitted time described by respondents of the same housing categories, but of different domestic ages and so elaborate on the housing specific analysis presented in the first three sections of this chapter.

H1s' joint leisure habits were relatively unaffected either by age or by children. Because H1 parents were willing and able to pay for babysitters, most were able to go out at fairly short notice. Interestingly, only those with older school age children found that their joint leisure lives were interrupted by child related obligations. Those who encouraged their children to develop their own interests or to join in after-school activities were obliged to provide the necessary transport and "back up" services. While this commitment ate into the parents' "free" time, the respondents concerned still managed to maintain such "normal" activities as going to the theatre, to restaurants, or to dinner with friends. This additionally busy period apart, changing demands of family life had little impact on H1s' perceptions' of possible leisure options. Even the oldest H1s expected to maintain regular, active and, on the whole, joint social lives.

In contrast, H2s joint leisure lives changed dramatically as soon as they had children. The decision to start a family was also seen as a decision to devote nearly all free time to a home centered domestic life. The following quotation illustrates this view.

"We'd been married what five years before we had Alex so we feel that er I'm not bothered so much now because we have had five years of going out, so I'm not so bothered, now we've got him its better I think to stay in, and, well when he gets a bit older not so much at the moment but I don't think you should go out so much when they are small anyway"

[H2, pre-school age]

H2s were neither able nor willing to employ babysitters on the casual basis characteristic of H1 respondents. As described earlier, some consequently abandoned their joint social life altogether while others, who could call on friends or relatives, led restricted social lives. The respondent quoted below describes what are presented as "her" babysitting problems.

"I'm a bit funny about babysitters really because I wouldn't want him to wake up and not know who is there. So there's only really my sister and my mother-in-law that I feel really comfortable about leaving him with. I won't leave him with someone I knew and he didn't. It does make things a bit difficult. My mother goes ballroom dancing on a Saturday night, and my sister is younger so she's always out, and anyway we don't like to ask them too often, its not fair on them."

[H2, pre-school age]

Many of the working H2 respondents who were also parents of pre-school or school age children were employed during the evening and so had "no choice" about what to do with at least 4 week-day nights. In general, however, joint leisure opportunities increased as the children got older. Of course, not all chose to take advantage of these opportunities. Some observed that they preferred to go out as a family (that is with the children) while others, like the respondent quoted below, explained that they had become so used to their home life that they no longer wanted to go out.

"We are both home birds really. We are happy to stop in. He's not one of these who goes out a lot, no, he likes his home. It's not that we can't go out its just, well, we prefer to stop in"

Even if joint leisure was possible, such excursions had to fit in around

independent leisure commitments. Most H2's expected that they and their husbands would follow rather different independent leisure careers. For example, H2 husbands were expected to maintain a relatively unbroken pattern of independent leisure whatever their parental status.

"I used to go out [on her own] but since I stopped work I haven't really. There's no one to leave him [son] with. We don't know anyone really. I've been with some of the lasses from work they always ask me back, I've been when they've had dos and my mum and dad have come over and slept the night with him. I can't leave him [son] with him [husband], no, I have to make sure he's asleep, he won't stay with him. He goes out. Oh yes well he stays out a lot really, it gets me mad sometimes. I don't mind him going out with his mates that's only fair, but well he is getting better now but he used to be out a lot."
[H2, pre-school age]

In comparison, most H2s expected that their own independent leisure lives would be disrupted, sometimes to the point of destruction, as soon as they had a child (23). Unsurprisingly, then, the joint and independent social lives of H2 respondents were essentially determined by the presence or absence of dependent children. The described patterns of "going out" fluctuated accordingly.

Nearly all H3 respondents were able to go out with their husbands at least one night a week whatever their family circumstances (24). In addition, even those with small children were able to go out often enough to keep up with all their own friends. Once the children were old enough to be left without a babysitter, H3 respondents were able to resume what they saw as a normal (ie. pre-family) pattern of going out. Most, including the respondent quoted below, took up this opportunity.

"I mean I go out quite a bit, I usually go to bingo on Monday and then I go for a drink. Sue that I go with, she is the landlady of the pub so we go back and sit there and have a natter to her and then on a Saturday I go out with my husband and I'm at my sisters on a Wednesday night so its quite hectic. With him being 13 they are OK now... but it's only in the last couple of years that we've been able to do that, before my mother-in-law used to come and babysit for us but it was no problem really going out it was just that you got a bit fed up of having to stay in sometimes."
[H3, school age]

H3s expected to maintain a minimum of one night out per week whatever their

parental status. Additional (joint or independent) nights out were more or less possible depending on the available child-care facilities. This active social life only decreased when the respondent and/or respondent's husband concluded that they had had enough and that they were tired of going out.

"I used to go out to bingo. When we were younger we went out a lot. But I've well it's too much now. I'm quite happy with my home and family, they come to see me, so no, I've had enough of going out."
[H3, 16+]

Here, actual age seemed to have as much if not more of an impact on a couple's joint leisure life as "domestic age" or family obligation.

In this short section I have suggested that the location and form of family choice about the use of uncommitted time varied depending on the respondent's "domestic age". However, those variations were more and less dramatic for each of the three housing categories. Essentially, H1s' leisure lives changed least of all; H2s' leisure habits changed beyond recognition at the point at which they had a child; while H3s maintained a routine pattern of going out regardless of their parental status. This variation is important in that it reflects changes in routine which in turn determine the points at which there is scope for real family debate (that is, debate involving both husband and wife) about the use of joint or individual leisure time. For example, H2s with young children faced far fewer such decisions compared with those whose children were old enough to look after themselves. In comparison, H1 couples were always able to make decisions about whether or not to go out together, and about when and where to go. This was also true of H3 respondents, although many had such fixed conceptions about the meaning of leisure that, in fact, there was little remaining scope for choice (see section 3).

I have so far tried to outline the ways in which different categories of respondent spent their evening and week-end leisure time. The point was to document the patterns of routine and, in that way, to identify the location

of real decision-making about family leisure; that is, to pinpoint the location of decisions about use of time which involved both husband and wife. The described habits, constraints, and expectations determined the location of the boundary between "no choice" routine and real choice as well as the respondent's interpretation of viable leisure options. In essence, this discussion reveals the degree to which potentially debatable decisions were ordered by networks of routine, habit, and material constraint.

In the next section I shall consider respondents' accounts of those few "real" choices which involved both husband and wife and which were about the use of uncommitted time.

5. DECISIONS ABOUT FAMILY LEISURE

The respondents described two types of domestic decision-making about the use of uncommitted time. Both kinds of decision were informed and structured by the fixed routines, habits, and more and less "elastic" domestic commitments which were the subject of the earlier sections of this chapter.

First, there were decisions about the precise timing of an ultimately unavoidable event. Respondents described situations in which they had "no choice" but to do x but were free to choose when to do it. For example, the husband was, perhaps, obliged to mow the lawn, but free to do it on either Sunday afternoon, Tuesday evening, or sometime next week. Individuals (rather than couples) fitted their week-end and evening chores in and around periods of time committed by habit or fixed obligations. In this context it is important to note that husbands tended to have rather more "elastic" family and domestic commitments than wives: the washing up could not be left until next week though it would do no real harm to wait another seven days before cleaning the car. In effect then, husbands and

wives constructed different sorts of more and less flexible personal time-tables. Though there was some real choice about the structure of these time-tables, and hence some room for real dispute, individuals were, within limits, free to allocate their time as they wished. It did not matter precisely when the jobs were done providing that they were completed to an appropriate standard. In other words, the nature of an individual's weekend or evening time-table was only the subject of joint debate if the individual failed to allow time to fulfil their domestic obligations according to plan (eg. if the car never got washed). There were very few described instances of this sort of debate.

Second, and more important, there were occasions on which respondents had to make decisions about the use of what was believed to be "free" time. These decisions became the subject of family discussion if it was necessary to coordinate the activity of both husband and wife or if an individual's leisure time-table contravened the definitions of appropriate independent leisure (eg. if the husband or wife stayed out "too often", or "too late"). In practice, the majority of debatable leisure decisions concerned the joint use of uncommitted time or were about the need to "uncommit" time such that both husband and wife could engage in the same leisure activity (25). Not surprisingly, the need to make such jointly acceptable decisions, and the nature of the choice involved varied depending on respondents' expectations of a "normal" social life. Those who expected to go out on their own had far fewer "joint" choices to make than those who believed that husband and wife should spend all their free time together. Different sections of the sample therefore had different experiences of this kind of decision-making. In addition, the exact form of such choices varied depending on respondents' conceptions of leisure. The following diagrams summarise the accounts presented in Sections 1 to 4 and so illustrate the distribution of potentially debatable decisions about the joint use of uncommitted time.

FIGURE 7

SUMMARY OF LEISURE HABITS

	TV	VIDEO	HOBBIES	ENTERTAINING AT HOME	VISITING	GO OUT TO EAT OR DRINK	PUBLIC ENTERTAINMENTS	CLUB OR SOCIETY	WEEK-END	DOMESTIC AGE DIFFERENCE
H1	"Serious" only, so on/off choices. Husband and wife expect to agree.	Time-shift "serious" serial or record films to keep	Gender specific Given full attention or none at all.	Normal routine reciprocal structure Dinner party circuits	Formally arranged Distant relatives seen occasionally.	Routine restaurant goes but very rarely visit pubs.	Theatre Concert Cinema attendance all possible some routine Theatre.	Formal independent membership of professional or charitable organisations.	No fixed plans although the chance to go to stay with friends.	Able and willing to pay for a babysitter though often tied up with school age child related commitments.
H2	"Something on" Husband and wife expect to disagree - often only partly watching the TV.	Time-shift soap opera etc. Only one "holding" tape.	Gender specific if any Given less attention than His.	50% do as it is cheaper than eating out. The rest do not even consider this option,	Regular commitment. Fixed routine often at the week-end. Relatives live nearby.	Expect to eat out together, go for bar meals rather than to a restaurant This is a normal night out	Occasional trip to Theatre or Cinema depending on the programme.	Formal independent membership of sport or church related organisations.	Fixed routine though still room for choice Husband and wife often engaged in different activity	No acceptable babysitters so limited joint social life Husbands continue independent leisure, wives stay at home Both go out more when children are older.
H3	"Whatever's on" Expect TV to be on all the time Husband and wife attend to different programmes. Often give TV only part attention.	Time-shift all sorts of TV use video libraries Give videos full attention.	None	None	So regular it is not noticed Popping in is quite normal. Expect to live very close to parents.	Wives eat out with their own friends Husbands do not However, both go out drinking together on "their" night out.	Cinema occasionally if it is "worth it"	Informal independent membership of Bingo Working Mens club or sport related groups.	Fixed Sunday lunch and Saturday shop Husband and wife have separate week-end routine.	Maintain a night out whatever the family circumstances. Often joint as well as independent social lives Only retire from that routine when older,

FIGURE 8

SUMMARY OF LEISURE DECISIONS

	TV	VIDEO	HOBBIES	ENTERTAINING AT HOME	VISITING	GO OUT TO EAT OR DRINK	PUBLIC ENTERTAINMENT	CLUB OR SOCIETY	WEEK-END	DOMESTIC AGE DIFFERENCE
H1	CHOICE ABOUT ON/OFF BUT EXPECT TO HAVE THE SAME TASTES	EACH WATCH WHAT THEY WANT	EACH DO WHAT THEY WANT	DEBATE LIMITED BY ROUTINE AND OBLIGATION	DEBATE LIMITED BY ROUTINE AND OBLIGATION	ROUTINE	CHOICE ABOUT WHAT TO SEE BUT EXPECT TO HAVE SIMILAR TASTES	EACH DO AS THEY WISH	AS FOR THE WEEK	FEW, GIVEN ABILITY TO PAY FOR BABYSITTERS
H2	CHOICE ABOUT WHAT TO WATCH EXPECT DEBATE	EACH WATCH WHAT THEY WANT	EACH DO WHAT THEY WANT	LIMITED SCOPE FOR DEBATE AMONGST 50%	ROUTINE	DEBATE ABOUT WHERE TO GO	CHOICE ABOUT WHAT TO SEE BUT EXPECT TO HAVE SIMILAR TASTES	EACH DO AS THEY WISH	ROUTINE	CHILDREN LIMIT SCOPE OF JOINT SOCIAL LIFE AND SO LIMIT THE NUMBER OF JOINT CHOICES
H3	CHOICE ABOUT WHAT TO ATTEND TO EXPECT DISPUTE	EACH WATCH WHAT THEY WANT	NONE	NONE	ROUTINE	ROUTINE	EXPECT TO HAVE THE SAME TASTES FOR CINEMA ONLY	EACH DO AS THEY WISH	ROUTINE	ROUTINE

The diagrams reveal two important dimensions of difference. First, H3s leisure lives were much more routinised than those of H2s or H1s. Accordingly, there was much less scope for family decision-making or debate about the use of "uncommitted" time. Indeed, as I observed earlier, such a commodity barely existed in the H3 context. Second, H3s expected to lead much more independent social lives than either H2s or H1s. Again this served to limit the number of occasions on which it was necessary to reach joint agreement about the use of uncommitted time.

Despite these differences, there were relatively few leisure issues about which husband and wife had to reach joint agreement. The personal timetables of even those couples who emphasised the importance of family leisure and of joint activity only crossed at a few critical points. For example, H1 respondents only described joint discussion about family television viewing, about their entertaining plans, and about the timing and form of joint trips out to restaurants, pubs, theatres, or cinemas. All other leisure decisions - for example about membership of clubs or societies, about the time devoted to a particular sport or hobby, or about independent television viewing - were typically believed to be matters of individual rather than joint concern and so did not appear on the family agenda (26).

To conclude this discussion I want to consider respondents' accounts of the few debatable and so potentially contentious decisions about family leisure. This highlights the expectations and cultural emphases which informed the course of such family discussion and so illustrates the ordering influence of what were very general (if variable) conceptions of proper family life. I shall begin with a review of reported family debate about the use of the television (27).

Different sections of the sample described different types of television related decision-making depending on their normal viewing habits. What

were invisible issues for some (say, whether to turn the television on or off) were visible and contentious for others. H1s, for example, conflated the "on/off" issue with the decision about what to watch. As noted earlier, H1 couples shared a common conception of "worth" watching. This, in combination with their characteristic indifference to television entertainment, served to minimise occasions of overt H1 dispute. In comparison, H2 and H3 respondents expected husband and wife to have different viewing preferences and expected that these would produce television related conflict. Those whose husbands objected to their particular programme preferences found that arguments about what to watch were as frequent as the preferred programmes. In other words, those who always argued about Crossroads had (at least) twice weekly disputes. Although "addicted" to certain programmes, H2s and H3s were characteristically disinterested in the rest of the television menu. Or rather, they were less interested than were other members of their family. The following example was typical.

"Oh yes they fight over it. That is something they do fight, the kids and their father, 'I want this side on' 'no, I want that side on' so you can imagine what it is like here on a night. I'm not bothered, I don't get involved."
[H2, school age]

In more detail, the form of overt conflict depended on the nature of the household's television equipment and on the relative levels of interest and indifference. Those who disagreed about what to watch and who had only one television described different types of arguments compared to those who had, say, two televisions or two televisions and a video. 63% of H1s, 68% of H2s and 64% of H3s had only one television. In this context, the described disputes usually involved reference to a specific notion that on this occasion it was A's rather than B's turn to choose, or to a general expectation that A (usually the husband) rather than B (usually the wife) had the right to watch what he wanted (28). The following examples illustrate the strategies described by members of one television

households.

"Well as I say if he wants to watch football I can always find something to do. I have my programmes that I want to watch and he'll sit through them or go and potter about. It's about 50/50 we share it. We take turns to watch what we want."

[H2, school-age]

"I don't know but if there is something I want to watch and something he wants to watch I always seem to lose. He'll say 'Oh I want football on' and I'll go and do something else, some baking or some ironing. I don't know, maybe its unfair to say always but the majority of times I seem to lose, but there again he's been out at work all day and I've been, well I have been working but I can put my feet up some days. When I play with the baby I suppose I'm relaxing really, not working so maybe that's the reason. It's fair enough if you think about it really I suppose."

[H2, pre-school age]

The respondent quoted above appears to suggest that her husband should be able to choose what to watch because of his employed status. Here, as elsewhere, leisure is acknowledged to have a different meaning and significance for those who "work". For this reason the husband is accorded the right to "proper" relaxation and so allowed to determine the nature of the family's television viewing.

Members of two television households were always able to watch their preferred programme though they were not always able to see it in "ideal" conditions (29). All "second" televisions were black and white and all were kept in a less comfortable room than the "main" one (usually the kitchen or a bedroom). In this context, those who could not decide what programme to watch went on to argue about who should watch which television. Some took turns to watch the "second set" while others simply presumed that they would end up watching the black and white television if there was any real problem.

"One of us usually gives in or the other will take the portable black and white into the kitchen. You know we'll say 'Oh well its your turn to have the black and white'. It always seems to be my turn. No, it is pretty fair really."

[H2, no children, older]

"We just give and take you know, if he would like it on fair enough he'll have it on. We have a second set, a little portable set so I could go into the bedroom and watch something if I wanted to on the

little black and white one. But I don't bother I just sit and do something else ...we never fall out about that. But if it did come to a time when one of us you know felt rather strongly about watching something then I could go and watch it in the bedroom."

[H2, 16+]

In theory, those who had a video had no need to argue about what programmes to watch. Time-shifted television was of as high a quality as the "real thing" and could be watched in the same comfortable surroundings. However, those whose programmes were videoed had to find some unused and so often less convenient slot of television time in which to view their tape. In all cases of reported disagreement, including the two quoted below, the wife rather than the husband ended up with what was seen as the "second best" option.

"Last week we couldn't go out because there weren't any buses and I wanted to watch Dallas. He didn't want to watch Dallas he wanted to watch football so he had the football on and I had to go and read a book. We recorded Dallas and I watched it later. It always works out that way round, it's always me that has to record my programme and watch it later."

[H2, no children, younger]

"Well we have got two televisions and a video so we don't have that problem any more. It is usually me that has to video my programmes but now I've got the afternoons free I can watch them. Before I used to have to find time to see what I'd missed which wasn't always easy."

[H2, no children, older]

Thus, normal television viewing habits ordered the types of potentially contentious decisions, although the form of associated conflict (if any) then depended on the nature of the household's television equipment. Those who were able to win television disputes (usually husbands) were typically able to claim that their preference was either more serious, or more "unmissable" than the other's or that they (as breadwinner) had the right to relax properly when they came home from work.

The only other joint debates about home based leisure were about entertaining. Given that H1s and only half of the H2s expected to entertain, only these respondents had experience of such discussion. Because entertaining arrangements were expected to be reciprocal, there was

only room for debate about such detailed decisions as exactly who to invite on exactly which occasion. In nearly all cases the wives were responsible for making the necessary arrangements and for the associated catering. It was therefore their job to designate an evening of jointly "uncommitted" time in which to prepare and consume the dinner. The next two quotations illustrate such practices.

"If I say we'll have so-and-so and so-and-so to dinner on Friday, he is always very pleased. He likes entertaining but I don't think he'd ever say to someone 'how about coming to dinner two weeks on Friday?'"
[H1, 16+]

"I have to make all the arrangements. I think a lot of men are like that, they leave it up to their wives and they enjoy it but they wouldn't do it themselves. When we have friends coming he doesn't make the effort to do it himself. I think this is the general thing with chaps, that they are not bothered."
[H1, no children, older]

In these contexts, the wives expected that they, as cook and family administrator, would be responsible for making decisions about this particular use of joint time. Interestingly, the same expectation of administrative authority ordered accounts of at least some family decisions about going out to restaurants, theatres and/or cinemas. However, in these cases the effect of such expectations was somewhat modified by a competing yet just as important expectation about the nature of being "taken out" and by the need (or otherwise) to plan such events in advance.

Most respondents, but especially the H2s, expected their husbands to "treat" them, and to take them out. The husband was expected to make the offer but to allow the wife to decide exactly where to go. As I described earlier, many of the H2 and H3 respondents had an established "going out" routine which removed at least some of the component choices. As this example illustrates, however, remaining decisions were framed with reference to a general vision of the nature of being taken out.

"He takes me out for a meal. I'm afraid we go out every week, he takes me out on Saturday. Well we have a bar meal so we might go to Stockton-on-the-Forest, I like it there, or we sometimes go to Askham Richard. We used to just go for a drink, but I prefer a meal, he is not bothered but I say if I'm going out then I'd like to go out and

have a nice meal. It makes a change if you are cooking all week. He realises that it is a treat for me so now we go most Saturdays."
[H2, 16+]

Those who ate out in restaurants rather than pubs (ie. H1s) were often obliged to book. Interestingly, this task was typically left to the wife, although all other aspects of the event were in accordance with the conventional notion of "being taken out". Decisions about other joint excursions were variously informed by the notion that the husband should take charge when taking his wife out, and by the practical expectation that the wife, as family administrator, would make the necessary arrangements and so some of the associated decisions. In this context, wives had rather more influence over choices about events which needed some kind of pre-planning. For example, H1 and sometimes H2 wives were able to determine the nature of the family's theatre-going experiences because only they picked up the relevant programme, only they selected a particular play, and only they made the necessary bookings. While the husbands were consulted, few actually initiated the process or went out of their way to make their own suggestions or bookings.

"It is nearly always me that would buy a ticket for something. John wouldn't probably go and buy tickets for something himself, but that may be because he is not in York during the day although he has recently sent off for a brochure about Opera North. If we go out to anything like that it is usually me that has said 'shall we go', and I usually get the tickets."
[H1, no children, younger]

To summarise, debatable decisions about use of uncommitted time were typically informed by a series of surprisingly common expectations about the relationship between work and leisure, about "going out" and the relationship between husband and wife and, finally, about the nature of the wife's domestic administrative responsibility. These general expectations had more or less effect depending on the location and form of jointly debatable decisions about the use of family leisure time.

LEISURE HABITS AND LEISURE CHOICES

Sections 1 to 4 illustrated the range of different ways in which H1, H2, and H3 respondents, as well as those of different domestic ages, spent their evenings and week-ends. This showed first that different housing sections of the sample had quite different conceptions of what might constitute a "normal" leisure option. To give two extreme examples, none of the H1 respondents even considered going out to play bingo, just as none of the H3s leafed through theatre programmes. Second, but just as important, different sections of the sample saw themselves to have more or less routine lifestyles. H1 respondents observed that they constructed what were presented as idiosyncratic ways of life and argued that their leisure choices were made on grounds of purely personal (or family) preference. Those choices combined to produce a varied and unpredictable "leisure" package, designed with reference to entirely individual criteria but constructed so as to provide enough opportunity for a "normal" joint social life. In comparison, H2s spent much of their spare time engaged with independent and/or rather more predictable forms of joint leisure activity. As they saw it, the form of their leisure lives was ordered by financial or material factors beyond their control. In addition, leisure choices were made with reference to a static and fairly precise model of the meaning of a "good time". Finally, H3s emphasised the degree to which their leisure lives were ordered by a series of taken-for-granted conventions. This section of the sample faced few "individual" choices about the use of uncommitted time because it was simply presumed that individuals would conform to the normal pattern. For example, few H3s felt that it was necessary to expand on the meaning of "going out" and only a couple expected to have anything other than an entirely predictable social life. Interestingly, these general perceptions of choice, ranging from absolute personal control at one extreme to absolute conformity and "no

choice" at the other, parallel those presented in relation to other domestic decision-making issues (see chapter 8). Perceived choices also varied depending on the degree to which leisure lives were, or were not, routinised. Those whose leisure habits were most predictable faced fewer choices compared with those who elected to make one off decisions about the way in which they would (jointly or independently) spend each evening and each week-end. Despite the described variations documented above, there were really very few areas of potential debate. The first four sections of this chapter have also demonstrated the degree to which domestic routine, family habit, day-to-day obligation, and independent leisure accounted for the week-end and evening time of all respondents and of all respondents' husbands.

In this final section I have suggested that those few genuinely debatable leisure decisions involving both husband and wife were resolved with reference to one of three common themes. If there was choice and family debate about the proper use of uncommitted time, then those debates were likely to be informed by certain shared expectations about the nature of family life and about the relationship between home, work and leisure. While the reported relevance of such general expectations varied depending on the form and location of the family debate (which was in turn determined by the patterns of routine, habit, and obligation discussed in sections 1, 2, 3 and 4), the appeal of these general arguments was widespread. This is, perhaps, not surprising, given that such themes evidently fit into a broader vision of conventional family life in which work is contrasted with home and leisure, in which the husband is the breadwinner and the wife financially dependent, and in which the wife, as housekeeper, takes charge of everyday administrative responsibilities.

CHAPTER 7: NOTES

1. By definition, I am concerned with choices about uncommitted time: if a particular space of time were committed, then there would be no choice about how those minutes or hours might be spent.
2. This means that I am not concerned with decisions about the use of day-time when, for example, only the wife was at home, or with personal decisions about the allocation of more and less committed time - other than those which, for one reason or another, involved both husband and wife.
3. As discussed in the work of, for example, Roberts (1981), Parker, (1976) or Dumazedier (1967).
4. See, for example, the introductory chapters of Dumazedier (1967) and Parker (1976) as well as the work of Walvin (1978a)
5. The leisure activity with the best documented history is football. See, for example, Walvin (1975) and Dunning (1975).
6. Roberts (1983), for example, offers a composite definition of leisure as an activity, an experience, and a particular sort of time.
7. See the work on the history of leisure and on current provision of leisure facilities (Roberts 1981, 1983; Rapoport and Rapoport 1975; Parker 1976)
8. Curiously, there is very little comparative work on "class" differences in conceptions of entertainment or leisure, although some of the literature explores the meaning of leisure as defined by specific age groups (Rapoport and Rapoport, 1975; Roberts, 1983).
9. In that I am concerned with decisions involving both husband and wife, I am primarily concerned with decisions about the use of joint leisure time. In this context variations in individual access to uncommitted time are only relevant in as far as they order what remains as jointly uncommitted time. In other words, I am not especially concerned to document the degree to which wives might be said to have more or less "free" time than their husbands. Rather, the point is to explore the domestic contexts which

order family choices (ie. involving both husband and wife) about the use of uncommitted time.

10. Again it is important to emphasise that I am interested in patterns of obligation and commitment as they affect family rather than individual decisions about the use of "free" time.

11. In practice it was difficult to characterise respondents' perceptions of "normal" evening/week-end leisure alternatives. The relevant interview material inevitably revealed a wide range of different types of more or less frequent events. What I wanted to establish was the respondent's perception of the range of possible and acceptable leisure options. While this was presumably related to the frequency with which individuals claimed to participate in particular leisure activities, I chose not to take one as an index of the other. If I had asked questions with a built-in time limit eg. "What did you do last night?" or "What did you do last week?" and so collected nicely comparable responses, I would have been able to devise some definition of "normality" in terms of reported frequency. However, that strategy would have been unnecessarily limiting, as would the option of asking questions of the form "How often do you do x?" (In any case it would have been impractical to restrict the range of possible responses in that way). The following discussion of conceptions of "viable" leisure options is therefore based on responses to questions which were framed more generally, for example, "What do you do at the week-ends?" plus a few more precise though commonly applicable questions of the form "What kinds of television programmes do you watch?" or "Do you go out to the theatre or cinema?". I have had to presume that responses to those questions gave a general idea of at least some of the range of possible leisure activities and that it would be reasonable to use those responses as the basis of an account of "normal" leisure options.

12. 26% of H1 respondents had a wider range of television centered leisure options because they owned or rented a video recorder. Most of them used

their machine to "time-shift" the sorts of serious serial television which they normally watched.

"I use it to record things that are on when I'm at work, for example, last week I recorded the start of the Citadel er Cronin's novel. I'm taping that and I taped Oh what was it called, a thing about a young governess, that was on a few weeks ago I've still not seen the tape of that yet"

[H1, 16+]

"I'm glad we've got it now because I like watching serials and if somebody says 'Do you want to go out?' I don't like to say 'No, it's the third part of this serial' but now I can keep up with it all."

[H1, no children, older]

This facility, along with the ability to borrow video tapes from a library, increased the range of potential television centered leisure options and permitted more complex time-tabling of television viewing than would have otherwise been possible.

13. Scott (1957) and Wilensky (1961), amongst others, have observed that there is some relation between professional occupational status and membership of voluntary organisations. Related to this, much of the literature on leisure has been concerned to examine the links between work and leisure, and to explore instances in which "work" extends into "leisure" time.

14. Hobson makes the same point although in rather different terms. She describes the "two worlds" of television thus: "There is an active choice of programmes which are understood to constitute the 'woman's world', coupled with a complete rejection of programmes which are presenting the 'man's world'." (Hobson, 1980, p109)

15. These accounts parallel those described by Hobson. She writes "It is clear that the news, current affairs, political programmes and scientific programmes, together with portrayals of war (real or in the guise of war films) are actively rejected by the women. They will leave the room rather than sit there while the news is on." (Hobson, 1980, p111)

16. From a different angle, Geraghty discusses the importance of time in relation to audience reaction to soap opera, and writes: "It can be argued

that the most important influence on how the audience perceives the continuous serial is its regular appearance, in the same slot every week, every year." (Geraghty, 1981, p9)

17. Only 10% of H2s had a video recorder. This 10% used their machines to time-shift television programmes as much as they used it to play rented tapes. What was recorded was much the same as what normally counted as "something on" and so varied for husband and wife. From the respondents' point of view, the ability to preserve episodes of "unmissable" television (soap operas) was especially important.

"If there's a film on, we'd watch that and tape Crossroads or anything like that, Coronation Street."
[H2, pre-school age]

"We use the video when we go out drinking. Like we taped an episode of Death of an Expert-Witness the other week."
[H2, no children, younger]

Because the videoed programme "had" to be seen before the next "real" episode was broadcast, serials had a very short tape life. Many H2s used their video for this short-term time-shifting purpose alone and were able to manage with one constantly wiped and re-recorded "holding" tape.

18. Curiously, video viewing was a rather different sort of leisure activity. While decisions to rent a video tape were often informed by the respondents' conclusion that there was "nothing" on the television, decisions about which tape to rent and about how to view it had little to do with the normal perception of television choices. Rented tapes, unlike normal television, were reportedly given full attention. In other words, H2 choices about what to rent were much like H1 choices about what to watch.

19. Not all saw this to be a problem. Some of the "housebound" H2s, like those quoted below, were keen to describe their satisfaction with entirely home/family centered leisure.

"We are quite content to be home together. We are happy with our own company."
[H2, school age]

"We had 5 years of going out, so I'm not that bothered. We've just got used to not going out."

[H2, pre-school age]

20. H2s, and especially the H2 husbands, tended to prefer "English" food, as opposed to the Chinese, Italian or Indian varieties available in the "cheaper" restaurants. Given these tastes, there were essentially two alternatives. Either respondents could go out to a relatively expensive English restaurant or hotel, or they could go to a pub which specialised in bar food.

21. From my point of view, independent leisure patterns are significant in as far as they constrain joint leisure options (in that they consume both time and money) and in as far as they might become the subject of domestic dispute (if, for instance, individuals infringe the conventions of appropriate independent leisure). Nonetheless, it is still important to acknowledge that perceptions of the chance to go out independently varied according to gender.

22. Like H2s, H3s described video viewing in a rather different way. 21% of H3s had a video, most of which were acquired in order to "time-shift" television programmes which otherwise would be missed.

he: "With working three shifts I miss out on every third week. I miss out interesting bits. That's why we got it, but she doesn't know how to work the teletext to find out what's on so she won't tape things for me. I have to set it for her."

[H3, pre-school age]

"With me being out such a lot [in the evening] it's mainly taping those [TV programmes] so I can watch them during the day when I come home from work"

[H3, school age]

In practice, the television diet was also supplemented with rented video tapes. Both pre-recorded and rented videos were reportedly given full, rather than partial, attention.

23. H2 respondents could only go out if they could delegate their child-care responsibilities. This was often so difficult to arrange that respondents found it impossible to go out when their children were young. Because they lost contact with their friends at this stage, their

subsequent social life was limited: even if they had a greater opportunity to go out they had no one to go out with. This respondent sums up the position.

"I don't know what it is I think once they get married they [women] tend to lose a lot of their friends. I used to live up in Acomb before I was married I had two, there were three of us all through school we were real good friends. Then one got married to a lad in the Air Force, then she got divorced, she has an Iranian husband now. The other one has four little girls so I don't get up there much and she can't come down here."

[H2, school age]

24. Of course those who did not have children were able to stay out much later than those who were relying on their mothers/mothers-in-law to babysit.

"We er sort of prefer to go out together when we can. Its just usually down to the Winning Post just for a couple of hours but we don't get to go out very much. It'd mean my mum, she looks after him [son] and well they'd have to put him to bed. Well I don't think they'd like to I mean I'd have to sort of change his nappies before he went to bed. So we come back early about 9.30 so when I can get back I can change his nappy and put him to bed so we don't have to rely on them. It's not fair on them."

[H3, pre-school age]

25. Debatable "family" decisions included, for example, choices about where to go on Friday night, (given that husband and wife planned to go out together on Friday night), about when to make time to go (together) to see x at the cinema or even about what to watch (together) on television.

26. "Independent" decisions included, for example, A's choice about whether or not to plant the potatoes this Sunday or next, about whether or not to sign on for a term of Yoga or about what television programmes to watch (alone). Such decisions were only the subject of joint debate if A or B engaged in "too much" independent leisure and so infringed what were expected to be shared expectations about the nature of "normal" family life. In my sample, such debate was rare.

27. Some of the literature on leisure considers the impact of television on family life. However, only a few writers have directly attended to domestic television related dispute. See, for example, Rosenblat (1976).

28. Hobson describes what her respondents saw as their husbands "right" to watch certain types of television in these terms: "there is a clear distinction between what men and women watch and what is seen to be the right of the husband to watch (news and current affairs programmes)" (Hobson, 1980, p110)

29. Parker suggests that "Conflicts over programme preferences are likely to be most frequent in the one-set family; such conflicts need not happen in multiple-set families". However, that presumes that the multiple televisions are of equal quality and located in equally comfortable parts of the house.

HOLIDAYS

This chapter reviews respondents' accounts of decisions about going on holiday, accounts which reflect certain common conceptions of the nature of holiday as opposed to "normal" life. However, these general conceptions informed described decision-making processes, perceptions of choice and so the context of associated dispute in a number of different ways.

In the broadest sense, of course, holiday choices were structured by such factors as the availability of cheap air travel, of holiday resorts, of hotel accomodation, and of paid holiday time. More specifically, respondents clearly had strongly routinised holiday "habits".

Much of the relevant literature documents the social and economic history of the holiday and so provides a general background against which to view the particular decisions described by my respondents (1). In this literature, as in that produced by economists, geographers and cultural analysts (2), the subject of study, the holiday, is taken as given. Attention is devoted to changes and patterns in holiday-going practices and, occasionally, to the character of holiday experiences, but not to the decision-making processes which led to the selection of one rather than another holiday option.

Interestingly, sociologists of leisure rarely discuss holidays, though, by almost all definitions, holiday time is also leisure time (3). While decisions about holidays, like decisions about leisure, involved choices about the use of "uncommitted" time, the notion of being on holiday served to frame such choices in a particular way. Decisions about holidays were therefore ordered with reference to a discrete set of holiday going conventions which were unlike those that informed normal use of "free time". That is not to say that holiday decisions were self-contained or

easy to identify. As I shall show, conventional notions of a holiday ordered a wide range of theoretically distinct choices about holiday location, holiday accomodation, and holiday activity.

In sections 1, 2, 3 and 4 of this chapter I shall review the definitions of a holiday which appeared to inform the choices of different sections of the sample. Having done this I shall then examine the ways in which these general visions informed respondents' perceptions of the kinds of choice associated with a series of particular holiday related decisions.

By way of introduction, it is important to emphasise the cultural significance attached to holiday-making and to acknowledge the complexity of what initially appears to be a simple issue: selecting a holiday location. Consider first the accounts of those eight respondents (of the comparative sample of fifty-two) who had not had a holiday in the last year. Without exception, members of this group presented themselves as self-defined freaks or as "unfortunates" who were for some reason unable to be like everybody else. The respondent quoted below describes what she acknowledges to be a deviant view.

"No I'd rather have a suite, I'm different from everybody else you see they'd rather have a holiday, but you see a holiday lasts you a week and its forgotten, a suite lasts seventeen years. I'm told I'm different from everybody else."

[H2, school age]

For the most part, those who did not go on holiday would have liked to but believed that they "could not" because they were either "too old", "too" pregnant, or the parents of children who were "too young". All viewed their inability to go away with some regret and most tried to arrange substitute holidays made up of days out.

"Well obviously we can't go this year, not with Paul. We'll try to go for days out and that but we couldn't manage a holiday not while he is a bit bigger anyway."

[H2, pre-school age]

"We used to go on the Wallace Arnold tours, all 4 of us you know Eric's mum and dad and us two well of course all that stopped when his mother died but we always had good holidays, oh yes, thats all over now, we are too old for all that now."
[H2, 16+]

These accounts illustrate the cultural importance of going on holiday. All sections of the sample saw holidays as both normal and important events in ordinary family life and some clearly marked out the year with reference to the highlights of Christmas and holiday. Both events demanded a degree of advanced preparation and financial planning and both were seen to be important "family" occasions. Even those who adopted a more casual approach to holiday-making agreed that it was important for the family to get away for at least a couple of weeks a year and to engage in holiday activities, whatever that was believed to involve.

So, nearly all the sample were faced with the task of deciding where to go on holiday. The final choice of a particular resort or destination represented the culmination of a complex sequence of theoretically separate decisions about what counts as a holiday, about proposed holiday activities, and about the financial priority of holiday expenditure. In practice these different components were logically and temporally inter-related. This double inter-relation made it impossible to conduct a "non decision-making" type of analysis of the ways in which particular component choices ordered and/or maybe even precluded other subsequent decisions. It was even impossible to establish a basic necessary sequence of decision-making, since what would seem to be the initial holiday decision ("To go, or not to go?") was evidently made with reference to a set of pre-existing holiday-going principles. For instance, if a self-catering holiday did not count as a proper holiday then respondents might choose not to go at all if they could not afford to go full-board. In this case, the full-board definition of a holiday was "decided" prior to the initial question of whether or not to go away this year. The general vision of what constituted a holiday therefore ordered this choice as much as it ordered

the other choices of where to go, where to stay, and what to do. In the next four sections I shall attempt to identify the respondents' visions of a holiday, though without attempting to produce an analysis of all the decisions, sub-decisions, and sub-sub decisions which mutually influenced and constrained each other on the way to a final solution.

1. H1S' DEFINITION OF A HOLIDAY

Respondents from this housing group had greater financial freedom than the rest of the sample and were in principle able to choose from a fairly wide range of alternative holiday resorts. In this context it is especially interesting to observe that 48% of those who stayed in Britain were H1s. Given their relative financial freedom this choice seems to represent a positive pro British preference as it was unlikely to have been the only practical option. The following quotations illustrate what the H1 respondents saw as the pleasures and advantages of staying in Britian.

"We love Swaledale. We always go there. We have a cottage we can stay in and we just go walking. There is not a lot else you can do there really."

[H1, school age]

"We are very boring in our holidays, we always go to Scotland or Northumberland for our holidays. We go and stay ..we find nice hotels and we take the dog, we go somewhere the dog can go, and we drive around or go for walks, it is lovely."

[H1, 16+]

These two accounts are typical of those provided by H1s who did not go abroad. All these respondents headed for the country rather than the seaside, some to go touring, others to explore the countryside around their own or a rented cottage - 15% of H1s had their own country cottage and another 7% rented or, as in the case quoted below, borrowed one (4).

"Jonathan's parents have a little cottage in Hareham, near Helmsley where we go fishing and on holidays. We go there for one of our holidays ..sort of our spring holiday..and my parents have got a cottage in Scotland and so we go there for our summer holidays."

[H1, pre-school age]

H1s who went abroad tended to choose equally rural locations. They described very active holidays spent in the pursuit of "authentic" native

culture and, to a lesser extent, of "obligatory" tourist sights. They consequently chose not to go on package holidays to coastal resorts. They went camping or rented gites or villas and so claimed to get a "better" view of the life of the particular country they had chosen to explore.

"We started to camp on the continent, but this year will be probably the most extravagant holiday we've had. We are going to rent a villa in Spain. We'll drive there in the van [Dormobile type] because the van makes travelling great fun it is like a big living room, you can see all the country from your front window it is marvellous, you get to see such a lot that way."

[H1, school age]

"The places we go to there isn't much to do anyway..just walking you know or exploring the area, that's what we enjoy."

[H1, school age]

In conclusion, H1s almost exclusively spent their holidays in the British or foreign countryside. MacCannell's (1976) description of the real experience seekers fits exactly (5). Some set off wishing to discover the great outdoors (70% of those who went camping were H1s) while others were bent on unlocking the secrets of France, Spain, or Italy. Even the less adventurous wanted to appreciate the particular qualities of the country they had chosen to visit.

"Italy..Oh well I love Italian food and wine,..er and we went to see the Vatican. I'd never been to Italy before so there were lots of things I wanted to see."

[H1, no children, younger]

Finally, a couple of H1 respondents travelled to much more distant places: one to Africa, the other to Thailand.

"Well it was either a new kitchen or a holiday in Thailand, and we thought about it for a bit and asked some friends 'which would you choose' we'd got the money and they were about the same price, well they said 'the holiday' and so we went, and it was fantastic."

[H1, no children, younger]

Though neither saw these as "normal" holidays they were on this occasion a real option. Other H1 respondents were planning (though had not yet been) on equally "exotic" holidays (6). In effect, H1s were principally interested in the nature of the place in which they would take their holiday. Other issues such as accomodation and activity were subsidiary and in part determined by the outcome of the key "Where to explore?"

decision.

2. H2S' DEFINITION OF A HOLIDAY

H2s went abroad more than any other section of the sample and typically chose to stay in full-board hotels in either Spanish, Yugoslavian or, occasionally, Greek seaside resorts. None of these respondents claimed to have any particular interest in going to one rather than another country. That decision was usually a by-product of what were seen to be significant issues, such as cost, precise location (ie. the distance from the sea) and/or quality of the accomodation. This group, like the holiday makers described by Thompson (1982) chose to go abroad principally for the sun, the sea, and the comparatively cheap full-board accomodation (7).

"I'm a sun person...I like to go and sort of fester on some continental beach."

[H2, no children, younger]

"We both like going away and soaking up the sun."

[H2, no children, older]

In comparison, those who stayed in Britain described rather more active sight-seeing holidays. For example, the respondents quoted below set out to explore the coastline and the countryside and to encounter the kind of "staged" history presented by historic houses, museums and monuments.

"Well now they [children] are getting older they want to be doing things or they might go on the beach. We like going round stately homes and gardens. We like looking round gardens and churches and museums, places like that."

[H2, school age]

"He is very good, he is a marvellous driver he likes to notice where the roads are..you know he knows all the roads and he can name them you know A54, A60 all that he is very clever that way and he takes a big interest in maps and areas. He planned a holiday once, we went down the all around Stratford area and came back up the West side and to Chester, that was a lovely holiday. We hired a car that week and it was very nice, he is very good that way. We both take an interest in a new area and finding out, we look it up before we go and then we can see how it has altered....We both like old churches and we go rooting round old churches and homes like Harewood house and places like that and coastal lines..it suits both of us that sort of thing."

[H2, no children, older]

Compared with the comprehensive style of H1 tourism these H2 trips to

historic homes, local museums and "natural beauty spots" reflected a more conservative "day out" approach to holiday making. From the base of a full-board hotel, guest house, or bed and breakfast establishment, H2 tourists made daily forays to visit the acknowledged landmarks of the British heritage (8). Whether they went to sunny beaches abroad or chose to stay in Britain, H2s were concerned to feel "at home" when they were on holiday. The "best" bed and breakfasts or hotels were those which were most "familiar", just as the "best" foreign resorts were those which were like warmer British ones. In addition, H2s, again unlike H1s, were characteristically concerned about their holiday accommodation. Several, like the respondent quoted below, believed that anything other than a full-board holiday was sub-standard.

"Oh I wouldn't call it a holiday otherwise. I'd say what's the point if you are cooking for yourself you may as well stay home and go to the coast from here. I call it a holiday when I can sit down have my meal and walk out and let somebody else do the work...he doesn't like it [self-catering]. He won't go in a caravan either. He says its no fun for me."
[H2, school age]

Others believed, with equal conviction, that it was better to go self-catering on the grounds that it was "easier with the children" or because you could ensure that the food was to your taste. The following quotation illustrates the perceived importance of food and of accommodation.

"We prefer self-catering, well when we were in Greece, although he loved the people, he loves Greece but he couldn't abide the food. He doesn't like it...it was all swimming in oil, its just too rich and yet you could go to the tavernas and get anything you wanted without oil, so we said well if we were self-catering we can buy the vegetables at the local shops and do as we wish."
[H2, 16+]

Whatever the view taken, H2s believed that accommodation was a real and significant issue.

In conclusion, the typical H2 view of a holiday shared certain of the features characteristic of the model holidays described by H1 and H3 respondents. The H2 model could accommodate the idea of touring provided that there was a base line of physical comfort and cultural familiarity.

In effect, H2 tourists expected to be protected from precisely the strange and unfamiliar elements that H1s went out of their way to find. While they wanted to visit historic or significant places, they were concerned to return to a comfortable and homely environment. The H2 model also incorporated a static seaside holiday option. H2 visions of seaside holidays, like those of H3s, were presented with exclusive reference to the sand, the sea, and the sun. What was important was the quality of these factors, not the cultural characteristics of the particular country and/or resort.

3. H3S' DEFINITION OF A HOLIDAY

There seemed to be a general H3 consensus that holidays were spent at the seaside (9). Because the "best" seashores were presumed to be the warmest, Spanish resorts stood at the top of the list of ideal locations. Four of the six who went to Spain had committed themselves to this goal at least a year in advance and had made special efforts to save the necessary money.

"We go abroad yes, I'd never go in England, I don't think it is worth it. You can spend as much, you know, and you have no weather. We never really thought of going anywhere else but Spain. We've enjoyed that, so we stick to that. That's what my wages are for really."
[H3, pre-school age]

The other normal alternatives were, in order of preference, Cornwall, then Blackpool, then the nearby East Coast towns of Scarborough, Bridlington or Filey (10).

"I went with my sister to Scarborough with the children, er Bridlington, and we've been to Blackpool as well. Last year we went to Cornwall but we were in a caravan and it rained a lot so I said I'm not going like this again....so we saved up and we are going to Spain for 2 weeks this year."
[H3, school age]

"When they were little we couldn't afford much so we just went to Scarborough, just for a break. We've been going down to Cornwall for the last 4 years. We've got a nice place to stay and it's such a lot warmer down there."
[H3, pre-school age]

It is interesting to note that a few H3s, like some H1s, positively favoured a British as opposed to a foreign holiday. As I shall suggest

later this issue was potentially contentious.

she: "I'd like to go abroad but he will never go abroad so there is an end of it. There is no point arguing over that"

he: "Well I think there is too much to see in England. See I'd like to go down to Cornwall and Devon."
[H3, no children, younger]

Wherever they went, all H3 respondents headed for the seaside where they aimed to "do nothing" and to "relax". In this context, tours were believed to be too demanding as a main holiday though some of the older H3s went on such a venture as a second holiday in the Autumn or Spring. Though some believed that self-catering holidays were not properly relaxing and hence not "proper" holidays only those who went abroad were able to afford to go full-board. The rest had to make do with a holiday in a caravan, bed and breakfast, or guest house. However, a few, particularly the younger childless respondents, had different holiday ideals and positively enjoyed the freedom of self-catering or camping.

"Well not really [want to go full-board] because we both like camping, you know, just up the East Coast to Weighton and Filey. We both enjoy that. It's real good fun. We have a good laugh and Dawn and Steve go with us some years and other years we've been on our own. We've always enjoyed it so we've always gone back, you know, there has been no problem."

[H3, no children, younger]

In conclusion, H3s appeared to have the most specific definition of the "ideal" holiday. Most aimed to spend a full-board fortnight in the warmest seaside resort that they could afford.

4. DOMESTIC AGE AND DEFINITIONS OF A HOLIDAY

So far I've considered conceptions of a holiday as described by different housing sections of the sample regardless of age. While chronological age was not especially important, the presence or absence of children had a dramatic effect on respondent's perceptions of possible holiday options. Most (75%) of the childless respondents went on a full-board holiday, though a few of the younger ones, especially the H1s, chose to go camping.

"We always stay in a hotel yes..well it used to be a boarding house when we were first married, we couldn't afford a hotel. Self-catering

doesn't appeal to me. I suppose with children, yes, you'd have to think about it but you know never having any [children] we've always had just ourselves to think about."

[H2, no children, older]

In comparison, 50% of the self-caterers had pre-school children. Many of them explained that they had "no choice" but to self-cater "because of" the child/children.

"We usually like to go to hotels. This year we went self-catering. I found it easier with him [son]. To go in a hotel is hard as regards washing nappies and feed on a morning, so you know we will carry on self-catering until he gets older."

[H2, pre-school age]

"Generally I would prefer a self-catering holiday because it does mean you can go out..it doesn't mean there are times ...but I think as you get older as I get older I'll probably much prefer a holiday in a hotel. With the children you have to go self-catering really."

[H1, school age]

As suggested in the above quotation, self-catering was usually presumed to be a passing phenomenon: the family expected to have a "normal" full-board holiday as soon as the children were "old enough". Reported perceptions of possible holiday types (touring, seaside etc.) were also ordered by the presence or absence of children. 55% of those who went touring were childless while, at the other extreme, only 2% of those with pre-school children did anything but go to the seaside. It is interesting to note that H1s appeared to take much less notice of their children in this respect. The next quotation is from a H1 respondent who had a three year old child.

"Oh yes we have lots of holidays. We have a week in London, and then three weeks away in Italy, well two in Italy and say one in France on the way there. We try to spend another week visiting friends. He [son] is no trouble."

[H1, pre-school age]

The decision about whether or not to go abroad seemed to be the least influenced by the "child factor". However, it did appear to relate to absolute age. Only 25% of those who went abroad were from the two older sections of the sample (the older childless and those with children over 16). In comparison, 60% of the foreign holiday makers were from the two younger age groups (the younger childless and those with pre-school

children). In general, then, those who had pre-school age children (with the partial exception of H1 respondents) observed that their holiday options were limited: most felt unable to do anything but go on a self-catering holiday to a seaside resort. As the children got older they had less effect on the family's holiday plans: those who expected to stay in an hotel returned to that style of holiday-making while those who preferred self-catering continued with what was seen to be normal practice. The only absolute age difference appeared to be that older respondents were often reluctant to travel abroad. Essentially, then, respondents were more or less able to realise their holiday going ideals depending on their age-related commitments. Though these ordered the range of immediately viable holiday options, they did not alter respondents' generalised visions of the necessary components of a proper holiday.

5. DECISIONS ABOUT HOLIDAYS

The above discussion gives a general picture of the range of holiday possibilities typically considered by each section of the sample. The next task is to consider the kinds of choice associated with decisions about holiday accomodation, holiday activity, and holiday resort. I shall discuss each decision as if it were a separate issue. However, it is important to remember that, in practice, all were inter-related: all combined so as to produce a final result and all were informed by the same umbrella definition of a "normal holiday" and by an even more general view of the relation between everyday life and holiday time.

Perceptions of choice about holiday accomodation

80% of the respondents claimed that they had "no choice" about the nature of their holiday accomodation. Some of these "no choices" were determined by the presence of small children, those with pre-school children typically believed that they could only go on self-catering holidays, others were determined by the respondent's financial position (some aspired to, but

could not afford, a full-board holiday) and still others, including the respondent quoted below, believed that full-board accomodation was a necessary constituent of a proper holiday.

"He's always said 'No. When we go on holiday we have a holiday. You are not having any washing up for a couple of weeks. It is your holiday as much as mine so we can go to a hotel.'"

[H2, school age]

Those who stayed with friends or relatives felt that they had just as little real choice about their holiday accomodation as those who kept up a holiday-going habit and always went to stay in the same place.

"We've been going down to St Ives because my niece's sister's girls have gone down there to live and we've gone in their car and had a royal time. We've always stayed with friends and the family and that..when we stay at St Ives we look after ourselves but we used to go for our main meal we used to go up to Carol's and have our dinner at tea time."

[H2, 16+]

In the few cases where there was room for some "real" choice about holiday accomodation, the wife rather than the husband seemed to determine the outcome. The respondents' ability to have the last word, as described in the following example, appeared to be related to a general conception of the difference between holiday and non-holiday experiences.

"We've just been to Spain to a hotel, the year before we went to Germany camping. I don't really mind whether we go self-catering or not it depends where we go. He is very easy about that, he lets me decide about that if I didn't want to have to cook then we'd go to a hotel."

[H2, school age]

Because holidays were expected to differ from normal life, the definition of proper holiday activites varied depending on the respondents' every day habits and routines. So, those who did the cooking every day might legitimately expect to be relieved of these chores when on holiday. In comparison, those who believed that such responsibilities were normally shared had no special reason to "demand" a full-board holiday. For example, few H1s concluded that the wife ought to be in complete control of all aspects of day-to-day cooking and so few concluded that not cooking was an essential component of a wife's holiday. In this context the final catering/accomodation arrangement depended on the outcome of some other

holiday-making issue, and the contrast conception of holiday versus non-holiday legitimated certain holiday going demands. This particular issue was further complicated by the equally prevalent notion that the family holiday was a kind of present given to the wife by the husband in return for the domestic services provided throughout the year. In such circumstances the husband was under even more pressure to pay for a full-board holiday if that was what his wife wanted. The following example illustrates both themes.

"Oh yes, I think we'd more hotel it than anything else wouldn't we? I don't know I think self-catering tends to mean that you are going for a holiday but you are still working. So more hotel really. I think he would cough up for a hotel. He says it is not fair for me to have to cook all year. We have been, I mean when we went to Spain we went self-catering but we ate out all the time. It wasn't a case that I was stuck in cooking.. If it was done that way [eating out] it wouldn't be so bad but you usually tend to find with wives and husbands that really well the wives deserve a rest. I think a lot of women think they should be over the kitchen sink on these self-catering holidays but I think he would think that that wasn't a holiday for me so he would, yes I think we would go to hotels... otherwise really it is defeating the object when you think of it."
[H2, no children, younger]

In conclusion, most respondents saw "no choice", or only limited choice, among types of holiday accommodation. Those who thought that they did have some choice almost always believed that the wife, as the non-holiday caterer, had the right to make the final decision.

Perceptions of choice about holiday activity

Nearly all the parents of pre-school age children believed that they had "no choice" about this issue as their child's routine determined the course of holiday and non-holiday days alike. Although such routines had different implications for husband and wife, the net result was a particular ordering of family holiday time (11).

"Before I had him we'd go and lie on the beach and then go out for a drink...but with him, I don't tend to go out on a morning, and then in the afternoon we'd go out somewhere and come back. He [husband] potters about, we went to Ladbroke's so he was,... he likes darts and there were darts contests, they started about 11.30 am so he used to go there in the mornings."
[H3, pre-school age]

All other respondents saw decision about holiday activity to be matters of personal preference. As such, these decisions were likely to be contentious either at the stage of choosing where to go or deciding what to do from one day to the next. Almost all H1 respondents claimed to have the same preferences and to have agreed about what to do on holiday. In comparison, H2s and H3s expected that they and their husband would have different preferences as a consequence of what were seen to be inherent differences of character: men and women were expected to have different interests. For example, only the wives wanted to go round the shops when they were on holiday and only the husbands wanted to go off exploring. This meant that conflict was almost bound to occur. There were two principal strategies for dealing with such contentious situations. First, it was possible to devise some system of turn-taking. Several respondents, including the one quoted below, adopted this tactic.

"We tend to go in with each other...if we know what we want to do and we all agree to do it you see we would ask them [children] what they wanted...Oh yes we are quite easy going, we take turns to decide what to do, like one day we would be on the beach, another day we might go out somewhere so it works quite well really". [H2, school age]

Alternatively, couples could agree to spend at least some holiday time alone or with friends of the same sex. In this way husband and wife were free to indulge in their chosen activities without imposing their own preferences on the other. The following example illustrates this option.

"Well if we go I like to lay on the beach he doesn't. He likes to be walking round and things like that but I like to sunbathe. He doesn't, he gets too warm. So I sunbathe and he will maybe go for a walk, and then he will come back and read or something, or sit for a bit in the sun then we will go for something to eat."
[H3, no children, younger]

Those who went on holiday with other couples found it especially easy to arrange their days such that husband and wife could take holidays together but still spend the time apart, each doing what they wanted in the company of someone who was expected to have the same sorts of interests.

she: "I mean it was nice as our honeymoon but you tended to just miss another couple around really and I suppose there were things that you [husband] wanted to do and I didn't fancy doing. If Les had have been

there he'd have gone with Les and I would have gone round the shops with Claire..."

he: "She was scared stiff going down the Pigale and I wanted to have a good look and as soon as we started off she wanted to be off..."

she: "I was scared of the people I was watching the people and keeping really tight hold of my handbag and then we went on the Pigale and that didn't look much better..I think I'd maybe not notice so much if I'd got another woman there and I'd definitely go with another couple down Pigale and that if we went to Paris again with a couple it's just that I'd just been put off that day."
[H2, no children, younger]

Although decisions about holiday activity were potentially contentious, and although H2 and H3 respondents positively expected this to be a difficult issue, there were well established methods of minimising if not resolving the problem (12).

Perceptions of choice about holiday "resorts"

The final choice of a holiday resort was seen to be a matter of personal preference, although one which was evidently constrained by financial limits and which was further informed by respondents' definitions of a "proper" holiday. In addition, the actual range of what were seen as possible holiday resorts varied depending on the respondent's (or respondents husband's) views about going abroad and/or about the nature of an ideal holiday climate. Because the outcome of such "in principle" decisions ordered the list of options from which a final selection was to be made, it is important to review the kinds of arguments and counter arguments presented in relation to these two inter-related questions of temperature and country. There were several cases of overt dispute about such issues, some of which emphasised the question of temperature, while others, like the two quoted below, focused on the question of country.

he: "I think people who go abroad ... they want to spend £295 to go to Spain for a sun tan, that's the only reason they go there to say 'Oh look I'm brown, look I've been to Spain'"

she: "I'd rather see the sights than go spending money just on a sun tan but I'd like to go for the experience you know just to see what it is like. We probably will go when we are older"

he: "Old and senile."
[H3, no children, younger]

In the next case the wife faces financial arguments of a different kind in favour of the British option.

she: "I'd have always I would have liked to go to Jersey but Jack used to go abroad for the firm you see. But he hasn't fancied going have you?"

he: "I've never had a fancy to go abroad for a holiday"

she: "He says there are too many nice places in England"

he: "I've earned my money in England and I'll spend it in England"

she: "That's what he says so I've never been"
[H3, 16+]

In all the described cases, husbands successfully prevented their wives from considering anything but British holiday options. It is obviously difficult to distinguish between disputes about temperature and those about going or not going abroad. However, it seems that anti-abroad arguments usually involved reference to some kind of general moral or financial policy, while debates about temperature involved appeal to an individual's personal preference for (or against) a hot climate. Interestingly, wives found it much easier to secure their preference when attention was centered on the question of temperature rather than on the absolute issue of going or not going abroad. Indeed, they "won" all reported temperature arguments while losing all "in principle" abroad or not debates. This pattern of relative success was partly related to the wife's ability to present the warmer choice as a "better" option only provided that there were no more powerful moral objections. After all, nobody actually wanted to have bad weather on holiday.

Once any arguments about climate and country were resolved couples were able to make more specific choices about exactly where to go. Some of these decisions were complicated by the presence of other holiday companions; others were simplified because the family "always" went to a particular resort; yet others were expected to be the wife's

responsibility.

Those who decided to go on holiday with friends or relatives (only H2 and H3 respondents did this) inevitably faced more complex decision-making than other sections of the sample. The respondent quoted below was, for example, one of six who had to reach agreement.

"Well it's a joint decision between the six of us. We meet up at Christmas and decide where we all fancy going...and if we are all agreed, we decide what sort of holiday we want, whether it is self-catering or what and then we have a look at the brochures and try to find something that suits us all."

[H2, 16+]

In theory, the complexity of the "where to go" decision increased in direct proportion to the number of people involved. In practice, such parties tended to "appoint" one or two individuals (always women) as decision-makers. This simplified matters somewhat.

"We used to choose my sister and me. We chose where we'd go and we used to have a good time, we went on the Wallace Arnold tours in May."

[H3, 16+]

"Well my sister has chosen Spain...we usually go with them..last year we went with my older sister and her husband, and she's chosen Spain this year because it is a cheaper holiday."

[H2, 16+]

In other contexts too, wives were left with the job of making the holiday arrangements and so deciding (within limits) exactly where to go. Many of the H2 and H3 wives were expected to pick the actual hotel/caravan/guest house/coach tour having reached some joint agreement about the type, cost and location of the holiday.

"I usually look for adverts and then show him, but he usually leaves the actual booking up to me once we've decided where we are going."

[H2, 16+]

Decisions about holiday location thus fell by default to the wife though her actual role depended on the husband's interest and involvement. Completely indifferent husbands allowed their wives to take charge of all associated decision-making, though, in practice, wives were usually left with the responsibility for making only a few decisions about matters of

detail.

So far I have presumed that there was room for choice about holiday location. In some cases, however, there was "no choice" and hence no scope for any kind of decision-making. Respondents who always went on holiday to the same place did not even need to decide where to go. They simply went back to the place where they had been the year before and the year before that and the year before that. Such respondents only faced a real "where to go" decision when and if the routine was disturbed.

"Well we always go to this farmhouse in Wales but last year we couldn't go there. It was an old couple who ran just a few rooms and they retired so we had to think again. Actually we didn't have a holiday last year at all."

[H1, school age]

Interruptions apart, I was not in a position to tell for sure whether the habitual choice was automatically repeated or whether respondents annually reviewed the situation but decided to continue as normal. Either way, the "always go" context precluded simple decision-making of the "where shall we go this year" form.

DECISIONS ABOUT HOLIDAYS

I have suggested that the location, course and outcome of nearly all debates about the component issues of climate, country, accomodation and activity varied in relation to respondents' definitions of a holiday. In practice, the inter-relation of what I have presented as separate holiday-making issues therefore limited arenas of potential debate. If husband and wife partly shared a holiday "ideal" they were likely to agree about a whole network of associated issues. For example, neither were likely to object to going abroad in search of the sun if both preferred hot weather. Similarly, those who expected to go to the seaside rarely argued about what to do on holiday. These areas of overlap meant that respondents' perceptions of possible choice about holiday issue "a" were already ordered by their agreed position on holiday issue "b". Only issues of detail about,

say, what to do from one day to the next were relatively unconstrained by these general conventions and, accordingly, only they were especially contentious. That is not to say that there was no debate about the nature of a proper holiday. The point is, rather, that if there was agreement at that general level, there were few "real" choices about subsequent and more specific holiday-related issues. In other words, general conceptions of a proper holiday provided a package of "answers" to a range of otherwise diverse questions. This "packaging" ordered and, in effect, limited the range of possible dispute.

In conclusion, this review illustrates the range of described conceptions of "normal" holidays. What was familiar and normal for H3s was quite alien for H1s, and vice versa. Again, H2s' definitions stood somewhere between these two extremes. This diversity is hardly surprising given that holiday time was often defined in contrast to typical non-holiday activity. Although I did not have the material on which to base a more detailed argument, it seemed that many respondents (especially H2s and H3s) expected to break a number of domestic/family "rules" when on holiday. Holiday spending money was, for example, quite different from "normal" money, and certain kinds of unusual or "illegitimate" behaviour were quite acceptable in a holiday context. Wives were, for instance, able to "treat" their husband to a holiday drink just as husbands were able to take charge of all the washing up in the caravan or self-catering flat.

Interestingly, different holiday definitions shared some of the characteristics of the different conceptions of leisure described in the previous chapter. Here, as in relation to other areas of domestic decision-making, it was possible to identify a pattern in described perceptions of choice. H1s, at one extreme, believed that they could control their social world to the degree that they could make individual choices and so define the nature of their own holiday and leisure experiences. At the other

extreme, H3s observed that they were like everybody else, and that their choices, or, rather, their habits and routines, were simply a reflection of a "normal" world in which lives were (and should be) ordered as described. H2s belonged somewhere in between, veering toward H3 perceptions in relation to some issues and H1 perceptions in relation to others. These differences are important because, according to the the general argument developed in chapters 1 to 4, those who had or who saw themselves to have "no choice" had no room for domestic decision-making dispute and hence no occasion to exercise power.

CHAPTER 8: NOTES

1. See, for example, Walvin (1978), Turner and Ash (1975) and Burkart and Medlik (1974).
2. MacCannell (1976) and Thompson (1982) have attended to "cultural" dimensions of tourism while Turner and Ash (1975) and others have considered the impact of tourism on the economies and social structures of host resorts.
3. Most of the literature on leisure acknowledges the rise of the two week holiday as part of an overall increase in "leisure" time, but does not go on to consider the ways in which that time is spent. Dumazedier is one of the few sociologists of leisure to directly consider "Vacation leisure" and "Tourist leisure" on the stated grounds that "Vacations are perhaps the most important leisure activities, both because of their length and their attractiveness." (Dumazedier, 1967, p123).
4. Those who had bought a country cottage believed that they had committed themselves to spending their holidays in that building. In other words, they had decided that that was where they would "always go", and so no longer faced the kinds of annual choices described by other respondents.
5. MacCannell describes the "touristic desire to share in the real life of the places visited, or at least to see that life as it is really lived", and goes on to observe that "Some tourists do in fact make incursions into the life of the society they visit, or are at least allowed actually to peek into one of its back regions...they seek out situations in which this type of thing is most likely to occur." (MacCannell, 1976, p97 and p98)
6. Interestingly, Turner and Ash provide an account of the effect of tourism on the economic and social structures of both Thailand (Turner and Ash, 1975, p158) and Africa (Turner and Ash, 1975, p177).
7. Thompson (1982), Turner and Ash (1975) and MacCannell (1976) all describe the presentation of culture as a commodity, or, to borrow the term used by Turner and Ash, as "fakelore". Thompsons' account is especially

interesting in that it draws attention to the tourists collaboration in a staged display of "tradition" which need only include certain stereotypical props in order to provide a sufficiently "authentic" backdrop to what is then defined as a "Spanish" but essentially seaside holiday.

8. Although both H1s and H2s were concerned to have what MacCannell describes as "authentic" holiday experiences, "authenticity" was likely to take a different form: H1s aimed to meet "real" people and to absorb "real" cultures while H2s were content to collect or at least encounter "real" symbols of the "real" past. In this context, MacCannell emphasises the "importance of the authenticity of the relationship between tourists and what they see: this is a typical house; this is the very place the leader fell; this the actual pen used to sign the law; this is the original manuscript.." (MacCannell, 1976, p14).

9. Walvin observes: "..how strange it all seems: that through thick and thin, the English holiday-maker should return time and again to the places where his forefathers found such unique pleasures - beside the seaside." (Walvin, 1978, p165)

10. As Walvin (1978) and others have noted, different seaside resorts have attracted different and changing classes of holiday-makers. These differences are not merely related to temperature, even if that was the key issue for my respondents.

11. If husband and wife were engaged with different holiday activities the couple faced fewer "family" decisions about the joint use of holiday time. The location of joint holiday-making decisions therefore depended on patterns of independent holiday activity.

12. As described in chapter 7, H2s and H3s often had separate interests and so led relatively independent leisure lives. The "problem" was that couples were obliged to spend more time together (ie. doing the same things) on holiday because the familiar, independent leisure options did not exist in quite the same way.

CHAPTER 9

FAMILY FINANCE

Although it is difficult to evaluate the significance of decisions about the management and use of money, it is clear that many dimensions of respondents' lifestyles - eating habits, leisure patterns, furnishings and sometimes even family size - reflected the outcome of what were essentially financial choices. It is therefore important to consider questions of family finance if only to understand the domestic context in which all these other decisions were set. If the aim is to provide an analysis of domestic power relations, it is also important to consider family finance as a subject in its own right. As Pahl and others have observed: "it is likely that the balance of power between husband and wife will be reflected in their control over economic resources" (Pahl, 1983, p238). Of course, accounts of the nature of the relationship between resources and power vary (1). The feminist literature, for example, tends to presume a "one dimensional" view of power and typically adopts a straightforward "dependence" account of resources (2). Whoever has more money has, it is argued, more power. Accordingly, working wives are believed to have greater domestic power than housewives, although neither have as much as their better paid husbands. In this way, formal or felt financial or economic dependency is taken as a measure of the powerless position of wives in the family context (3). On occasion, however, this simple analysis is complicated by a recognition that money also figures as something other than a resource. In the family context, money needs managing, organising, and spending. Individuals who are responsible for these time-consuming and demanding tasks can also be seen to be "landed" with such obligations because of a different system of power. Thus, while women might control the family's money, and so, in a sense, be said to have power; (4) there is another sense in which their consequent financial

obligations and responsibilities may be taken as evidence of their powerlessness (5). They have been obliged - willingly or not - to take on the tasks of financial management.

Much of the relevant literature has set out to document formal patterns of financial management (6). This is, no doubt, a useful exercise if the aim is to review what Pahl describes as the "flow" of money within households so as to counter the traditional economic view of "the household as a black box, within which the resources acquired by individuals are assumed to be shared amongst household members" (Pahl, 1983, p238). However, in part because of their emphasis on formal patterns of management, few writers have made the crucial theoretical distinction between money as resource and financial management as responsibility (7). Rather, attention has focused on broad questions about the relation between patterns of "power" and methods of financial management. This emphasis has had two important consequences. First, given widespread confusion about the meaning of the term power, writers such as Hunt, Pahl, Ayers and Stamp find themselves in a curious dilemma: do housekeeping wives have power because they control the family's money and because they make a host of decisions about everyday expenditure, or is this responsibility evidence of their essential powerlessness? (8). Secondly, few of these writers have gone on to consider the ways in which, say, joint bank accounts or particular methods of housekeeping are actually used, and few have examined the relationship between particular expectations of gender or role appropriate behaviour and the selection of one rather than another financial strategy. Formal methods of financial management have been taken as pre-given, and self-evidently important subjects of study. In consequence, literature on the relationship between family power and family finance typically begins, and ends, with a discussion of formal methods of money management.

I have suggested that is important to distinguish between an analysis of

family finance designed to reveal the distribution of money which could be used as a resource in a wide range of domestic contexts, and one which is designed to consider questions of power in relation to the context or outcome of decisions about financial management and expenditure. In this chapter I shall consider each issue, that of resources, and that of decision-making (including responsibility for decision-making), separately.

To some degree, this chapter addresses many of the same decision-making issues as those which have been the subject of the previous four chapters. Here, too, I am concerned to document respondents' perceptions of the kinds of choice associated with decisions. Again I want to explore the range of what were seen as "normal" or viable options so as to consider the key dimensions of the context in which decision-making dispute might or might not arise. In practice, most decisions about every-day expenditure were "automatically" taken by whoever was responsible for a particular kind of shopping. In addition, then, I shall have to review described patterns of responsibility so as to map the borderlines between taken-for-granted decisions framed by expectations of responsibility and other more visible and so evidently debatable "family" choices (9). The form and location of money related decisions depended in part, on respondents' methods of financial management. For example, all those who had what was labelled "housekeeping money" were expected to use that earmarked sum of money for the food shopping and were consequently responsible for that type of expenditure. Similarly, couples who had a joint account inevitably faced different sorts of financial management decisions compared to those who maintained their own separate accounts. Accordingly, it was useful to order a review of financial responsibility and decision-making with reference to the range of formal methods of financial management.

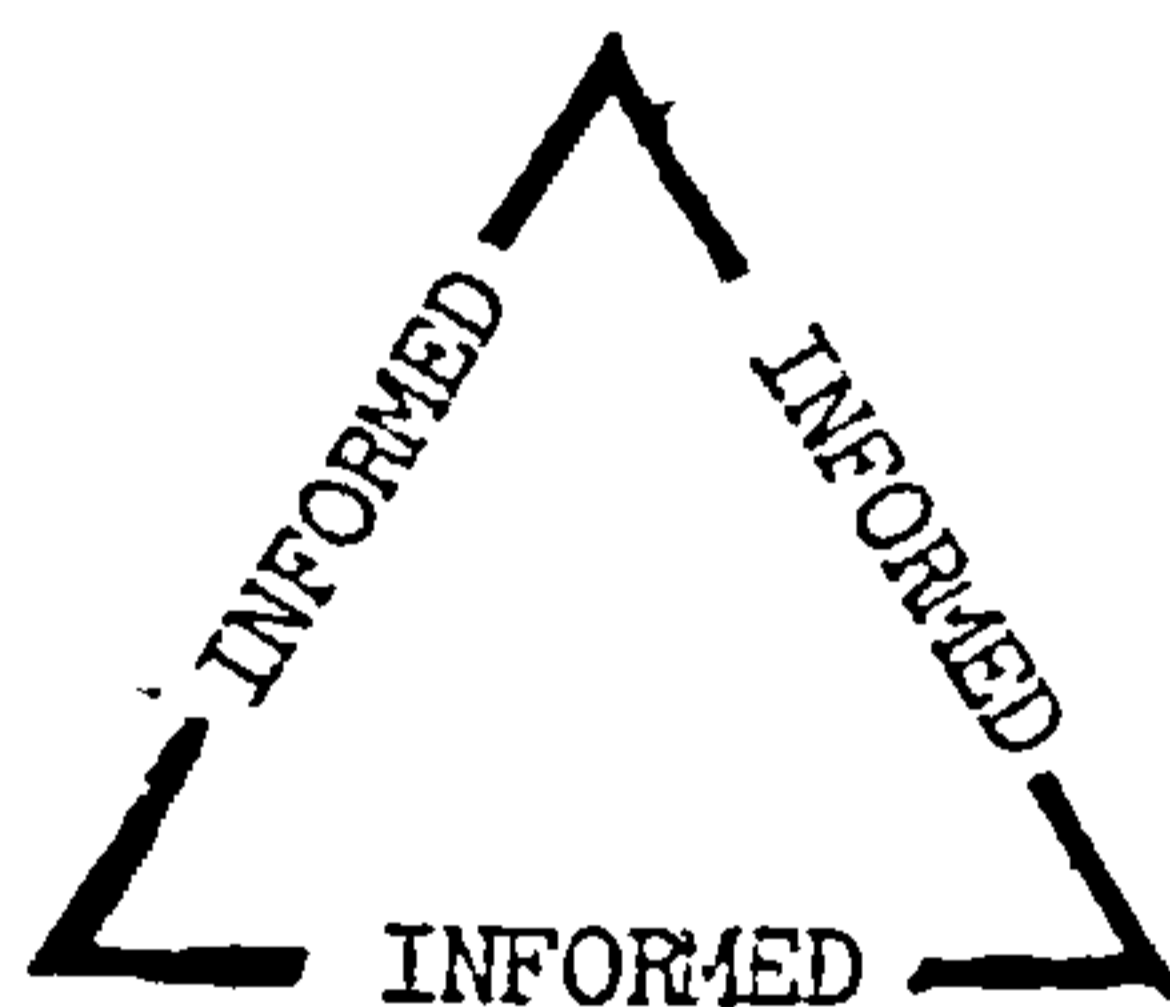
It also proved important to consider the allocation of money which might be used as a resource in case of domestic dispute. As I suggested in chapter

4, money which might have effect as a resource was money which was agreed to be independently disposable. Just as methods of financial management ordered, but did not determine, patterns of financial responsibility, so they ordered respondents' perceptions of different "allocative categories". Individual access to what was defined as independently disposable money therefore varied in relation to the structure of "real" or "imaginary" allocative categories (10). To continue the example used above, those who had what was clearly defined as "housekeeping money" were unable to legitimately spend that sum on themselves.

I want to suggest that formal methods of financial management, decisions about managing and spending money, and definitions of "allocative categories" (and so definitions of financial resources) were inter-related such that each had implications for the other as illustrated in the diagram below (11).

FIGURE 9

FORMAL METHODS OF FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT
(JOINT, SEPARATE ACCOUNTS, METHODS OF HOUSEKEEPING)



REAL AND IMAGINARY "ALLOCATIVE CATEGORIES" - INCLUDING THAT OF INDEPENDENTLY DISPOSABLE MONEY

DECISIONS ABOUT EXPENDITURE AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT - ALLOCATION OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR SUCH DECISIONS

I shall order the following analysis with reference to a) described methods of financial management (Section 1), b) the relationship between methods of financial management and the described structure of allocative categories (Section 2) and c) the relationship between methods of financial management and described patterns of financial decision-making and responsibility (Section 3). While it is convenient to order discussion with reference to formal methods of financial management, I do not want to suggest that these

methods determined either the allocation of financial resources or the form of family financial decision-making. Rather, as this chapter seeks to demonstrate, formal methods had a somewhat limited effect on everyday decision-making routines and even on the perception and definition of independently disposable money. In any case, as shown in the diagram above, I want to argue that the selection and everyday use of formal methods of financial management reflected respondents' prior expectations about gender appropriate behaviour and their related expectations of a "normal" division of real and imaginary allocative categories.

1. METHODS OF FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Most respondents simply presumed that they would manage their money in what they believed to be the "normal" way. The following discussion is therefore more a review of the range of what were seen to be "normal" methods of financial management than an analysis of decision-making processes associated with the selection of one rather than another financial strategy. Although there is little to say about the selection process (nearly all respondents believed that they had "no choice" but to adopt what was presented as the one "normal" option) it is important to document described outcomes as these evidently informed allocation of financial responsibilities, respondents' methods of formal or informal "earmarking", and their definition of different categories of money (including that which was believed to be "independently disposable"). In this section I shall consider the methods of financial management adopted by each of the housing sections of the sample, beginning with the strategies described by H1 respondents.

H1s' methods of financial management

52% of H1 respondents opened joint current and deposit accounts as soon as they got married. Most of this 52% explained that they saw this to be the

easiest and most convenient arrangement for couples who had a good and trusting relationship. The underlying argument seemed to be that all other financial systems were inherently "selfish" and so symptomatic of some kind of domestic problem. The following examples illustrate the themes of sharing and selfishness and what is presented as the consequent selection of the joint account strategy.

"I do know married couples who have been married for a long time who have separate accounts and they go through all these motions of she pays for this and he pays for that but personally I think it's bonkers. I suppose, it depends, I mean you have got to trust your other half haven't you. I suppose if I was married to some man who squandered all the money away so that there was nothing left at the end of the third week of the month I suppose I would feel differently. Then I probably would have a separate account, but with Chris, we trust each other so neither of us squanders money. I always think it's a bit mad if you are sharing a home and everything and you have separate money and then one pays for one thing and another pays for the other."

[H1, school age]

"It is easier. I never dreamed of having two separate accounts. Ours is just everything together. I just assumed that we'd put it all together. Well its funny actually. We didn't live together before we were married but I'd often go round there [to his flat] say Friday to Sunday evening, and then we'd go shopping on Saturday morning and we'd buy food and say half of that is yours and half of that ...and count it all up and split it. The day we got married we got a joint account and it's much easier. Much nicer anyway. You're not fiddling about how much he owes me and how much ...I mean I know some folk have got about three accounts, two separate and one joint, and all the bills come out of the joint one and each puts so much into it and keeps their little bits of money. It's too much bother, I couldn't keep track of it."

[H1, no children, younger]

So, joint accounts were believed to reflect their owners "sensible" and mutually trusting approach to family finance irrespective of the way in which the account was used without regard to the relative financial contributions of husband and wife. The need to appear to share financial resources and responsibilities in this way was so influential (among the H1s at least) that a couple of those who were "unable" to have a single joint account chose to have two separate joint accounts, rather than "openly" having their own. The respondent quoted below describes the history of this type of arrangement.

"They are both joint accounts. We have never thought of having separate accounts. We do tend to say in conversation 'my bank' and 'yours', and my pension goes into Acomb, but my husband because he is always travelling he had to have a central bank and he kept the Stockton-on-Tees one on and he still has his salary and his pension goes into that one, so we do say 'my bank' and 'your bank' but we don't in fact live by that at all. The money is ours and we both use both cheque books. No, I would never go as far as that [having a separate account]. I think you'll find that people who start work late in life, they tend to want to have their own accounts but people like me who have worked for more than half of their married life don't bother so much. The money is just our money and there is none of this separate business."

[H1, 16+]

Whatever the details of actual use (12), all forms of expenditure were covered by money drawn from the joint account/s. There was no formal distinction between say, housekeeping money, bill money, entertainments money, savings etc., nor was there any practical difference between "the wife's" money and "the husband's money". All earnings went into the joint account and so lost what might otherwise have been a distinct status as especially "his" or "her" income. Although this was certainly true of the bulk of the family's money, a few respondents observed that they maintained their own supplementary accounts by default. These formally insignificant arrangements were presented as the remnants of a past single existence: independent accounts currently contained very little money and were ususally presented as something of a joke. The example quoted below was typical.

"Both our money goes into a joint current ..we've got a joint deposit account as well and we've each got our..what we call running away money. He has a little account at Lloyds and I've got a little one at the Leeds Permanent ..we both had those before we got married. They haven't got much in and we have a good giggle when we get the statements you know 'how is your running away with money doing?' 'Oh I could get as far as Romford'. It was just too much effort to cancel it, you know, we thought well we might as well just in case really, it's more of a giggle."

[H1, no children, younger]

In effect, just over half of the H1s had nothing which was formally defined as their own money. Instead, they had at least theoretical access to the family's money which was seen as an undivided whole and which was "stored" in a joint account. This, they insisted, was the "normal" state of

affairs.

The remaining 48% of H1s were just as convinced that it was "normal" for husband and wife to each have their own separate account. Interestingly, those who opted for this arrangement felt that this was both "normal" and yet something which needed justifying. In particular, they were concerned to dispel the miserly image which they thought others would associate with that method of financial management. This was as true of those who had their own income as of those who were financially dependent and who received some kind of allowance from their husband. For example, working respondents observed that they simply preferred to divide the family bills such that each paid "their own" rather than share them in the sense that all expenses were covered by what was formally "joint" money.

"Well when I work I don't feel that it [her income] is particularly mine. It never really works out that way I don't know ...I don't feel that it is right to say you work and your money is ours, and I work and that money is mine ..er we tend to pool everything together really and we spend what we need. The money I earn I usually sling it in my bank account and then say if a bill came in er I'd say 'Oh I'll send a cheque off for that' sort of thing so were flexible about it you know. When I don't work, he just writes me a cheque....whenever I ask for it really sometimes I'll have it monthly or sometimes I'll just say 'Oh give me two weeks and I'll see how it goes' We don't make any hard and fast rules. It tends to be just whatever is convenient. It's very flexible. It's not like this is mine and that is yours."
[H1, no children, younger]

Those who had no income, but who received an allowance, also observed that theirs was a just and fair arrangement in that they were given more than enough to cover their personal expenses as well as those associated with, say, the food or clothes shopping. The next example illustrates this view.

"Yes, he gives me whatever I need. If I ran out and wanted to buy some sort of expensive clothes or something then I just ask for more. It is not very often I ever run out so you know it's only if I get through what I have. I don't really sort of ever think of it as asking for money."
[H1, pre-school age]

In conclusion, then, H1s had either a joint or a separate bank account. In most cases this was automatically adopted as the only "normal" arrangement, although some respondents were unable to select their initially preferred

option because of what they saw as their "unusual" domestic circumstances.

The respondents quoted below describe such a position.

"We have separate bank accounts but that is mainly because er..of his ..he pays for the maintenance you see, so we just decided to keep our bank accounts separate. He's got a daughter of twenty and he still pays money for her..so this is why really we had to keep our bank accounts separate. I pay the gas bill and I buy clothes for myself and the children."

[H1, pre-school age]

"Well recently we re-organised our finances. Now I pay all the bills through standing orders, the rates, electricity, gas, mortgage, er any standing orders for like subscriptions and that takes probably about 85% of my salary. What is left I spend on myself. Peter's salary goes on running the car and buying any things we need. Peter's money is purely for day-to-day week-to-week things so that we know quite accurately where we are and how much money we've got to spend. Before, we had a joint account and everything came out of it and it was much harder to compartment things. When Peter went to work in Leeds he opened another account to have his salary paid into so we changed from a joint account to two separate accounts. Somehow it seems simpler although it may not be. Before, we got the statement and it said we were x pounds in credit. To me that would mean 'Ooh good theres x pounds to spend' whereas now I'm more responsible about keeping a bank account in order because I've got the responsibility of the bills. It is a bit of a curb on my wanting to spend, it means that he knows that I can't spend too much."

[H1, no children, younger]

Given that there were only two "viable" alternatives (a joint or a separate bank account), H1s saw "no choice" about how to arrange their finances. Either they "automatically" chose to have a joint or separate bank account or they were obliged to select the only remaining alternative if, for some reason, their first "automatic" choice proved to be impractical (13). Finally, it is important to emphasise the significance attached to the notion of sharing. Though the actual method of financial management determined the form of the couple's financial collaboration, all H1s were concerned to explain that they and their husband believed in a notion of the "family's money".

H2s' methods of financial management

The 20% of H2s who opened a joint account as soon as they married presented what they saw as the logic of this arrangement in much the same terms as

those used by H1 respondents. As illustrated in the example quoted below, these H2 respondents again emphasised the importance of "sharing".

"Everything is in the joint account. Whatever I want I just get it you know with shopping...he doesn't look at it like it is his money, which is why whatever he earns is ours. It isn't 'Oh its mine', it's ours so thats all there is to it. It's much easier that way."

[H2, school age]

Curiously, none of the H2 respondents expected to divide the family finances into two separate accounts. Those few (10%) who chose this option did so in order to regain a sense of their own money (as described below) or in order to save up what were seen as especially their wages.

"Well you see I was married before and we had a joint account and I think I got a very sort of raw deal out of that. I was determined that I'd never have a joint account again. I'd have my own money. I don't think many people realise what a difference that makes, like now I've always got a set amount of money per month that is sort of mine to do what I want with, which I certainly didn't have before."

[H2, no children, younger]

The majority of H2s (70%) presumed that they would take, or be given, cash which they would then use to cover all their normal expenses.

This notion of "housekeeping" money (however broadly defined) has critical implications for the structure of associated systems of financial management. If one area of expenditure is distinguished from all others, and if sums of money are allocated to the person who is expected to be responsible for that area, then the system of financial management is inherently compartmentalised. There is consequently no scope for a comprehensive vision of "family money" of the type permitted by a joint account method. The family's financial resources are instantly earmarked and notionally allocated to responsible purchasers who are then obliged to make the necessary spending decisions. The detail of resulting arrangements varied with definitions of areas of gender-appropriate responsibility. A third of the housekeeping H2s believed that wives should manage the family's money and so operated what I shall call the "taken from" method of housekeeping. In these cases the wife, who had total formal control of the family's finances, took her housekeeping out of

the family income. The remaining two thirds of housekeeping H2s believed (with equal conviction) that the husband should take care of all aspects of the family's finances except the housekeeping. Accordingly, they adopted what I shall refer to as the "given to" system in which the husband handed over what was seen as "housekeeping" money.

H2 respondents who operated a "taken from" system expected to convert most of the family income to cash and to divide that into a number of "boxes", each containing money which was destined to go towards, or to cover, a particular type of expenditure.

"We just get it out. He gets his monthly pay out and I get, we er I pay the bills and what has to be paid. The rest is for us. You know, we have a box [for that sum of money]. When bills come in they just get paid because I've put aside the money for them. We pay cash, we don't write cheques at all."

[H2, pre-school age]

Most H2 respondents who "took" their housekeeping in this way observed that they simply copied their mother's method of financial management. They therefore "knew" how to structure the system of tins and boxes and expected that they would be in control of the management of this system and so of the family's finance. The actual number of boxes varied depending on the range of different bills and on the method of categorising types of expense. In all cases the wife determined both the nature of the organising categories and the amount of money allocated to each. The following quotations illustrate the perceived "normality" of this "taken from" arrangement.

"That's another thing we've never quarreled about, money. I've always handled the money. You only want the wife to do that. This joint account business is no good, honestly. I have a tin. I have one for the rates, ...I have a tin, I put the money in for running the car, I have a tin for running the bikes, and I put my telephone money in, and I put my coal money in and I have a box I put surplus into until it mounts up, and er I put maybe £2 or £3 and that covers my TV licence fee, and then there is the kitty. If we go out he always has money over and above his pocket money, he never ever goes out with his pocket money, that is his own. I buy all his clothes, toothpaste, boot cleaners everything."

[H2, 16+]

"He usually comes in with his wage packet. I mean he wouldn't give it to me unopened. He doesn't believe in that. You know, there are clubs at work he pays in, but I get the majority of it and I sort the money out for the mortgage and the bills and he gets his spending money,.... I don't get any but when I go out with him I don't take my purse. I don't buy anything so I don't really need it."
[H2, school age]

The fate of the wages of H2 respondents who worked, and who also "took" their housekeeping from the total family income, varied depending on the ways in which they were paid. Cash income usually went straight into the general family fund and was allocated to the relevant boxes along with the rest of the family's money. However, several of those who were paid by cheque were able to define all "their" income as the family's savings. These working wives, like the one quoted below, left their wages in the bank and used cash from some other source, usually their "husband's" money, for all normal forms of expenditure.

"I get paid by cheque. The small amount it is I get paid by cheque and that goes into the building society so when we want you know a... like I want a new suite then... That account is usually just my wages, or if he gets some overtime I'll put the extra away."
[H2, school age]

"Given to" methods of housekeeping, like the "taken from" systems described above, also depended on everyday use of cash. While the husband always presented his wife with housekeeping in this form, that money was variously taken from a joint account, the husband's own account, or directly from his pay packet. The arrangements described by those whose husbands gave them housekeeping money which was taken out of a joint account had one of two typical histories. A couple of H2 respondents observed that this system had "evolved" in response to changes in their own working career. In effect, they relinquished most of their financial responsibilities, including their participation in the task of running the joint account, at the point at which they stopped earning. The next example illustrates this process.

"I get a set amount of money, the majority of which will go on food. Well it all goes on food really, and then I usually sort of ...I dip into my family allowance for food and put some away for when the boys need clothes. I try not to go over the amount Terry gives me, he

gives me that in cash every Friday. We've always had a joint account, we've never had his money and my money, it was always our money. When I was working I used to go out and buy the food out of my wage packet, then what was left over went in the bank. Now I'm not earning our attitude is if I can manage on what Terry gives me its better to put the money into the bank until there comes a point when you've got to say 'Oh well its got to go up by £5 or whatever.'"

[H2, pre-school age]

Alternatively, respondents adopted this system on the grounds that it was both joint (after all, there was a joint account) and yet appropriately separate: the husband was still able to control the family's money. The respondent quoted below presents the history of her method of financial management in these terms.

"My money well, I don't use it for..we've never had any problem over money, we've always tipped up. We've always put what we've earned in together....It goes straight into one joint account. He just makes a cheque out and gets his own cash and cash for the housekeeping and any bills he pays by cheque. He draws out £150 which I say that will do us this month. I might get it all out of that or I might have to ask him to get a bit more. If I wanted anything I would tell him what I wanted and he would give me the money...say I've seen a nice pair of shoes he'll say 'Oh how much are they, where have you seen them, well wait till Friday and see how I'm going', or 'wait till next month'. It works very well, not like some couples I know who keep their own money separate. I'm very lucky that way, some people make life very difficult for themselves by having that mine and thats yours and you pay for this and I'll pay for that. We've never had that, we've had one account and thats it thats finished. This was the method our parents used, we were carrying on the method our parents had just, one purse."

[H2, no children, older]

Other of the "given to" respondents found it more difficult to present their financial arrangement in quite the same joint or shared terms because they were presented with housekeeping money which was drawn from what was clearly their husband's own account or from his pay packet. Interestingly, respondents in this position still argued that they and their husband retained a unified vision of the "family's" money despite the fact that their system of financial management was formally compartmentalised.

"I get housekeeping money from my husband and I use some of my own money and then my daughters give me some more for the house. He gives me a fixed amount of housekeeping money for the week and if I was ever short of something he would ...he's never you know hes never mean with money. If I was short he would willingly give it to me. Mind I'm never short, I don't go rash on things. He's, my husband is the old fashioned type of Yorkshire man and er all the years we've been married I've never known how much he's earned, but he doesn't keep me

short. Some men they can but he doesn't. He gives me a fixed amount and he'll increase it and what not but if I said say I had to borrow £10 and then I offered it him back he wouldn't take it. Yet he wouldn't be over generous in giving money if you were rash and spent it or something like that so we've built on that understanding. My money gets paid into my account. We have ours separate and I try not to draw out too much of that. I mean when a man has all the bills to pay a woman should help him you know I think you should pull together. That is where all the arguments are involved I think its all over money, 'that's mine and that's mine' well we say that's ours, you know. I know we have separate but its ours and its our house I think you've got to share, that's what its all about."

[H2, 16+]

Housekeeping money, whether of the "given to" or the "taken from" variety was expected to cover the family's normal household expenses. In this context, those who were given or who took housekeeping money, and who also went to work, could use their wages in one of two ways. Those who were paid in cash tended to use their income to supplement the housekeeping and to buy what were by definition, "extras". In comparison, those who were paid by cheque often stored their earnings in a separate "savings" account which contained what was, again by definition, "additional" or "extra" money.

Thus, H2 respondents adopted one of four possible methods of financial management. Most (70%) presumed that they would operate one of the two cash-based forms of housekeeping; exactly which depended on their view of the proper allocation of financial responsibility. Those who believed that wives automatically ought to be in charge continued the "taken from" tradition, while others expected their financially responsible husband to give them a specific sum of housekeeping money. The remaining 30% expected to have some kind of bank account. Some simply expected to have a joint account, while others ended up with a separate account having abandoned what they believed to be the "normal" arrangement.

H3s' methods of financial management

Nearly all H3 respondents paid their bills with "real" cash. Though 54% had a bank or building society account these were typically used for the

family's savings rather than for everyday expenditure. Those few who had to use an account as anything other than a semi-permanent store drew out cash in preference to using their cheque book. This way they knew exactly how their finances stood at any one moment. Because H3 respondents expected to work with cash, and because all expected that they would be in charge of the food shopping, all had a fairly clearly defined notion of housekeeping money. Again, selection of a particular housekeeping strategy reflected respondents' expectations of gender appropriate purchasing responsibility. Most (70% of the H3 housekeepers) believed that wives should have total control of the family's finances and so operated a "taken from" system of housekeeping. Their descriptions, including the two quoted below, were much the same as those presented by those H2s who expected to have control of the family's finance.

she: "It is handed straight over to me, he's always handed his wages over to me"

he: "Yes, even before we was married I handed my wages over."

she: "I get everything we need and I sort it all out."

he: "Anything she wants she gets. If its something like a 3 piece suite then what we do is she makes her mind up and then she goes and gets it."

[H3, pre-school age]

"It is my job really, I don't mind, but we've done it from the start, but sometimes Paul thinks that he can get money from the gooseberry tree you know it can't be done. I don't mind doing it all because I know where I stand with it all. My mum did the same she er gave us the idea when we first met. I think his mum does the same. You know where you stand and how much money you've got in the house."

[H3, no children, younger]

Again the fate of the wages of those who worked depended on the way in which they were paid. Respondents who were paid in cash simply added that money to the total family income, while those who were paid by cheque tended to keep that money in a separate "savings" account. However, unlike the H2s, a couple of those who had what was formally a "savings" account found that they had to draw upon that money in order to meet the "larger" bills or in order to resolve temporary financial crises.

"I use my own money if I need it. I'll go and get it out of the bank if I need it. The same if he needs it. I'll go up and get it out of

the bank. If he's desperate for anything I'll just go up to the bank and draw out what's needed. Really my money is just for the mortgage and spending money for me and any jobs that need doing around the house, or if we get short."

[H3, pre-school age]

Perhaps because H3 respondents were typically poorer than either of the other two sections of the sample, those who operated a "taken from" system of housekeeping saw their financial role as a particularly important family responsibility. As the following respondents observe, the family's welfare depended on their skills as financial managers.

"I don't use the money for what's supposed to be for something else..I wouldn't dream of doing that and I hope my children wouldn't think of doing that either because that's just ...well I don't know what do they say, rob Peter to pay Paul. No, if I haven't got the money then we'll have to do without."

[H3, 16+]

"I only do what I suppose, what I see my mother does, putting bill money away every week and ...you know like some people will get a bill and say 'Oh I don't know how I'm going to pay this one' but to me that's more strange...to me that's just ...well 'why don't you do it every week and then it will all be there'. My bills are all paid on the day they come through the door, I don't have any I haven't seen any different you see that's the way I do it."

[H3, pre-school age]

The remaining 30% of H3 respondents were "given" money by their financially responsible husband. This group believed that theirs was an unusual arrangement and went out of their way to explain how it had come about. Some described how they had switched from a "taken from" to a "given to" system when they finished work. In these cases their husband effectively took over the employer's cash providing role as well as control of the family's finances. Others claimed that they had deliberately rejected the normal "taken from" alternative on the grounds that it was unfair. Because these H3s still expected to work with cash, they therefore had "no choice" but to opt for the "given to" alternative as described below.

"It was more the woman took all the responsibility. The husband went out to work and came home and paid the money and that was it. I mean they didn't have a say you know apart from just running the house and all the rest of it. The man did his job of work, came home, passed over his wages and the woman was left with everything then, even the responsibility of giving back pocket money which.. I don't want that. I want my [housekeeping] money and that's it."

[H3, school age]

Like H2s, H3s who were "given" housekeeping and also worked either added their income to the housekeeping fund (this was especially likely if they were paid in cash) or put their money in a separate savings account.

Evidently, H3 wives expected to have much more control over the family's finances and over decisions about spending than did those in either the H2 or H1 categories. The form of that control was also more detailed than that described by respondents from the other sections of the sample, perhaps because there was often so little room for financial manoeuvre.

Methods of financial management

Few respondents made any real decision about how to arrange their finances. They simply did what they thought was normal or what their parents had done. In practice there were four key forms of financial management, two of which depended on an everyday use of some kind of bank account and two of which were cash-centered. Different sections of the sample adopted characteristically different strategies, as illustrated in the table below.

FIGURE 10

HOUSING CATEGORIES AND METHODS OF FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT				
	ACCOUNTS		CASH -HOUSEKEEPING-	
	JOINT	SEPARATE	TAKEN FROM	GIVEN TO
H1	50%	50%	-	-
H2	20%	10%	24%	46%
H3	7%	7%	60%	26%

I have already observed that the location (ie. joint or separate account, savings account etc.) and hence possible use of the wife's wage (if any) varied depending on the overall method of financial management. In detail, the fate of the wife's income also depended on the system of financial

management and on the form of payment. Figure 11 summarises the patterns which the respondents described:

FIGURE 11

THE FATE OF THE WIFE'S INCOME AND METHODS OF FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT				
FORM OF THE WIFE'S INCOME	ACCOUNTS		CASH -HOUSEKEEPING-	
	JOINT	SEPARATE	TAKEN FROM	GIVEN TO
CASH	-	USED AS "HOUSEKEEPING"	ADDED TO TINS	SAVED OR ADDED TO HOUSEKEEPING
CHEQUE	ADDED TO JOINT AC	KEPT IN SEPARATE AC	SAVINGS AC IF POSSIBLE	OWN SAVINGS AC

(Note: none of those who had a joint account and who worked were paid in cash.)

So far, I have tried to describe the range of different methods of financial management and to document the strategies adopted by each housing section of the sample. In the next two sections I shall explore the implications of these various methods of financial management first in terms of respondent's perceptions of "allocative" categories (and so their perceptions of independently disposable money), and then in terms of associated patterns of financial responsibility and decision-making. In both respects the method of financial management was of greater relevance than the variables of, say, age or housing. I shall therefore review perceptions of money and patterns of financial responsibility as described by a) those who had a joint account, b) those who had separate accounts, c) those who operated a "taken from" system of housekeeping and d) those who adopted a "given to" housekeeping arrangement. This is revealing in that individual access to legitimately disposable money (ie. money which could be used as a resource) varied depending on the structure of the formal and

informal system of "allocative categories". Furthermore, financial decisions were more or less visible depending on the way in which they were (or were not) bracketed together by a system of financial responsibility. The probability and the course of associated financial disputes, and the patterns of access to financial resources, were structured accordingly.

2. CATEGORIES OF MONEY AND METHODS OF FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

While formal methods of financial management evidently set limits on the range of possible ways in which family money might be categorised or "earmarked", those formal methods did not determine the detail of the resulting classifications (14). It is important to acknowledge that actual use of, say, a separate or joint account varied depending on respondents' beliefs about gender appropriate allocations of spending responsibilities. Such expectations, in combination with the formal limits imposed by the ordering method of financial management, informed respondents' perceptions of, and their access to, different categories of money. In addition, generalised conceptions of "own" money also varied with the nature of the respondent's contribution to family income.

In this section I want to identify respondent's definitions of different categories of money, and, in particular, to explore what they believed to come under the heading of "their own" money both in the sense of money which was immediately available for their own use and in the more diffuse sense of their relation to the "family's" money (15). I shall therefore attempt to review the "kinds" of money described by working and non-working respondents who had joint or separate accounts and by those who "took", or who were "given" housekeeping money.

Allocative categories described by those who had a joint account

About half of those who had joint accounts claimed that they made no attempt to earmark particular sums or to notionally allocate different

portions of their money. The family's income simply went into the joint account and remained there until needed by either husband or wife. The respondent quoted below illustrates this view.

"Well I just go and get what I want and sign the cheque. Everything is in the joint account so whatever I want I just get, you know, shopping I just go out and pay by cheque. Any other money I want I'll just get out of the bank. He gets out what he needs. Most of the bills we pay by standing orders."
[H1, school age]

Though all made claims of the form "all the money is our money", the other 50% of those with a joint account felt uncomfortable about using what they saw as the "family's" money for anything other than essential "house-keeping" purchases. These respondents, including those who were earning, observed that while they felt able to make some purchases on "their own", they felt uneasy about making others without first "seeking permission". The borderline between unproblematic and debatable expenditure seemed to vary depending on the extent to which the husband oversaw the wife's use of the joint account (or, less commonly, vice-versa). The respondent quoted below describes how her husband established the boundary between these two forms of expenditure.

"You know we don't ever specify exact figures...You know, he's terribly nice like that to me. He's always very tactful about saying that I've been over doing it or that perhaps I should have checked before I bought something...he wouldn't ever sort of make me answer to him, 'What's this cheque for' or, the most he'd ever do is he'd sort of go through and say 'Now look we haven't a lot in the account, don't buy anything for the house until next month'"
[H1, pre-school age]

35% of those who had joint accounts had institutionalised a divide between earmarked "housekeeping" money, which the wife took from the joint account in order to buy essential supplies of food, cleaning materials etc., and "the rest", which could only be spent on jointly approved projects. While the husbands expected their wife's use of the joint account to be informed by such a compartmentalised view of family money, they also expected to be able to draw upon the account as they wished. In other words, husband and wife were expected to use the account in different ways and to take

corresponsingly different views of particular types of expenditure. Respondents who had more complex financial arrangements - for example, those who had "their own" joint accounts - tended to make decisions with reference to an even more precise definition of legitimate and illegitimate expenditure. In the next case, for instance, two joint accounts were used as, in effect, separate accounts. Husband and wife each had their own buying and spending responsibilities and each used money from their own joint account to cover "their own" expenses.

"We have two joint accounts. My pay goes into one and his goes into the other and really unless one account is really low, we tend to stick to one account each. We sort of try to use David's for the main bills like the mortgage and the gas and electricity and rates, that sort of thing and we live on his money. Mine is just for extras, household goods or monthly bills."

[H2, no children, younger]

Whatever the pattern of informal compartmentalisation, those who had a joint account and who also believed that the family's money should be shared had trouble distinguishing a category of money which was distinctively "theirs", either in the sense of money to which they had immediate and legitimate access or in the sense of a broader notion of their own contribution. This can be seen in the difficulty respondents experienced in giving their partner a present. Because gift giving ideally involved the exchange of something which the presenter really owned, and because that item was supposed to be a "priceless" surprise (16), responses to the "present buying problem" illustrated respondent's ability to buy and hence to own such items (17). The ability to give a "proper" present depended on access to a category of independently disposable money. Descriptions of present buying therefore provided an insight into respondents' access to what could be counted as "their own" money. In this case, as in others described by those with a joint account, the wife appeared to find it more difficult to conceive of "her own" money than did her husband.

"Yes, that's the only thing that is a bit funny. Yes, I suppose it's just the surprise element. Well I mean what do women do who have children and who have no income, they've got to go and buy him a present out of his own money.....I suppose I think of it as our money er ..I thought that myself when I first started buying presents for him. I suppose it would be better if I bought the wool to knit something at least you'd feel you'd done something towards it."
[H2, no children, older]

Respondents attempted to maximise the proper gift-like qualities of presents in one of three ways. Some chose to take out cash and buy presents with some of this joint money. This strategy at least ensured that the precise cost of the chosen item never showed up on the bank statement.

"I do try to get out cash rather than writing a cheque so that he doesn't know exactly how much something has cost. I do prefer to get cash but I mean its only symbolic and I think he does the same but it doesn't matter its not a major issue."
[H1, school age]

"I find it quite awkward because when he was away I didn't want him to know that I'd bought his present, so how could I make that money missing from the account. What I ended up doing was taking £50 out now and then and putting it in my Lloyds account which.. I used to be with the Lloyds and there was only sort of £3 in the bank to keep it open ...and you know slipping in £50 and of course he didn't notice it. But he found out. There was a statement for the Lloyds because we'd lived with his mother for a month and we'd never bothered changing the address so my statement went there so he went down and his mother gave him the statement. Oh I got caught there I can't do anything like that again....He just goes and buys it he'll come back and he'll say 'Oh I've done so and so' you know."
[H2, no children, younger]

Of course this did not get round the problem of using "his" or even "our" money to buy him a present. Other respondents were able to save up what they saw as distinctly "their own" money and so avoid the need to mentally appropriate a portion of the "family's" cash. Such independent funds usually consisted of Family Allowance and/or money which the respondent had earned "on the side".

"If I am honest, [I use] the Family Allowance. I get it monthly now and it just saves me from going to the bank that week. I might use it for something special, like last time I used it like that I bought my husband a radio and I bought it with actual Family Allowance cash that I could save. Cash that ...I didn't have to let him see the cheque because I didn't want it to come out of the account ..so that was the only way I could save some cash myself, it had to be done that way. I do that for birthday presents because I felt well all I am doing is spending his money so you see it seemed a bit ridiculous. Otherwise I

never have any money of my own, so that's what I do."
[H1, school age]

In theory, all those who had their own income could adopt this or some similar method. In practice, those whose earnings went straight into the joint account were often as formally penniless as those who had no income. However, working respondents did seem to find it easier to make the necessary mental division of the block of "our money" into that which they could spend (ie. that which they had earned) and that which represented their husband's contribution. They were therefore able to buy presents with what they imagined to be "their money" even if it was located in a formally "joint" account.

"Well it is different now [now that the couple have a joint account...before they had two separate ones], when I am buying him a present now it's not really as if I am buying him a present because it's our money anyway.....I suppose I am still earning as much as I was before and I just have to think of it like that. It would be worse if I didn't work at all."
[H2, school age]

"I don't feel as dependent as, when you are not working you do feel.. I mean even though you are a partnership you don't tend to.. I mean I used to feel a bit guilty ...a bit as though I couldn't do things without asking. Like, it's a lot easier getting him a present now. I know it all comes out of the joint account but I know that I have contributed to that money so it is not his money that I am using."
[H1, school age]

Clearly, then, the joint account system formally stripped both husband and wife of anything which they could really think of as their own money. This proved to be a very real problem for the wives, especially for those who did not work. Though I do not know how husbands viewed joint account money, it seems that most behaved as if it was really "their own". None went to the trouble of sneaking money out of the joint account and then pretending that it was really theirs in order to buy a "proper" present for their wife; they simply drew upon the account in order to cover all their expenses. Though joint account money was never formally earmarked for any specific purpose, it was characteristically used and viewed in a different way by husband and wife. This ordered described views of legitimate spending power and had certain implications for respondent's (and their

husband's) access to "independently disposable cash" which could be used, as discussed in chapter 4, as a resource. In effect, respondents who had a joint account were less sure about the legitimacy of their access to the "family's" money than were those who adopted any of the other methods of financial management. This was as true for those who worked as for those who had no income.

Allocative categories described by those who had separate accounts

Those who had a separate account and who also worked had a very clear idea of their own money. Their money was what was in their account. However, this fund was usually divided, sometimes mentally and sometimes literally, into a) that which was or would be accounted for by "their bills" (ie. by the respondent's contribution to the family's expenses) and b) that which was left over and which could be treated as independently disposable money. In detail, then, the sum of accessible, independently disposable money varied depending on the way in which the couple divided responsibility for paying the "family's" bills and on the scale of actual income. The respondent quoted below describes how she and her husband "balanced" income and expenditure.

"Steve writes a cheque for the food and I give him half out of the cash that I've got in my purse. Most of the bills are ..well Steve pays the mortgage and I pay most of the bills. I pay gas, electricity, telephone, papers, er he pays the rates, and the water rates are split in two now aren't they, I pay the small one and he pays the big one. When we first sort of got together Steve sort of worked it all out proportionally and it seems to have worked quite well. I spend a lot more on clothes than he does....Going out for a meal no, er it's too sort of expensive really. Well it all depends on where we go to, I mean if we go for a curry and that's fairly cheap I can afford to chip in a fiver, that's it. If we go somewhere more expensive, then I can't really [afford to contribute].....I usually keep track of mine better than I mean basically there's really sort of no need for Steve to be careful with money because he earns so much wheras when you don't earn so much you have to sort of keep track of where it goes....I always have some left for me."
[H2, no children, younger]

Whatever the division of "his" and "her" bills, and whatever the relative size of the incomes, both husband and wife had access to what was clearly

defined as their own money. Each was therefore able to buy the other a "proper" present as defined above. Those, like the respondent quoted below who had changed to a separate from a joint account system, appreciated this difference.

"Oh that is a lot easier now, it is much better this way. It is more of a surprise. I mean Neil can buy me a book and I might think that that is more of a present than it was before [the couple used to have a joint account]. It is nicer for me too. I can give him a surprise present and know that I have worked to be able to give him that."

[H1, no children, younger]

Respondents who had their own account but who did not work described their financial position in one of two ways. Some concluded that there was only one type of money and that was their husband's. This group treated their "allowance" as money which was "lent in trust" and used it as such. Their own money, if any, was that which they had earned in the past or which they had saved from Family Allowance (18). However, a couple of others in the same position shared their husband's view that the family's money was indeed all "ours". These respondents were quite happy about using money which their husband gave them and did not pay any special attention to independent sources of income or the Family Allowance. From their point of view the separate account "allowance" arrangement was just a convenient strategy for distributing the family's money.

"I don't really sort of ever think of it as asking for money. I don't really have to ask, so if I get through what I spend I don't ...we just tend to buy what we need. We've never thought about it really. I never save up, no, no not at all....[Family Allowance]...Oh I never bother with that it doesn't really seem like anything."

[H1, pre-school age]

Those dependent respondents who treated the money in their account as "their own" had no problem about buying their husband a present.

"Its no problem really because once he's given it to me he regards it as mine anyway so no, there is no problem."

[H1, pre-school age]

Clearly, the separate account system formally distinguished between the wife's and the husband's money. Yet that did not guarantee that each would conclude that they had "their own" money. Perception of the contents of a

separate account and of its possible uses varied depending on the intended role of that account in the overall financial system and on the source of the money which it contained. In other words, formal and felt dependence (or independence) did not always go together. Some of those who had no income thought of their allowance money as their own; others did not. Equally, only some of those whose account contained their own income saw that money as essentially "theirs".

Allocative categories described by those who adopted a "taken from" system of housekeeping

"Taken from" systems of housekeeping generated as many categories of money as there were forms of expenditure. Housekeeping wives distributed the total income into the physical or mental categories of, for example, "car money", "petrol money", "husband's pocket money", "Christmas money", "electricity money" and so on and so forth. Once allocated, these sums could only be used for their intended purpose. Some, like the respondent quoted below, physically separated them so as to avoid confusion.

"I save up a bit each week for clothes, fortunately we don't buy a lot of clothes. Money for the car I put that aside each week and it all goes in a tin and if I go to Asda [supermarket] I fill it up and take the money out of the tin. If he's out more often than not he does it. It doesn't mean he uses his money, it still comes out of the central fund. He'll come home and take the petrol money out of the petrol money box if he's used his own money."
[H2, school age]

The actual range of tins (and so of allocative categories) depended on the range of bills and on the family's spending practices. For example, the sum allowed for personal spending money differed depending on the couple's normal leisure habits and on their definition of gender appropriate behaviour. Some had a separate tin for "entertainment" money. Though this was seen as joint money, or rather as "no-ones" money, the wives expected to give it to their husband before the couple went out in order that he could then "pay for" them in what was believed to be the "normal" way. Others managed without a separate entertainments fund and expected to pay

for food or drink out of their own "pocket money". In these circumstances the husband usually got more pocket money than the wife because he was expected to take her out.

"If we go out? Oh well he pays. Yes. Occasionally er like sometimes if Eve's [friend] husband hasn't gone out, you know, he has not taken her out, then I, she'll pay a round and I'll pay a round but when there are two husbands the women don't open their purses. I use mine [pocket money] when I go out on a Tuesday night and well it goes towards me clothes and presents, that sort of thing. [Do you get the same amount?] Oh nowhere near as much no, no, nowhere near as what he has because he has more expense than what I have because he's taking me out. After 23 years I think you get used to being taken out."
[H2, no children, older]

Whatever the anticipated expenses and whatever the formal structure of the housekeeping system, those who had what was defined as their own "pocket money" were able to use it to buy things for themselves and to buy their presents. It was unquestionably their money just as their husband's pocket money was unquestionably his money.

"Oh he always brought his pay packet home fastened, that's perfectly true and then he had his pocket money and I had mine and then I sorted it all out. I just take a bit for my catalogue and for presents."
[H3, school age]

Those whose accounting system had no such discrete category were obliged to appropriate what they would count as "their" money from elsewhere. Husbands who had no pocket-money, or, more commonly, "not enough" pocket money were in a similar position, as illustrated in the following quotation.

"He will say 'I'll only give you so much out of my wages this week because its your birthday'. Actually it is my birthday in a couple of weeks time and he's doing a couple of plastering jobs to get some money to buy me something. I don't think he minds, it's not so much him asking me for the money back as him saying er 'I'll only give you so much this week' from his wages".
[H3, no children, younger]

The detail and balance of the overall structure determined the significance of each component "tin". To continue the personal spending example, several respondents argued that they had no need for a tin marked "their pocket money" because they were able to buy all they needed with money from the other boxes. It is important to remember that those who operated a

"taken from" system of housekeeping were able to control the use and distribution of the family's finances. Most were therefore able to ensure that they never "went short" even if the system fostered an appearance of financial dependence.

"See a lot of women say 'Oh I've no money of my own. I hate asking my husband for it, for every pound'. Well I've never had that because I've had it all anyway. He never bothers, he wouldn't say well have you got £500 in the bank, he thinks what I have to do I do quite well so fair enough."

[H3, school age]

"Taken from" housekeepers were obliged to allocate and to manage money which was originally more or less "theirs" whatever its actual fate. This had certain implications for their general conception of "their" money as distinct from the "family's" money, whatever the formal structure of the housekeeping system and whatever their immediate access to independently disposable cash. Most of those who worked observed that "their money" (ie. their contribution) went towards this or that expense. Some used it as their own "pocket money".

"Oh Yes I've got my own cheque account I'd be very upset if I didn't have, I can't be er I'm rather what shall I say er I'm a bit not in so many words I like to be independent er I'm not a womens libber but I think we should stand up for our own rights and this that and the other. I've earned my money so I keep a little bit for myself and thats only fair."

[H3, 16+]

Others used it to pay for specific bills.

"My wage is for the holiday it goes into the building society and stays there for when we go on holiday. I just pay for the holiday."

[H3, pre-school age]

Either way, these respondents were able to monitor the use of their income and so maintain a sense of "their" contribution.

In conclusion, then, "taken from" system of housekeeping generated endless different categories of money. Some systems included categories of personal pocket money, others did not. However, it was hard to pin down the significance or otherwise of such arrangements without knowing about the way in which the whole structure operated. Within limits, "taken from"

housekeepers were able to determine the structure of the allocative categories and so order the everyday use of the family's money. Such decisions had important consequences in terms of the form of subsequent financial behaviour and, indeed, in terms of each partner's ability to buy, to spend, to go out on their own, to pay bills etc., etc. Not surprisingly, wives perceptions of their earnings as "their money", and their vision of their contribution to the family income, varied according to the ways in which that money was actually used.

Allocative categories described by those who adopted a "given to" system of housekeeping

This method of financial management depended on a minimum of two categories of family money. First, there was the housekeeping money, earmarked for food/clothes/household shopping, and given to the wife for that purpose. Second, there was "the rest" which had to cover all other forms of expenditure and which formally "belonged" to the husband. Most respondents also identified a third type. This was "their own" money, which consisted of un-used housekeeping money (19), Family Allowance, and/or their own income. Working respondents who added their own income to the housekeeping were often able to accumulate quite considerable housekeeping surpluses. Although most observed that their husband gave them "enough" housekeeping, many went on to explain that they were working in order to help meet the family's food bill, rather than for their own benefit. This legitimised their employment and, at the same time, allowed them to save up what eventually became "their" money.

"All my money goes into the house. I take all my money in with the housekeeping and if there is any left over I don't mind.I need that wage to help live on you know my husband doesn't get a lot of money."

[H3, 16+]

Those who kept their earnings in a separate savings account had to manage from week to week as if they had no extra income. In practice, "their own"

money consisted of what cash they could save from the housekeeping plus, in a rather different sense, the inaccessible sum in a bank or building society which was usually earmarked for some major family purchase though occasionally "touchable" for other personal purposes. Most working respondents welcomed what they saw as their ability to retain at least a sense of their own money in the context of a "given to" system of housekeeping, even if the fact of their employment did not increase the sum of their instantly disposable cash. The following example illustrates this point.

"Well he used to give it [money] to me. The only thing was it was, the actual asking of it that's what I didn't like. I had to ask him for all of it you know whereas now I don't. I'll just say I'm going now, I'll get some new clothes whereas before I used to say 'can I go?..'can I have the money for this or that', you know, no matter what it was if it was extra it was 'can I have the money'. I didn't like that. Clothes and that I can get now and as I say its my, well I say it's my, its our money but I've earned it. I can get his present now without having to save for weeks.. saving for his birthday out of the housekeeping. Now I can just get it [a present] out of the housekeeping and if I go over I'll just get some of my money out and use that."

[H3, school age]

It is important to note that the "given to" system of housekeeping was founded on the presupposition that the wife had no independent income and that the husband was literally the "breadwinner". In this context the wife had to be given money with which to buy the "bread". From this point of view, the wife's employment (if any) was by definition "extra". Accordingly, her income was always used to buy what were defined as "extras" rather than "essentials". For example, none of the working respondents used their own wage to replace the housekeeping though in at least some cases, this would have been financially and theoretically feasible. More than that, the implied spending roles of husband and wife were theoretically demarcated such that the wife was allowed, even required, to determine the use of the housekeeping money, but had to "ask" for more money and so "ask" permission to indulge in any other type of expenditure.

Allocative categories and financial resources

In this section I have tried to explore the relationship between methods of financial management and definitions of categories of independently disposable money. Though formal methods of financial management set some limit on the range of associated allocative categories, the respondent's (and their husband's) methods of mental as well as physical earmarking were extremely complicated: perceptions of different categories of money varied accordingly. In detail, very few wives (employed or not) felt easy about using joint account money as if it were their own, although it seems that their husbands had no such difficulty. While those with their own account were able to retain a clear, if generalised, sense of their own money, the sum which was classed as accessible and independently disposable varied depending on the origin of the money in the account (ie. income or allowance) and on its intended purpose. Some of those who managed the family's finances (ie. who "took" housekeeping money) had what were clearly defined sums of "personal pocket money". Others did not. While actual access to independently disposable money depended on the structure of the housekeeping system, the respondents' generalised sense of their contribution varied depending on a number of other factors including the existence or otherwise of their own income. Much the same could be said of respondents who were "given" housekeeping. However, in these cases, the system's in-built presumption of financial dependence ordered the way in which individuals were able to secure what they could count as "their own" money. Essentially, the existence of clearly defined sums of accessible, independently disposable money varied depending on a set of expectations and practices which determined the way in which the whole of the family's money was spent, and, to a lesser extent, on the origin of particular portions of the "family's" income. The size of the wife's income (if any) made relatively little difference to the respondents immediate access to money

which could be used as a financial resource. Other factors such as the form of payment (cash or cheque), the structure of the system of financial management, and respondents' perceptions of the notional use of different categories of money were more relevant. However, earning (or otherwise) did inform the respondents' more diffuse notion of "their own" money in the sense of "their" contribution to, or their conception of the "family's" money. The point is that knowledge of contribution was not the same as access to independently disposable money - money which could be used as a resource in case of domestic dispute.

In the next section I shall consider the relationship between methods of financial management, perceptions of different categories of money, and beliefs about gender appropriate spending responsibilities.

3. PATTERNS OF FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

In this last section I shall try to establish the identity of those who were normally in charge of particular areas of financial responsibility. This is important because, as I observed in chapter 3, allocation of responsibility appeared to alter the probability and form of any associated decision-making dispute. In addition, I need to explore the inter-relationship between particular methods of financial management, definitions of allocative categories, and associated expectations of financial responsibility, so as to complete analysis of the triangle of inter-relationships outlined in the introduction to this chapter. So, the task is to establish who was in charge of which type of financial related decision-making and, at the same time, to explore the relationship between formal methods of financial management and the actual allocation and delegation of financial responsibilities. In each of the next four subsections I shall review the ways in which those who had a) joint accounts, b) separate accounts, c) "taken from" systems of housekeeping and d) "given to" systems of housekeeping made decisions about the overall state of the

family's financial position and about routine expenditure on leisure, food, clothing and bills. In combination these accounts provide a picture of the relationship between patterns of responsibility (and delegated responsibility) and overall methods of financial management, as well as a map of the decision-making issues which were typically bracketed together and defined as the responsibility of either husband or wife.

Patterns of financial responsibility described by those who had a joint account

In practice it proved to be difficult to "share" the management of a joint account. If husband and wife were to take equal charge of financial decision-making they would have to monitor every detail of the others' spending. All concluded (or discovered) (20) that this was impractical, and so either adopted a less than equal arrangement in which one was appointed "manager", or agreed to settle for an imprecise system in which neither really knew how the joint account stood at any one moment. In practice, most presumed from the start that the husband would have overall responsibility for monitoring the bank account, or, at least for checking bank statements and for making the necessary decisions.

"Well all the money goes into a joint account but most of it is his and I only put in peanuts. I like being treated as a female and the man writes the cheques and pays the bills and so on....I haven't done that for so long I wouldn't know how to do it now.. so its nice not having to do that, it's one of the luxuries of being female I think."
[H1, pre-school age]

Respondents who had taken charge of this job themselves usually set out to justify what they saw to be their deviant arrangement on the grounds that they happened to be better financial managers than their husbands.

"I tend to deal with that sort of thing, er Rowntrees [where she works] have a bank and also I just like keeping little books and things like that. So if you look in my purse, there is about £50 there and if you look in his pockets there is about 50p. Somebody said don't you find it difficult to keep track of it all and the reason it isn't is because it isn't really like a joint account. It is like both salaries into a bigger account which I control. I'm not cruel honest it sounds awful doesn't it, it's easier, it works that

way. Although we've each got a cheque book I must get through one about every month and he must get through one about every 3 years. If he is buying something like clothes on his own then that is the only occasion when I don't write a cheque so I mean then I have to remember so that I put it in the book."

[H1, no children, younger]

Joint account managers of either gender had to rely on their partner to provide details of independent spending. This was easy if the couple agreed that the "non manager" would draw out a fixed sum of money per week or per month, as in the case quoted below.

"We worked out that I could take about £40 out of the bank each week and that would do petrol and food. Mike watches what the bank balance is doing fairly closely and I leave that to him and er he'll say you know look we've got to sort of, the bank balance is ...don't get any extras, and so er stick to the don't get carried away with those sort of things just get the food...but its not rigid er you know I think we are lucky in that we don't have to have it absolutely that rigid."

[H1, pre-school age]

In these cases the "non-manager" could be (and often was) quite unaware of the overall state of the family's financial situation. In comparison, those who used the joint account more flexibly had to exchange information about their independent use. In these circumstances financial knowledge was more evenly distributed, though possibly inaccurate. Several respondents only knew how much money they had when they got a bank statement.

"Oh yes well Brian usually pays all the bills and everything like that you know he pays all the bills you know er he does all that I don't usually er he usually keeps more of a track of it than me but I mean we both more or less know what everything is"

[H1, 16+]

Each arrangement (sole manager or joint muddle) produced quite different patterns of financial knowledge and so potentially worked to the advantage of one party and to the cost of the other. Not surprisingly, patterns of bill-paying responsibility related to patterns of overall responsibility for the joint account. Those who simply drew out £x per week usually presumed that the account "manager" would make sure that the bills had been paid. In both the examples quoted below the wives "paid" the bills. However, in the second case, that was defined as an administrative rather

than a financial responsibility.

"I tend to pay all the bills ..being a secretary I suppose you've a tidy mind I go through the letter rack every so often and if I spot a bill I pay it, then I file all the stuff away. I've always done that so I suppose I always get lumbered with it...I tried to get him to pay a bill one week, it took him weeks to pay it, we got a red letter so I thought no I'll do it. I mean he could do it quite easily but he needs reminding a lot so its easier to do it yourself, then I know what needs paying and what we've got in the account so it is more convenient really."

[H1, no children, older]

"Well most often I do that just because I've got a bit more time . He will just say at breakfast 'Oh look there's a gas bill', or something, and leave it on the top and in the next day or two I'll do it so that we don't get cut off or anything...it isn't really official policy. We don't work on rules and regulations and official policies at all, we would both hate that...my parents are exactly the same, mummy just does the same as me, she tends to write the bills and so on because he's too busy and we are the same. But that is just well, I don't always know how much we have got in the account so in that sense Mike keeps a check on how much we are spending"

[H1, pre-school age]

Those who used their account more flexibly claimed that either husband or wife paid the bills as they arrived or as was most convenient. Yet in even these cases wives tended to take responsibility for the associated administrative work (posting, delivering etc.) though it was not always their job to ensure that the bill had been paid. Those who had joint accounts presumed, like the rest of the sample, that the wife would take charge of the food shopping. However, practices of delegation clearly reflected respondents' styles of accounting. Those wives who drew out a regular and fixed sum very rarely asked their husbands to do the shopping, for, if they had done so, they would have upset the notional budgeting system. In comparison, those who expected to use a joint account as required were free to send their husbands off to buy food. After all, he would use the same kind of money (ie. "un-earmarked" money from the joint account) as they would have done. "Joint account" respondents also expected to buy their own clothes, clothes for their children, and sometimes for their husbands. Not surprisingly, those who took out a fixed sum of "joint" money were more likely to discuss such purchases than those who drew upon the account as required. Whatever the level of discussion,

all "joint account" wives expected to take charge of decisions about food and clothes shopping. This is curious for, in principle at least, the joint account system imposed no formal financial limit on the range of possible shopping strategies. It seems, therefore, that the resulting practices reflected respondent's common expectations of gender appropriate responsibility rather than any strictly financial limitation. Much the same could be said of described methods of paying for meals and drinks. If all the money was "our money" and if the account was genuinely "joint", then there was no purely financial reason why the husband should pay on these occasions. However, nearly all respondents expected that their husband would buy them drinks and would pay the bill if they went out for a meal. Indeed, most concluded that they were only "taken out" if they were being paid for. This was a problem for all those who argued that their joint account reflected their "shared" approach to family finance, but one which was most awkward for those women who managed the joint account themselves. If these respondents were to be taken out they had to hand over the money or write the cheque and still pretend that they were being paid for. Most resolved this problem by giving their husband joint money in advance in order that he could then appear to pay.

"We've got into the habit I'm ashamed to say of him buying the drinks in pubs so what happens is ..before we go in 'have you got any money? because I haven't any'...so I give him some money and he goes and buys drinks."

[H1, no children, younger]

Those who normally expected to use a joint account for all routine purchases were also obliged to find a way of operating as if their husband paid. The simplest solution was for the husband to write the cheque, or as in the previous example, to actually hand over the money.

"If we go out for drinks he buys drinks or meals or whatever...I always have money in my pocket...I wouldn't buy drinks, no, no, not if he is with me. No. He goes and gets it. Well, he is a great big tall bloke so he gets to the bar quicker. Also I suppose really there is ..it's a bit old fashioned but if I'm out with a man, well he can go and get drinks and things like that, why should I, I'll go and sit down and have a nice treat and be waited on, but obviously if I'm with

the girls then I'll get a round of drinks."

[H2, school age]

"If we go out for a meal he will write the cheque...its silly really but we've always done that. He takes me out and writes the cheque. I mean we are still.. er how shall I put it ...there's a tinge of I must let the man do it if you follow me."

[H1, pre-school age]

Interestingly, those who regularly drew out what was, in effect, a sum of housekeeping money had much less trouble pretending that the joint account contained what was "really" their husband's money. After all, he managed the account and he was the main breadwinner. Though these financial details were important it seems that some could still pretend to be "taken out" even when the formal financial arrangements were "wrong". In this case, for example, the wife explains that the rituals of going out, ordering the meal etc., outweighed the cheque writing problem.

"There are occasions when we go out and we are not planning on eating out. I always have my purse with me and he won't always have his wallet.. so it depends who has their cheque card with them. So there are occasions when we'll go out and I'll pay, well I'll write the cheque because I've got the cheque card, but for the most part going out socially, he has the cash. I hate going to the bar so I never, he'll do that. Its nice to feel, to think well, he'll handle that so I can sit back and relax a bit more, even if he's not got the cheque card he gets the meal and everything...its not as if I'm not being taken out."

[H1, pre-school age]

Whatever the detail of joint account management, this method theoretically allowed either husband or wife to take charge of a wide range of different spending decisions. In practice, beliefs about gender appropriate behaviour simplified the range of what were seen to be practical allocations of responsibility for particular types of spending. As we have seen, such gender specific prescriptions of proper behaviour combined rather awkwardly with the theme of sharing which often accompanied descriptions of the family's finances provided by those who had a joint account. Nonetheless, few deviated from what were seen to be normal patterns of responsibility.

Finally, it is important to note that the wife's own income (if any) made

no apparent difference to the way in which the couple made their financial decisions, or to the way in which they allocated particular spending responsibilities.

Patterns of financial responsibility described by those who had separate accounts

All those who had what they saw as their own account expected to be responsible for its overall management. In these circumstances there was no such thing as the "family's money" and hence no need to make decisions about its use. Those who were employed simply took care of their own money and were often unaware of the state of the other's account, as in the case quoted below.

"He can save money without me knowing because he is taking care of the food and the car and the petrol he could either spend or save the rest" [H1, no children, younger]

While husbands of non-working respondents were invariably in charge of most aspects of the family's finances, they played no part in decisions about the use of their wives' allowances. In these circumstances, husband and wife had to depend on each other for information about their respective accounts. The following example illustrates this position.

"We have our own current accounts, and he has a standing order which pays housekeeping into me and I just draw out what I want. If I get short I just tell him and he gives me some more..I haven't a clue how much money we've got really I just, I mean if I ask him he tells me but at the moment I haven't a clue because I haven't asked him for a bit ...he sometimes gets worried. He came to me in great horror last year and said 'we've only saved this this year, what can we do about it' ...I said 'well there isn't a lot unless you want to cut down your standard of living you know really.'" [H1, no children, older]

In effect, the separate allowance system, like all other separate account methods, worked such that neither party knew precisely how much the other had at any one moment. Because A had no formal need to know about the state of B's account, exchange of information was optional. Only those working respondents who expected to pay bills with money from whichever happened to be the "fullest" account exchanged financial information on any kind of regular basis. Even so, each was still in charge of what was

clearly defined as their own money, as illustrated in the following example.

"Whoever's got the money in their account pays the bill er as it turns up, or we wait till we get a red letter and by then usually a pay day has gone past. No, we don't have any secrets about money or anything. We share it mainly."
[H2, school age]

Most employed respondents had established what they believed to be a just, practical, and gender appropriate method of allocating the family's bill paying responsibilities. In nearly all cases this turned out to mean that the husband paid what were seen as "serious and important" bills leaving the wife with irregular and "less important" ones. The wife's earnings were therefore typically classed as "extra" whatever the sums involved. Those who deviated from this "normal" arrangement explained that in their case it happened to be more convenient if the husband paid what would usually be expected to be the "wife's" bills. This view is illustrated below.

"Chris buys the food. There is a Sainsburys in Leeds so he does the shopping during a lunchtime or after work. I think our situation is slightly unusual too in that I earn more money than he does and in that way I probably take more responsibility for our bills than most women would."
[H1, no children, younger]

Not surprisingly, those who had an "allowance" expected their husband to take charge of the family's bills. Though they might pay the milkman they would never pay the electricity bill. The following quotations illustrate the areas of expenditure for which husband and wife were expected to be responsible.

"It [the allowance] covers generally, it doesn't cover er the bills if I bulk buy well it probably does it is hard to say but if because as I say if I'm short er no probably I do need extra if I'm bulk buying meat but it covers everything else...I might buy a half dozen raspberry canes but I mean if we wanted a lawn mower it wouldn't you know anything big bills I mean I don't pay for anything like the gas or electricity."
[H1, no children, older]

"I just buy what we need. He usually gives me a cheque every month and I just you know spend it on whatever you know on food just things that we need in the house and well sort of food and clothes for myself and Robin [child]."
[H1, pre-school age]

Whatever else they were used for, allowances were designed to cover the

food bill and were given to the wife in order that she could do this type of shopping. Working wives also expected to do the food shopping and, depending on how much they earned, expected to count the food bill as one of their expenses (22). Interestingly, very few of those with separate accounts used "their" money (ie. that which was in their account) to buy important (23) clothes for their husband. While the wife was expected to be a better clothes buyer and so expected to accompany her husband and to give advice on the selection of important items, he was ultimately expected to buy his own clothes with his own money.

"He has to be persuaded to spend a lot on his clothes you know perhaps if he was looking at two sweaters he would go for the cheaper one of the two and I'd persuade him to have the other because it was better really and would probably last him longer.. but Oh yes he buys his own things..sometimes I have to tell him that he needs some new shirts, or something like that but he gets it all himself."

[H1, 16+]

In theory, those who had their own accounts could choose to pay their way when they went out for a drink or a meal. However, the few who took up this option were well aware of the social complications associated with this unusual practice.

"I'll get a drink and then he will get a drink unless I've run out of cash in which case he will get them both...er when we go out with our friends round the corner er the chaps usually pay for the drinks but the girl sort of she has got a little kid so she wouldn't be expected to anyway. If I've got enough money I will sort of buy our round but its strange though I mean when you go out with couples sometimes even though the girl is working she won't er buy a drink so if she doesn't then I don't but on the other hand if I'm sort of out and there is a woman who sort of may earn a lot more than me if she is buying a round I'm blowed if I'm going to be impoverished I have to buy a round as well even if I have to starve the next day."

[H2, no children, younger]

In practice, most expected to be taken out even if they did have their own income and, of course, those who were full-time housewives had "no choice" about the matter. Whatever the normal or chosen practice it was, in principle, possible for husband or wife to take charge of any discrete area of domestic expenditure. Possible allocations of responsibility were therefore only limited by differences in the actual amounts of money "owned" or earned by husband and wife. The fact that described patterns of responsibility were so uniform again reflects the prevalence of particular

notions of "normal" financial behaviour. In the separate account context, the wife's income (if any) had a more evident impact on the family's financial arrangements than it did in the joint account contexts described above. Although those women who had their own income had to decide how to use that money, those decisions were evidently informed by a common conception of the husband as breadwinner and hence of the wife's earnings as extra (whatever the sums involved).

Patterns of financial responsibility described by those who adopted a "taken from" system of housekeeping

Respondents who took their housekeeping out of the total family income were expected to take charge of all financial matters. It was their job to run the house on their family's behalf (24). This arrangement inevitably generated an inequality of knowledge and expertise. In practice only the wife knew how to run the household. While the husband might have taken a passing interest, and while he was typically seen to have the right to enquire about the way in which "his" money was spent, (as in the cases described below), none went as far as interfering with what was clearly defined as the wife's responsibility.

"I had to put it [housekeeping] up when David [son] started going on to solid food and I found that it was costing me between three and four pounds extra a week so I had to put more in [into the housekeeping purse]. He [husband] is interested. You know, he is careful, when I told him that I'd had to put...you know when I said to him 'Oh I've got to have some more for the housekeeping' he says 'Oh why is that?' and I told him and he said 'Oh that's fine'. He is very interested like that ...I write cheques out for the bills now, we put the bill money in the bank and I write out cheques when they come, and he is interested in how much they are. I keep a book so that any time he wants to have a look he can see exactly what I've paid out and how much we've got in the bank."
[H2, pre-school age]

"Taken from" housekeepers faced a more or less difficult task depending on the "tightness" of the family budget. As Land notes "to be a 'good manager' on a small income requires an inexhaustible supply of self-discipline" (Land, 1969, p61). Although none of my respondents were as

poor as those described by Land, many observed that they had to vary actual sums of "housekeeping" (ie. food money) from week to week so as to fit around other immovable expenses (25). While there was some room for latitude in relation to different types of expenditure, none were prepared to delegate any of the associated decision-making. So, if they were to send their husband out shopping, these housekeeping wives would give precise instructions and would provide the relevant sum of money, as illustrated in the next example.

he: "What about some money for town?"

she: "I thought you'd got enough I can give it you when you come back"

he: "No I've only £3, that won't buy what you want"

[H3, 16+]

The detail of buying practices varied depending on the structure of the housekeeping system and on the nature of real or imaginary allocative categories. For example, some husbands were expected to buy all their clothes with what was labelled their "pocket money".

"No he gets his own, he has his football money which he uses for that you know, he likes clothes, he is like me, he likes his clothes"

[H3, pre-school age]

Others got less pocket money and were expected to draw upon a specific clothes allowance when they needed to buy, say, a new shirt. As the following example illustrates, different kinds of clothes (the wife's, the husband's, major items, minor items, etc.) were often paid for with money from different "tins".

"Well what I try to do is I let I have a certain amount of what I keep for my pocket money. It [her clothes] all comes out of that money and I try to save a little bit of that each week for clothes and he has his Burtons so it just works out roughly about the same...We usually go down together and choose because he doesn't like going on his own and choosing suits or anything like that and of course being in an office he has to wear better clothes than you would if you were just doing ordinary work...I usually buy his shirts for him and underwear that type of thing because anybody can buy that you know, that just comes out of the housekeeping I mean we usually ..I might take a bit extra out for that sort of thing."

[H2, no children, older]

The same variety was evident in relation to sources of money for "going out". Some respondents had entertainments allowances, others did not.

However, whatever the budgeting arrangements, all expected that the husband should pay "for" his wife when they went out together. A few, like those who managed the family's joint account, argued that what was really "our" money was temporarily converted to "his" money for the evening. Others, especially those who did not work, observed that they were merely giving back what had been given to them in the first place.

"Well the money would come out of our money together, what we both earn. I keep some separate for drinks and things like that. He would pay he would go to the bar and buy the drinks. Well he doesn't like the idea of me going to the bar to pay so he gets it. I suppose if a man takes his wife out its up to him to provide the drinks really isn't it. Men always go and buy the drinks. I don't like going to the bar to be quite honest. I don't think it is a woman's place to go to a bar... He'd pay for meals but I mean it isn't as if it makes any difference really its all our money you know so."

[H2, pre-school age]

"Well Kevin would have the money. He gives it all to me and I put it away on a Thursday and Kevin would have it to go out and he'd sort of pay [for] me all night. Kevin always pays for me that's the way we've always done it. It is better that way I think. It looks stupid for a bloke to go into a pub and get money off the woman you know what I mean I'd rather him have the money and be manly you know what I mean."

[H3, no children, younger]

In conclusion, then, the "taken from" housekeepers controlled all detailed decision-making about the family's method of financial management and were in charge of all areas of spending except those associated with "going out". This division of financial responsibility was the same whether or not the wife went out to work.

Patterns of financial responsibility described by those who adopted a "given to" system of housekeeping

In this context the husband was invariably responsible for the family's overall financial position. Patterns of financial knowledge reflected this division of responsibility. Although wives who had their own income knew of the fate of their wages, the fact of their earning had no necessary impact on the established pattern of knowledge and ignorance. Most, including the respondent quoted below, still did not know what part their income played in relation to the family's overall financial circumstances.

"The whole of my wages are paid into the bank, I try to save £10 each month for our holidays. He is very careful with money. He is a true Yorkshire man. All the years we've been married I've never known how much he's earned. He saves too, he, he must have some saved. Well yes he's always got some tucked away. You can't buy a new carpet without money can you?"

[H2, school age]

So, the husband was formally responsible for managing the family's finances and was expected to pay all the bills. Meanwhile, the wife was expected to take charge of food shopping, using her housekeeping money to cover this and, perhaps, a few other expenses. Interestingly, this type of housekeeping, like the money earned by or given to those who had separate accounts, was rarely expected to cover the cost of such items as husband's jackets, suits, or trousers. While socks and underwear might be counted as housekeeping expenses, few "given to" respondents also bought trousers and jackets.

"Yes well I buy my own and I buy them for Helen and I used to buy them for him as well. I'm not so daft now I don't he has to buy his own, he's [husband] into a punk rocker phase anyway at the moment and so he can buy his own because I don't like them. I buy all the boring things like socks and underwear still, but that doesn't add up to much."

[H1, school age]

In the "given to" context, shopping could only be delegated if the wife handed back some of the designated housekeeping or if the husband agreed to pay with what was formally "his" money. As I shall suggest in the next chapter, this appeared to limit the occasions on which husbands helped out.

The "given to" system of housekeeping, then, specified the identity of proper shoppers and bill payers. Any deviation from those normal roles was reported to be awkward, "wrong" or uncomfortable. Respondents only had access to the type of money which they would need to fulfil their role as housekeeper and their husband's money was just as rigidly earmarked. In this context the method of financial management in effect determined (and was, of course, determined by) the spending behaviour of both husband and wife.

Methods of financial management and allocation of financial responsibilities

In this section I have described ways in which respondents allocated responsibility for particular types of spending and for management of the family's finances. In so doing I have tried to define some of the inter-relations between methods of financial management and allocation of financial responsibilities. Each of the four key methods, joint and separate accounts and "taken from" or "given to" styles of housekeeping, sets different limits to the range of possible ways in which spending responsibilities can be divided. Though the detail of the resulting patterns of responsibility varied, all four methods allowed respondents to share out their money-related obligations with reference to what was a remarkably consistent vision of gender appropriate behaviour. In all cases, for example, wives did the food and most of the clothes shopping and so had access to the relevant category of money. Similarly, all expected the husband to be the main breadwinner and expected to use his wage in such a way as to make that role evident. In this context the wife's own income (if any) was seen and used as if it were "extra". In conclusion to this chapter I want to suggest that common definitions of "normal" and "proper" behaviour had greater impact on every-day financial decision-making than either formal methods of financial management or even individual income.

To be responsible for a particular type of spending was to be able to make associated decisions without fear of interference or criticism provided that the responsible person behaved "appropriately". Whoever was responsible for buying food or shirts or socks or for paying the gas or electricity bill was able to control the pattern of spending and saving in that area. As I have shown, patterns of responsibility for particular types of expenditure were much the same whatever the method of financial management. Very broadly, wives bought food and clothes while husbands

paid the major bills and handed over the money when the couple went out for a meal. This was so whether or not the wife went out to work. In effect this meant that respondents were able to determine the use of much larger sums of money than those which they actually earned. Expectations of proper family behaviour thus combined to produce a situation in which wives were able to routinely determine the outcome of a broader range of spending decisions than their husband, whatever the formal method of financial management. As I observed in Section 2, this did not necessarily mean that respondents had access to what they saw as independently disposable cash though it did give them a degree of "invisible" influence over many aspects of the family's lifestyle and, perhaps more important, immediate access to a body of information about the areas of spending or financial management under their control. The case, then, is that formal methods of financial management made remarkably little difference to the ways in which respondents actually allocated spending responsibilities. The literature which sets out to document formal methods of money management fails to engage with the complexities of use and so overlooks similarities in the everyday patterns of financial responsibility (Pahl, 1983; Stamp, 1985).

Access to what could be used as "own" money appeared to depend on the detail of the couple's method of financial management, on the way in which they or they and their husband were paid, on their perception of associated allocative categories and, to a lesser extent, on their knowledge of the significance of their own financial contribution (if any). In comparison, generalised definitions of "own money" in the sense of "own contribution" varied in relation to such factors as the scale of the individual's actual income, and hence their position of relative financial dependence or independence, and on the way in which they were paid (if at all). Working wives felt themselves to have rather more of their "own" money than those who had no income, although immediate access to financial

resources depended as much on the method of financial management as on actual earnings. In other words, it was important to distinguish between "own" money in the sense of cash available for personal use, and "own" money in the sense of a generalised knowledge of contribution. Few of those who have considered domestic power and family finance have made this distinction.

Although formal methods of financial management ordered individual access to immediately disposable cash, that ordering had effect in a world already structured by expectations of legitimate earning and spending roles. Again it seems that literature has concentrated on formal methods of financial management without sufficient understanding of the implications of those patterns or of their location in a more complex world of taken-for-granted expectation. Furthermore, it was clear that earning did not, in itself, ensure that respondents had what they could use or define as their "own" money. Accordingly, the observer cannot presume that patterns of financial advantage correspond to patterns of earning or to methods of financial management.

I am not in a position to tell whether day-to-day control of domestic expenditure was in fact more or less of an "advantage" than access to independent spending money. Similarly, I cannot determine the degree to which respondents systematically "won" or "lost" particular money-related disputes because of, or despite, their financial responsibilities and so cannot conclude that, for example, respondents were systematically disadvantaged by their systems of financial management. However, I can observe that, in combination, methods of financial management, associated perceptions of different categories of money, and expectations of gender appropriate spending responsibility, ordered the outcome of a wide range of clear cut family decisions and the form of many domestic routines. Decisions about buying furniture, about holiday and leisure expenditure,

and about family size, were all informed by the family's material position and by its method of financial management. As I shall discuss in the next chapter, allocation of jobs such as "the shopping", as well as the nature of that shopping role also depended on the family's method of financial management. Yet it was not as if the course of all these other choices about expenditure were simply structured by a "pre-existing" method of management. For those methods were in turn "devised" with reference to a notion of the proper spending and saving roles of both husband and wife. It is therefore difficult to fully distinguish these themes from those which I shall consider in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 9: NOTES

1. See chapter 1.
2. This view is much like that presented by Blau (1964) and Emerson (1962). This account of resources is discussed in chapter 1.
3. For example, Stamp writes: "If the wife is earning she is likely to be able to treat her income as her personal spending money. She will probably have greater influence on decisions in the family" (Stamp, 1985)
4. Ayers writes: "In controlling most domestic activities, wives gained an autonomous sphere of power" (Ayers, 1986, p211)
5. Ayers also writes: "we wish to argue that for men, clear elements of self interest operated in perpetuating this myth of what constituted a good wife and in avoiding involvement with household affairs" (Ayers, 1986, p201). Pahl too notes that "The wife in the whole wage system household has the appearance of holding power, but this may be largely illusory". In contrast to Ayers, Pahl goes on to explain that "The illusion ... is based on the fact that the household is ultimately an important, a power-full location: either power is located elsewhere, in the public sphere or, though it is located in some households in the society, it is not located in those particular households because of their inferior position in the overall class system" (Pahl, 1983).
6. As Pahl writes: "traditional economics on the other hand, has construed the household as a black box, within which the resources acquired by individuals are assumed to be shared amongst household members" (Pahl, 1983, p238)
7. It is easy to conflate the two issues as formal methods of financial management evidently inform both the allocation of financial responsibilities and the distribution of money as a resource.
8. See notes 4 and 5 above.
9. As I observed in chapter 3, an allocation of responsibility serves to demarcate an area of normally unproblematic decision-making. Whoever is

responsible is accorded the right to make certain decisions. In addition, disputes, should they arise, are then informed by a range of expectations and beliefs about the proper fulfilment of domestic obligation.

10. Very little of the relevant literature goes on to consider the ways in which methods of financial management are actually used. For example, Pahl, Stamp and others set out to categorise different methods of management without reference to the ways in which those methods actually informed the every-day use and perception of different categories of money or the outcome of routine decisions about expenditure. However, as Comer and Hunt observe, felt financial dependence cannot be equated with formal financial dependence. Similarly, to establish that the wife has formal access to the family's money is not to establish "that this freedom is exercised in practice" (Hunt, 1980, p38). For my purposes it is important to recognise that, say, a joint account could be used in any number of different ways and that joint account money could be mentally as well as "really" earmarked for particular sorts of expenditure.

11. The triangular form of this diagram is the result of much conversation with Stuart Sutcliffe.

12. Though I will consider respondent's perceptions of joint account money in the next section it is important to observe that these formal arrangements could turn out to have very different practical implications. To give just one example, some respondents used the joint account for what was, in effect, housekeeping money, while others drew upon it as "required".

13. Interestingly, a couple of older socially mobile H1 respondents had had experience of other methods of financial management. In this case, for example, the respondent changed from a "taken from" system of housekeeping to a joint account at the point when the family had "enough money".

"I mean when I first started I had tins, rent, rates, water, newspapers, electricity, gas....we changed, I don't know when, when we had more money I suppose, that's when I got rid of my tins, Oh yes things were very tight. I mean we still have a glucose tin with a

hole in the top. It was to keep threepenny bits in to pay for our train fares to go for our holiday. I can't remember when I got rid of the tins ..I suppose when I started work. No we don't save up as such. Not now. It all goes into the bank and we get what we want, what we can afford."

[H1, 16+]

14. Mirowsky and others have noted the critical role of "allocative categories", in particular, in relation to the use and perception of the wife's income. "Although the money goes into a common pool, its use is ascribed to a limited purpose. As a result, the wife's earnings may not be treated as equally relevant when the equity of marital power is being judged" (Mirowsky, 1985, p590)

15. Ideally I would have liked to document the husband's as well as the wife's perceptions of the family's allocative categories, and so to have identified what the husbands saw as "their" money. However, given that all my respondents were wives, I was unable to collect the necessary information.

16. As Shurmer writes "Of course, the price should be concealed... even when the price of a commodity is standardised we remove the tag" (Shurmer, 1971, p1242).

17. There is a limited but interesting literature on gift giving. See, for example Caplow (1982) on kin networks and christmas presents, Mauss (1970) on the gift, Davis (1972) on the relationship between formal and informal gift economies, Schwarts (1967) on the social psychology of the gift and Bell and Newby (1976) on the relationship between deference and gift giving.

18. It is interesting to note that those who were "given" housekeeping and who did not work were in much the same form of financially dependent position as those housewives who depended on an allowance. However, only the former group felt able to "earn" their "own" money by careful management of the housekeeping. Because the general allowance was destined to cover a broader range of expenses than the more specific housekeeping, it was more difficult to evaluate the consequences of thrifty management

and so more difficult to estimate the amount "saved" and hence the amount which the wife could define as her legitimate reward.

19. Both husband and wife presumed that the allotted housekeeping money would more or less exactly cover the costs of the weeks shopping. If the wife was able to do the shopping for less she was expected to keep what was left as a reward for her efficiency.

he: "She gets a set house-keeping allowance and if she can do her housekeeping under that then she can keep the rest."

she: "Its like my wage coming in only it comes from him."

[H3, pre-school age]

The wife's chances of accumulating housekeeping leftovers in this way varied depending on the size of her housekeeping allowance and on the catering standards which she was expected to maintain. Though both were difficult to define, some respondents, especially those without any other source of "their own" money, observed that they cut back on food as a way of "earning" spare cash.

"If I want anything other than run of the mill I've got to ask for it which goes against the grain. If I want something new, well it depends how much it is, if it was something up to £30 I would just pay for it out the house-keeping and we'd have to have mince all week which er to be fair ..he doesn't moan about what he gets but I don't like eating that sort of thing everyday... but if I want something I'll just do that. I don't do it every week.. it is very rare that I want more than £30."

[H2, school age]

20. A couple of joint account respondents had been forced to review their method of financial planning having found that they were unable to "share" this responsibility and yet retain control over their financial affairs.

"Thats why everything went wrong. Neither of us..we both thought the other one was ...he presumed instantly that I was [responsible] and I presumed he was and nobody was so the system collapsed. It was a complete shambles. It is funny really. He thought I was [responsible] and I thought he was and neither of us had ever positively said 'Oh is everything alright with you'. We had both got enough money. We ought to have sorted it out really but we didn't. You get married to be half a partnership only we both thought we were the other half."

[H1, no children, younger]

22. Those few who worked but who did not earn enough to pay for all the shopping were consequently in a curious position. They believed that they

should be in charge of that type of expenditure and yet did not have access to enough of the right "type" of money. There were two described solutions to this problem. In a couple of cases the husband paid the "major" supermarket bill while the wife used her income to cover all other "minor" day-to-day food related expenses. Alternatively, husband and wife literally split the bill. The following quotations illustrate both strategies.

"We both do er he will often go to the supermarket and pay by cheque. Say we buy just a few things which add up to £10 or £15 then I will just buy that but if I have what I call a good shop ...I'm going this week to stock up on things then he might come along and write a cheque for £30 or £40"
[H1, 16+]

"Er Mike writes a cheque and I give him half out of the cash that I've got in my purse. Fresh stuff we buy as we need it. If I am cooking then I will go into town at lunchtime and get what I need and if he is cooking then he might tell me what he wants and give me the money for it and I'll go and get it or if he is out he will get it himself."
[H2, no children, younger]

23. Most respondents distinguished between important and insignificant types of clothing. Underwear, shirts, sometimes shoes and sometimes trousers fell into the insignificant category and were often bought by the wife, either with housekeeping money, or, in this context, with money from her allowance. In comparison, the husband was typically involved with the selection and purchase of "important" items like jackets, suits, sometimes trousers and sometimes shirts.

"I buy shirts and jumpers and socks and pants and I buy the occasional pair of trousers but he doesn't like, he is very fussy about his trousers he is a bit old fashioned like that er and he buys his own jackets of course and shoes I don't do that but the other things I buy."
[H1, 16+]

24. Although this meant that the wives were in command of all routine decision-making it did not necessarily mean that they knew exactly how much their husband earned. Some expected to be given an un-opened pay packet while others received most but not all of their husband's wage.

25. For example, this respondent was obliged to budget very carefully.

"I set myself a budget each week and then I know if I've used it I've got everything stocked up and everything in....there are some things you can't cut down on, like say washing powder like washing powder that I use has jumped from 75p to nearly £1 and thats just within the last what 18 months and you know you can't really cut that out because it is the only soap powder I can use for them [children] because they have got exczema and its the only soap powder I find that agrees with their skin so I can't really take short cuts there but I can usually manage it from one week to the next. If I've got a big bill coming up then I try to stock up a bit earlier so I've not so much to get."
[H3, pre-school age]

HOUSEWORK AND CHILD-CARE

In this chapter I shall consider respondents' accounts of domestic decision-making associated with the allocation, delegation and performance of tasks which could broadly be described as housework and child-care. It is important to note that I am not concerned with the allocation of domestic labour as a topic in its own right (1). Rather, I am only interested in the allocation of housework in as far as that allocation is also an allocation of authority (2). As I observed in chapter 3, those who are responsible for particular types of domestic labour are characteristically expected to make all associated decisions without interference from the other. Accordingly, an allocation of responsibility is usually also an allocation of a limited area of authority. I am interested in authority and decision-making, and in debate about the allocation and delegation of domestic responsibilities, but not in the nature or volume of the associated labour.

In practice, there was very little doubt about who should be responsible for each of the range of component jobs included under the headings of housework or child-care, and so little doubt about who should make the related decisions. For my purposes, then, questions about the actual allocation of domestic responsibilities were of minor concern: nearly all respondents believed that they had "no choice" about this issue. This chapter focuses on types of decision-making which were potentially debatable and attends to associated perceptions of choice and so to the contexts of those debates. Respondents believed that there was some room for choice, and so debate, about the delegation of domestic responsibilities (ie. about decisions to delegate the work and the associated decision-making) and about issues which lay on the margins of a clearly defined area of authority/responsibility, and which were for some

reason "visible" and so the subject of joint discussion. I shall consider respondents' accounts of their shopping, cooking, cleaning, washing, decorating and child-care arrangements with a view to exploring first their definitions of the circumstances in which delegation would (or would not) be legitimate and, second, the nature and location of visible and so potentially debatable "borderline" decisions. This will allow me to describe the various contexts which ordered debate associated with choices about housework and child-care and which consequently structured the domestic worlds in which power was (or was not) exercised (3).

This decision-oriented strategy clearly differs from those adopted by feminist and other writers, and it is perhaps important to outline the range of alternative approaches taken towards the subjects of domestic inequality, power, housework and child-care so as to highlight the particular points of difference between my account and those found in the literature. Not surprisingly, these differences reflect what are essentially different conceptions of power.

Consider, for example, the views of power which underlie what has come to be known as the domestic labour debate. Writers such as Gardiner, Benston, Fox and Malos take as their starting points first, the presumption that women are oppressed, second, the notion that that "women are oppressed in special ways when the dominant mode of production is capitalist" (Fox, 1980, p12) and third, the idea that "the material conditions of women's household work are central to the determination of women's social position" (Fox, 1980, p9). In effect, their common task is that of explaining how women are exploited in the capitalist system and, in particular, of explaining the economic role of housework as part of that exploitative process. In this context, debate about women's real interests is as rare as debate about the status of the concept of power. As I observed in chapter 1, analyses which focus on "production and reproduction as the

material aspects of women's oppression" (Gardiner, p235, 1980) variously imply that relations of production and reproduction are the product, or sometimes the cause, of relations of power (4). Either way the term "power" is taken-for-granted, as is the inequality which it is presumed to refer to. I do not want to get involved with the arguments and counter arguments of the domestic labour debate. My point is that there is little overlap between analyses of housework or child-care, which are orientated towards the project of explaining exploitation in the terms described above, and those which are informed by alternative accounts of power and/or inequality.

While the analyses of housework provided by Gavron, Oakley, Hobson or Hunt also focus on housework as work, the emphasis here is on the experience of that work rather than on the relationship between that form of labour and an overall economic system. These writers examine everyday experience of what is presumed to be the oppressed position of the housewife (Hobson, 1978; Gavron, 1966), emphasise the characteristics of housework as work and draw attention to what has been a relatively "invisible" topic (Oakley, 1974). Such studies of housework are believed to relate to an analysis of women's oppression in one of the following ways. Some writers suggest that women are oppressed (in the domestic context) because it is they who are responsible for doing what is presented as an inherently unpleasant job (Hobson, 1978; Gavron, 1966). As Comer writes, "the housewife's most acute oppression is experienced in the work she performs" (Comer, 1974, p83). Others imply that the key "problem" is the low status of housework and so of those who do it (Oakley, 1974) (5). Those who take this argument a stage further go on to consider the relationships between housework, financial dependence and women's involvement in the labour market (Pollert, 1981; Westwood, 1984) (6).

In sum, then, feminist accounts of housework vary depending on the nature

of informing conceptions of the role of housework as a dimension of, or an explanation for women's oppression. These accounts in turn rest on different conceptions of both power and of the nature and "cause" of women's oppression (7). This chapter's analysis is informed by a rather different approach to the study of domestic power relations and so simply attends to respondents' accounts of decisions related to issues of housework and child-care. My aim is to document perceptions of choice and so contexts of decision-making described by different sections of the sample, but not to present any additional account of the experience of domestic labour or of the justice or otherwise of particular ways of dividing responsibility for housework or child-care.

In detail, this chapter is divided into 3 sections. The first considers the kinds of decision-making associated with choices about such regular domestic tasks as shopping, cooking, cleaning and washing. The second examines the range of decisions related to such irregular and sometimes unpredictable jobs as household maintenance and decorating. Finally, the third section explores decision-making specifically associated with child-care obligations. In each of these sections I shall review respondents' beliefs and expectations about the possibility of delegating particular areas of domestic work and, where relevant, perceptions of choice associated with those few choices which were not automatically taken by the appropriate authoritative figure.

1. DECISIONS ABOUT ROUTINE TYPES OF HOUSEWORK

As noted earlier, my respondents expressed little doubt about the "proper" allocation of domestic responsibilities. Accordingly, all of them were "in charge" of the housework (8). However, before I begin discussion of specific choices associated with the component tasks of shopping, cooking, cleaning and laundry, it is important to observe that these sub-areas of domestic responsibility were not as neatly separable as the following

analysis might imply. Some decisions had immediate consequences for others. For example, decisions about what food to buy ordered subsequent choices about what to cook. Furthermore, respondents had to allocate their time such that they were able to fulfil all their domestic responsibilities according to schedule (9). Individual jobs were therefore slotted into elaborate "programmes", the structures of which varied from one housing section of the sample to another, and to a lesser extent, according to the wife's employed status. This is important for the resulting styles of housework had certain common implications for respondents' perceptions of component areas of decision-making. For example, those who had a rigid daily routine knew precisely how they would structure their washing, cleaning and cooking responsibilities, while those who adopted a more flexible strategy had to balance their time-table according to an immediate and variable set of personal or domestic priorities. Thus styles of work had general consequences in terms of respondents' daily routines and so influenced their perceptions of an "appropriate" standard of work and the possibility and likelihood of delegation (10).

It should also be observed that different housing sections of the sample described characteristically different views of the "meaning" of housework and so of the significance of delegating particular component responsibilities. While these differences were more and less marked in relation to different "component" tasks, there appeared to be some systematic variation in overall approaches to "housework". In detail, of course, the nature of the choices associated with shopping, cooking cleaning and laundry varied considerably. I shall now consider decision-making practices related to each of these areas.

Food shopping

The range of shopping jobs and decisions which might have been delegated

varied depending on the wife's normal shopping habits, on the kinds of shops normally frequented, and on her approach to menu planning. As I shall show later, the nature of the shop (supermarket or otherwise) determined the nature of the work which might be delegated. Yet wherever they bought their food, H1s, H2s, and H3s went about that task in characteristically different ways. For example, only a couple of H1s had what they defined as a "day" for shopping while, at the other extreme, nearly all the H3s stuck to a regular shopping routine. This was important, for the wife's food shopping strategy determined the practicality of delegating any of the associated decision making. For example, those who bought the same goods each week or each month never had to think about what they would choose.

"I more or less get the same things each week because we stock the freezer up for pies and pasties and fish fingers and what not like that. Also, we've started getting a chicken and a turkey roll from Asda once a month and alternating it. We'd have beef, chicken, pork, and turkey roll for our Sunday dinner, and we've, we find it a bit cheaper that way."

[H3, no children, younger]

In these cases (typically H3 or H2 rather than H1) there were simply no decisions to delegate. The wife always selected the same kinds of food and the family always ate the same sorts of meals. In comparison, those who decided what to buy just before they got to the shops, or while they were out shopping, faced an endless sequence of choices. In these circumstances there was some chance that a helping husband could directly influence the final outcome (11). A few respondents positively encouraged such involvement and felt that their husbands ought to take part in this decision-making process.

"I do the planning which I find not easy..What am I going to do for lunch tomorrow. What are we having for tomorrow night..? and I'll say 'What do you feel like?' 'Oh anything just anything, don't worry about it anything will do'. Well anything is not the answer ...so I make the list."

[H1, no children, older]

"I always make a list. I sometimes make him make a list. I make him make the list then he thinks he's doing something because I get sick of these, ...if we run out of anything it's always my fault so I'll make it his responsibility as well. I still get in trouble when we run out. But he can't menu plan. I mean when you go shopping you don't

just buy things you see you think well Saturday tea, Sunday, you plan what you are going to have and the veg you are going to have with it. He'd come home with a chicken. 'Er right what are you going to do with it.' 'Er I hadn't thought of that' 'Ok then what veg are you going to have' 'Oh we haven't got any. I didn't get any veg, I never thought of that' So really he tries but it's something you've got to get into and take a responsibility for, and he won't. I think he thinks it's not his place to do the shopping. His mother always did the shopping so I'm afraid as far as shopping goes he is a bit of a dead loss and he intends to keep it that way."

[H1, no children, younger]

As I shall suggest later, the location of jointly debatable areas of decision-making varied depending on the wife's preference for supermarket or local shopping as well as on her approach to menu planning.

Respondents' perceptions of the possibility of delegating shopping labour, as opposed to decision-making, varied depending on the nature of the shopping trip in question. 90% of the sample expected to do at least some of their shopping in a supermarket while the remaining 10% (from the H2 and H3 sections of the sample) bought their food locally or in town, either because they did not have access to a car or because they had an established shopping routine which did not encompass the notion of a supermarket.

"I have to arrange it so I go every day it's too far to walk there and back with a heavy shopping bag so I only shop once every few days I just spread it out over the week. I have to do it all round here really."

[H2, no children, younger]

"I go shopping every Friday. I get all my shopping on a Friday. I go to the market.. I know where I am going and what I want. I just get round it as quick as I can. It's just a routine."

[H3, 16+]

On the whole, respondents believed that there was greater scope for delegating supermarket labour. Although only a few delegated all the associated work (12), most (91% of those who expected to use a supermarket) presumed that they and their husbands would go to the supermarket together. Many of the H2s and H3s had no choice about this because they relied on their husbands for transport. These non-driving respondents, including the two quoted below, observed that their husbands

helped with the shopping because there was nothing much else to do in a supermarket.

"My husband takes me to Hillards. We get most of our shopping there. He helps me, he will take the trolley round and I transfer it [the shopping] from the trolley to the cashier and she transfers it and then he takes it to the car and he helps to unpack when we come back but then he leaves me because I know where things go."

[H2, pre-school age]

"Well he usually takes me because I go to the supermarket once a week so he usually takes me. Sometimes I do all the shopping and he comes and picks me up. It just depends. Usually he sits in the car for a while and then waits while I get so far round and then he comes. He'll probably stand in the queue while I finish off the shopping and he helps me load it in the car and bring it home."

[H2, school age]

The helping husband, as trolley pusher, box packer, and porter, speeded up the shopping process and saved his wife from all unsuitably heavy labour. These were seen to be entirely appropriate activities even if there was some doubt about the legitimacy of other forms of involvement. Although some helping husbands preferred to stay in the car while the decisions were made, others came into the shop and were actually to hand and so able to inform, or even make, "on the spot" choices. Not surprisingly, respondents had different definitions of legitimate and illegitimate "advice" depending on their preferred style of menu planning. In the first of the two cases quoted below, the husband's involvement was permitted as there was still plenty of scope for choice. In the second, such decision-making was problematic because the wife had already prepared a mental list of what she required and of what she could afford.

"I keep telling myself that I should be more systematic about it but the truth is that we tend to go round and choose what we fancy, it is a real old hotch potch some weeks. It's something we've always done since we've got married because er well John is interested in food so therefore he takes some interest in the buying of it."

[H2, school age]

"If I go round here [ie. shop locally] I just get it all. If we go to Asda he usually, we usually get it together there. He just shoves things in. He just shoves them in but you know if there is a thing that we both like I'll say 'shall we have this one or the other one' you know I'll sort of ask him before I get it but he just puts things in. I know its cheaper at Asda but I always spend more than if I go on my own to the shops round here what with all the bits he adds in.."

[H3, pre-school age]

Providing that the husband accompanied his wife there was always scope for joint decision-making. As Weinbaum and Bridges (1979) have noted, family trips to the supermarket potentially undermine the wife's exclusive decision-making role. It was certainly the case that few respondents expected their husbands to accompany them on local shopping trips. In this context, delegation, if any, took the form of an errand. Husbands who were sent, like those who volunteered, were simply asked to buy the items which featured on their wives' shopping lists and were consequently denied any decision-making role. Respondents described very different beliefs about the circumstances in which they could legitimately ask for (or accept) this sort of help. Some, especially the older ones, were only prepared to ask if they were literally unable to get out themselves. Others were willing to delegate odd shopping jobs if it were more convenient that way or if their husband offered his assistance. The following examples illustrate the range of perceptions about the possibility of such delegation.

"Sometimes on a Saturday afternoon when he is going out. He likes a bet and he says 'do you want anything up there while I'm up there' and I'll I give him a little list then if there a few things. If its just one he'll remember but he's very good, he always offers...you know do you want anything?"

[H3, 16+]

"Oh yes I phone him up with shopping lists. He always reckons that he's too busy at lunchtime but I can't get out either and anyway I think its good for him to do some of the shopping. If I forget anything I'll ask him to get it."

[H1, no children, younger]

"It's my job. He's never you know he's never been one to do any of the shopping. He hates going into town or even to the shops down here. The only shop he goes into here is the newsagents. No he's not fussy for shopping. I don't make him do it. No. When I was ill my daughter came down and did it for him."

[H2, 16+]

Interestingly, several of those who were in principle prepared to ask their husband to help chose not to do so because they believed that this would cause more problems than it solved. These women quoted instances of their husband's previous failure as evidence of what they saw as the impracticality of seriously trying to delegate any of the local shopping

work.

"Can he do it?...Well look, he went, I sent him out for a loaf of bread and he came back with food for the cat, six tea cakes, which cost 36p whereas I can get them for 26 in town, and some butter because he thought I might run out. All I'd asked for was a loaf of bread!!..I learned my lesson then. He's always willing but I bet you even if I wrote it down in letters this big he'd come home with the wrong things."

[H2, 16+]

Such stories emphasised what was seen as the husband's natural inefficiency. Errands of the kind described provided an occasion on which the husband could show that he was willing to help but that this was not really his job and that it was certainly not a job that he could do effectively. Curiously, husbands who "failed" to buy the right things were always seen to have been incompetent rather than to have positively disrupted their wife's plans. It is at least possible that some of the "mistakes" were deliberate and so represented conscious interference with the decision-making process.

So, the frequency, and form of delegated labour varied depending on the type of shopping trip. Supermarket assistance, which was extremely common, usually involved loading and unloading goods and/or pushing the trolley. Interestingly, respondents only sought help with local shopping in particular circumstances (eg. because they had forgotten to buy something or because it was more convenient) and then only asked that the husband run an errand for them.

In sum, the formal character of different types of shopping, in combination with a generalised definition of gender appropriate labour (13) appeared to order perceptions of the possibility of delegating aspects of shopping labour. In comparison, the perceived possibility of delegating associated decision-making depended on the respondent's shopping routine, her method of menu planning and, to some degree, on the type of shop and the precise nature of the husband's labouring role. Not surprisingly, choices which

were made or realised in the other's presence (ie. in the supermarket) were more likely to be subject to joint discussion than those which were made in the privacy of a local shop. In practice, opportunities for delegating decision-making were structured by the wife's normal menu planning procedure and by the number of occasions on which she and her husband went supermarket shopping together. Given their characteristic shopping style, H1 respondents were much more likely to decide to delegate at least some associated decision-making than were respondents from other sections of the sample. H3s, who were most likely to shop alone in local stores with the aid of highly organised shopping lists were consequently the least likely to be faced with jointly debatable decisions about what to buy.

Cooking

All respondents believed that they would take charge of the routine planning and preparation of the family's meals. However, different sections of the sample held characteristically different views of the possibility of delegating the associated work or decision-making. Broadly, H2 and H3 respondents believed that they cooked for their husband and their children while H1s, especially the younger ones, tended to view day-to-day cooking as just one among many domestic chores which had to be done. While these H1s acknowledged that it was "their" job, they argued that this was simply a consequence of habit, convenience or experience, and not because it should be their responsibility or because it demanded any gender specific skill.

Before going any further it is important to acknowledge that individual respondents were more or less likely to delegate particular types of cooking work (14). Because cooking jobs were classified as more and less "easy" (or, rather, as more and less "easy" for someone of the "wrong" gender), it was difficult to simply document perceptions of choice about the possibility of delegating something which could be uniformly classed as

"cooking". Whatever the general view the wife's cooking responsibility, choices about delegating breakfast making, for example, were quite unlike those related to the production of a main meal.

In general, husbands were expected to have much more to do with the preparation of "extra" meals like breakfast, lunch tea or supper (depending on the terminology) than with "main" meals. Decisions about snacks were seen to be relatively unimportant, and, in any case, the associated work was often described as heating up, slicing, spreading or boiling rather than "cooking". Although all husbands were reportedly able to manage these jobs, the occasions on which they were actually called upon to exercise their snack-making skills varied depending on the family's day-to-day routine. In the following example the husband had to make his own breakfast and lunch because his wife was out at work.

"He cooks his breakfast. That is a very strict routine. I am away before all that..[ie. his breakfast]..we are very well organised. We have a fairly strict routine, and he always comes home and gets his own lunch because we've always had a dog and a cat and he has quite a clever routine for himself ... he likes the radio on with the news till 12.30 and he knows where everything is."

[H1, 16+]

The structure of the daily routine was not always determined by factors entirely beyond the respondent's control. Indeed, most expected to try to manage their household so as to minimise the occasions on which their husband was left to fend for himself. Where possible H3s, H2s and, to a lesser extent, H1s arranged their own time-table so that they did not have to delegate what they saw as their catering responsibilities.

"He likes me to get up and make some toast and have a cup of tea with him before he goes out. He is one of these strange people that doesn't like getting up on their own. Occasionally I wouldn't mind staying in bed but most mornings I get up quite happily and get the breakfast."

[H2, no children, younger]

Some were so organised that their husband's "cooking" capacities were never even put to the test. This group, which mostly consisted of older respondents, were as proud to announce that their husband could look after

himself as they were pleased to observe that this had never been necessary.

she: "He wouldn't stop me from going anywhere if I wanted to go out in the day and leave him some dinner to warm up that would be alright wouldn't it?"

he: "I can look after myself"

she: "He can do. He can... He would never starve, no there's lots of things he could do if he had to."

he: "Oh I don't know boiling a kettle I think."

she: "He'll boil an egg and he'll poach an egg on toast or beans on toast. He can do things such as that, he could do that if he ever had to."

[H3, 16+]

Husbands who made their own lunch, tea, or breakfast, and those who made snacks for the family, were usually "allowed" to take care of the associated decision-making as well as the labouring work and were only subject to criticism if they left an enormous mess or if they used up all the bread/margarine/bacon etc. This was so whatever the circumstances of delegation. Here it is important to note that helping husbands were seen to be doing their wife a favour even if they were in fact preparing "their own" meal or snack. In such circumstances wives had no choice but to be grateful and so had what they described as a fairly high level of "tolerance".

As I observed earlier, decisions about what to eat were to some degree determined by prior decisions about what to buy. Location of choice about main meal contents therefore depended on the respondent's menu planning strategy, and opportunities for delegating decision-making responsibility were structured accordingly. For example, those who compiled their shopping lists with a view to Tuesday's dinner, Wednesday's lunch and so on, had already made all necessary choices. Even those who were more flexible had at least pre-selected the range of possible options in that they had, for example, run out of eggs or needed to eat up the carrots they had bought (15). Some husbands influenced the early stages of the decision-making sequence and offered buying as well as cooking suggestions. Others occasionally took charge of decisions associated with the whole process from planning right through to production and consumption, yet

whatever the formal possibilities such involvement was sporadic. All respondents felt that it was their job to ensure that the family was properly fed. Accordingly, most "what shall we eat" decisions were taken "automatically" and were presented as just one of several normally "invisible" components of the wife's more general catering responsibility. No respondents expected their husband to take charge of decisions about the family diet, though a few did expect help with an occasional menu-related choice.

The perceived practicality of delegating any of the work associated with main meals depended, in part, on respondent's definition of this type of cooking, and, in part, on such logistic factors as the couple's normal meal time and the working hours of husband or husband and wife. All H1 husbands worked regular "office" hours (9am to 5, 6 or sometimes 7pm) and most expected to have their main meal somewhere between 7pm and 9pm in the evening. In comparison, the eating habits of H2s and H3s were frequently complicated by inconvenient working hours or by repeated cycles of shift work. Despite these variations, however, about half of H2s and H3s expected to have their main meal at, or as close to, lunch time as possible. The other half normally ate between 5pm and 6pm. This meant that 83% of H2s, 71% of the H3s and 21% of H1s prepared the main meal while their husband was out at work and were therefore unable to delegate much of the associated labour (16). However, 10% of H2 respondents and 14% of H3s were themselves out at work at the time when they would conventionally prepare the main meal. In three of these cases the husband, who arrived home earlier than his wife, chose to take over the cooking rather than wait for his wife to come home and prepare what would then be an inappropriately late meal.

"Well my husband is very good. He starts the tea because he gets in that bit earlier now. We have our tea together about 6 O'clock. When I was working part-time I always did the cooking and he only does it now because he is in first. He'd rather do it himself than wait until

I get back. We wouldn't be able to eat till well 6.30pm or nearly 7pm if I did it and so it is usually something quick like waffles and poached egg you know, or grilled fish. He doesn't mind doing it. No. He just reads the instructions on the packet and it is... I don't think it's ever, ...it is eatable, that is it really."
[H2, school age]

The only other respondents who routinely delegated the work of preparing the main meal were H1s, both of whom explained that their husbands had lived alone before getting married and had found that they enjoyed cooking. These men chose to continue what was now seen as their "hobby" even though there was no longer any real "need" to do so.

"We sort of cook alternate evenings. Obviously it's flexible, I mean if one has got to go out then we will swap evenings. It just seemed to happen like that, I don't know really I suppose it was because he is very fond of cooking and he wouldn't like to be sort of done out of it. Also it seems sort of fair really when we are both out at work all day so he takes his turn, but he doesn't object to that because as I say he likes cooking."
[H1, no children, younger]

"We probably split it 50/50, 50/50 as long as you like curries. Well we vary ...I probably do slightly more of the cooking than Dave does because I think if it is something basic I'll just go ahead and do it. He tends to faff about doing sort of spices and all this sort of thing..."
[H1, no children, younger]

Many more respondents delegated the work of preparing the main meal on some kind of special occasion. In the H1 context this usually meant that the husband took over when the family was entertaining or when he wanted to make an "exotic" meal. Five H1s had husbands who enjoyed creating such dishes as coq au vin or boeuf bourgignon and who took over when this kind of cooking was required.

"I do it through the week yes. Now and again he will, [cook] and really he is marvellous if he wants to be, he always does the cooking for special occasions, like if we are entertaining someone then he always cooks"
[H1, no children, younger]

"He is a very good cook I mean he doesn't just have set favourites. At dinner parties he tends to cook more than me. I sort of carry on in a normal kind of routine. I do all the routine cooking but when it's a dinner party I look after the children and do other things and he does the cooking. I might do the pudding but he does the main course. I like it that way actually because I do like cooking as well but Geoff enjoys it. He finds it relaxing doing er big exotic cooking you know get out the recipe book and things, 'lets try this', and really ..I used to do it as much as him when we didn't have the

children, but I can't concentrate on it now and I take sort of short cuts which isn't any good with top cooking er and I can't really concentrate when Anna [daughter] is there so I'm happier if he leaves me to entertain them and he'll do it. Otherwise if it was left to me if it was a dinner party and he doesn't have the time to do the cooking I'll always do something simpler than him. If he isn't cooking it means he hasn't got the time to cook so I have to entertain the children as well so I always make it simpler."

[H1, pre-school age]

Respondents from other sections of the sample occasionally delegated the cooking on quite different grounds. For example, a couple of H2 husbands and five H3s were prepared to make the family's main meal if it was more convenient that way or if their wife was ill or especially tired. In these cases the husbands produced simple "specialities" rather than elaborate and "exotic" creations.

"Oh he doesn't mind cooking. He won't er do it all the time but er I'll do it all the time but if I said 'Oh er you know I can't be bothered you do it'. He would do it you know he'd do it for a change. He won't do it all the time but I mean in the holidays and things he will do it. I think he likes it because he just does it now and then."

[H2, school age]

Either way, the "special" status of the occasion emphasised the normality of ordinary allocations of responsibility. Such delegation was only legitimate if the husband enjoyed cooking (and most H1s believed that their husbands would not enjoy cooking so much if they had to do it all the time), if the wife had asked her husband to take over as a favour, or if he volunteered. None of the occasional "chefs" were expected to be able to produce a sequence of acceptable everyday meals. H2 and H3 respondents could not eat egg and chips every dinner time any more than H1s could sustain a diet of rich and expensive food. Temporary cooks were therefore expected to produce a one-off meal to the "required" standard, the meaning of which varied with the context of delegation. Husbands who prepared exotic meals were engaged with a kind of cooking to which normal rules did not apply. In comparison, those who made the dinner/tea/supper because their wife was unwilling or unable to do so either produced what would normally count as a sub-standard meal or else stuck to their simple

speciality which was as perfect as it was predictable.

"He always does poached egg on toast. He can't go wrong really"
[H2, no children, younger]

Finally, some women were positively unwilling to delegate any of the cooking even if this were theoretically possible. A few of these explained that, in their view, it was not really right for a man (let alone their husband) to do the cooking, while others reasoned that established patterns of expertise were such that it would make no sense to delegate the work to their necessarily less capable husband. The following examples illustrate both views.

"He will sometimes warm something up if I've got late and can't get it all done before I go out to work, but I don't like to ask him I like to get it all organised so it's on the table by the time I have to go out. I think that is my job really, and I'd feel guilty if I didn't do that for them ..I think it is my job to make sure they have something hot."
[H2, pre-school age]

"He will do some things, but not really. It would be such an investment of time and energy for him to learn to cook it is just impractical really.. I can't do his jobs, it would take me just as long to learn about them and there is no point really, so we stick to what we can do"
[H1, 16+]

Of course, those who prepared the main meal while their husband was out at work were literally unable to delegate any of the the main meal cooking - presuming, that is, that the meal time was "fixed" and presuming that the husband's working hours were constant. Most of this group (75%) believed that theirs was an entirely ordinary arrangement. Cooking was just one of a range of housekeeping responsibilities which the wife felt obliged to fulfil. Indeed, some respondents had chosen to stay at home in order that they could do this and other domestic jobs "properly".

"We eat at night when he gets in so when the afternoon begins you really have to think about the evening meal because if I do, the more splendid meal I do it usually means starting earlier but sometimes I don't start till about 3 or 3.30 or so....I know he says he wouldn't mind if I went out to work but I think he has come to expect all the things to be done, the meal to be ready, if he found that he had to do that I don't think he'd be that happy really"
[H1, school age]

In summary, decisions about what to eat and therefore about what to cook

were inevitably ordered by earlier decisions about what to buy. Most respondents took charge of all these choices as part of their more general housekeeping and food providing role, and only debated the matter on "special" occasions. In theory different planning and catering styles determined the exact location of real choice and so created different (theoretical) opportunities for delegating associated decision-making. Some decided what to eat weeks in advance, others only a few minutes before they started cooking. However, decision-making responsibilities were so rarely delegated that these details remained invisible.

Respondent's perceptions of choice about the possibility of delegating any of the work associated with preparing the main meal appeared to be ordered by the presence or absence of the husband during normal cooking time, by the respondent's view of her role as caterer, and by the husband's cooking ability. H1 husbands had rather more to do with the preparation of their family's main meal than any others. Only this section of the sample were likely to adopt a pragmatic approach to the subject and to treat cooking as an ordinary domestic chore (or pleasure) rather than as a particularly "feminine" obligation. Because respondents from other sections of the sample typically believed that cooking was properly the wife's job, husbands only took over to help out and only did so when the circumstances justified what was seen as unusual behaviour.

Cleaning

All respondents felt that they were ultimately responsible for the state of their home. This meant that they routinely faced decisions about what was or was not clean, as well as decisions about the circumstances in which they might delegate particular elements of the associated labour. Again the perceived practicality of delegating either the work or the decision-making varied depending on the respondent's approach to housework. Those who had a "routine", that is those who regularly tidied the bedrooms on,

say, Tuesdays, never had to decide when the cleaning needed doing while those who cleaned "when necessary" constantly made decisions of the form "is it time to do the bedrooms yet?". The following examples illustrate the range of described strategies.

"I have a day for doing bedrooms which is a Friday. I call Friday my turfing out day. I Hoover through every day from top to bottom, but Friday is the day when I move all the bedroom furniture, when I move the beds and settees I move everything. But generally I wash the kitchen floor every day. I used to have a day for doing the windows but now with the little one it's nearly every day I do a window clean, there are little finger marks all over. I do the toilets every day so really when it comes to turfing out it doesn't take me as long as it would do if I'd left it all week."

[H2, pre-school age]

"I'm really disorganised, you know, I clean when it needs doing but it always seems untidy because we are both untidy people. If I say right 'it's time we did the house out' he would clean up but there is no way I can say I have a routine. I tend to walk into the house with my eyes shut, and walk out with them shut. There is no way I can do much when I'm working so I just ignore it."

[H2, school age]

Styles of housework determined both the form and location of necessary decision-making and the degree to which respondents were likely to be able to delegate associated work. Irregular cleaners (who tended to be working wives) often tidied up at the week-end or at times when their husband was available and, in theory, able to help out, while those who had a definite routine tended to organise their domestic timetable such that they fulfilled their cleaning obligations during the week. Some of this group deliberately aimed to get "their jobs" done whilst their husband was out at work.

Described practices of delegation, both of work and, much less commonly, of decision-making, (17) also varied with the couple's view of housework. Again, different sections of the sample described characteristically different definitions of the nature of cleaning work and hence of the nature of their proper cleaning role. Most H1s and many younger respondents concluded that cleaning, like cooking and food shopping, were simply jobs which had to be done. Those who held this view were unlikely

to conclude that they had "failed" if they asked for help, and all were prepared to take advantage of opportunities to delegate cleaning work. Some positively expected to "share" the housework and so expected to make use of their husband's labour.

"If I said 'right today we are going to clean the lounge dear, you do the lounge I'll do the bathroom'. We divide the responsibility but again, it's me in charge. 'Right you're lounge, I'm bathroom.'"
[H1, no children, younger]

"If I need some help I can just ask him. He is always willing to do his share, he will do anything, he will put his hand to anything, he'll Hoover, he'll dust, he'll polish, whatever to help me out, it doesn't matter what it is, he'll do it to help me out....he wouldn't notice that the place was in a mess so I'd start agitating before he would so that's why it's me that asks him rather than the other way round."

[H3, no children, younger]

Others, like those quoted below, were, in principle, prepared to delegate cleaning but chose not to do so on the grounds that this would create more problems than it solved. These respondents observed that their husband was unable to do even the simplest kind of housework.

"We don't divide it, I do it all. He would if he had to but it's one of those situations where ...if I put things away I know where I put them. If he puts them away he forgets where they should be...it's easier for me to do it. In any case, he can't stand the Hoover. No, he can't stand the noise. He can't stand me Hoovering so I have to do that when he is out...that's the way we are. I prefer it like that, you know he'll always say 'I'll do this', or 'I'll do that', but I won't let him. It's just for my own convenience really."

[H2, school age]

"I do everything in the house. He'd not wash a pot, or Hoover, or anything, I'm not really bothered. I've always done it, it's just a habit you know I've just always done it, plus he wouldn't do it right I don't think so it'd only annoy me. He can't even wash up, he is hopeless."

[H1, school age]

At the other extreme a couple of older respondents, both H2s, argued that wives should do the housework themselves and should choose not to delegate such work even if that were practical.

"I do firmly believe that that is the female role and that I should do all the cleaning and household management that is my job and I shouldn't really go to work."

[H2, 16+]

These women tried to minimise the occasions on which they sought help

although, curiously, they still believed that their husbands should be able and willing to offer such assistance if required.

"I regard looking after the house as my job so I don't see really why the husband should come home after work and start doing things that I could very well do when I'm at home during the day. I don't think that's fair. He would do if I asked but I never have to ask, touch wood."

[H2, 16+]

Such devotion was exceptional. Most women believed that, although they were ultimately responsible for the housework, there were nonetheless certain jobs which they might expect to delegate either routinely or in particular and unusual circumstances. The exact location of the boundary between legitimate and illegitimate delegation varied from case to case, and from circumstance to circumstance, although those who went out to work expected rather more help than those who were full-time housewives (18).

"That is basically mine, because I'm in all day so I might as well do it really. When I was at work it was different. I believed in 50/50. I was going out the same hours as he was so ..so I believed in 50/50, then. I believed that he should help with the housework then."

[H3, no children, younger]

he: "I clean up in here I wash the pots every night so er I just I just er think that its my right sort of to chip in with her because she is going out to work I think if she had to do all the housework it's wrong."

[H3, no children, younger]

So, levels of expected help were structured by respondents' domestic routines, their working status, and their view of the gender specificity of the cleaning role (19).

Whatever the level or "quantity" of help, assistants took on only a few of the possible cleaning roles. Respondents typically delegated routine cleaning work which was not thought to demand any special skill. 30% of the sample saw hoovering as a relatively easy "gender neutral" task which was ideally suited to delegation.

"Ian always does a certain amount of things, he doesn't enjoy cooking so he always does the hoovering. In fact he, it is a bit of a joke, we brought a new hoover about two years ago and the other day I had to change the bag and I didn't know how to do it. He thought this was funny ...that I didn't know how to change the hoover. Ian is the sort

of person who will take the initiative in certain things in the house and we share, he knows that if I am involved in cooking or ironing or whatever I can't do the hall floor and sometimes he finds it a relaxation to go and do that."

[H1, no children, younger]

"He will Hoover, he'll never dust mind, no, but he will Hoover. I think he thinks it's [dusting] too ...well I'll tell you one thing he would never carry a bunch of flowers...well he'd think it was too feminine, I don't know, but Hoovering yes, he will take the Hoover round the front room, he likes to see it tidy. I do it properly at the week-end but yes, he has a go with the Hoover."

[H2, 16+]

The only other job to be so frequently "delegated" was the work of outside window cleaning. As the following quotations illustrate the "dangerous" location converted what would otherwise have been the wife's work into a job which could, and perhaps should, be delegated. However, decision-making remained the wife's responsibility.

"He washes the windows upstairs for me, as most of the men do, they all do the upstairs windows round here. I never go up a ladder, no, so he does that."

[H2, school age]

"There are certain things which Dave does for me, like well the windows, the outside windows, because he is taller than I am he can climb up better. Inside I usually do, except the kitchen which I can't reach but it is such a rare event that it hardly, it doesn't happen that often."

[H1, no children, younger]

Husbands occasionally helped with a rather broader range of cleaning work, the exact form depending on the circumstance of delegation. For example, all claimed that their husband would take over at least the most pressing cleaning jobs in an emergency. The list of such "emergency" work varied depending on the couple's definition of "necessary" cleaning and on the duration of the wife's incapacity.

"Oh no he has done it [the housework] but only if I've been really poorly. He wouldn't do the housework just ordinarily. I went into hospital for 48 hours and when I came back he was doing the Hoovering but I must be honest I felt like taking it [the Hoover] off him, but at least he tried. He had a go at the dusting then, but no, no, he doesn't really do much like that, not unless, as I say, not unless I'm really poorly."

[H2, no children, older]

In these circumstances, the husband was expected to do all that was necessary to keep the house going as best he could. In comparison, those

who helped when their wife was fit and able, if especially busy, were directed towards certain specific tasks. These selected areas of cleaning work were not necessarily the most "urgent" jobs but were chosen on the grounds that they would be "easy" to delegate.

"On the odd occasion that at week-ends if I'm busy doing dinner and it's a bad day and he can't get into the garden he'll put the Hoover on for me or just tidy up"
[H2, no children, older]

"If there is somebody coming round for a meal for example I will probably be doing the cooking and Robert will, sometimes he will do it off his own bat, sometimes I have to ask him, he usually goes round and tidies up while I cook the meal."
[H1, no children, younger]

In sum, then, the respondents' perceptions of the possibility of delegation varied depending on their cleaning routine (or lack of it) and on their view of the nature of cleaning work. Different sections of the sample held characteristically different positions with respect to each of these issues and so delegated different cleaning jobs under different circumstances.

The laundry

All but two respondents believed that they were obliged to ensure that the family had clean clothes, sheets, tea towels etc. and so felt that they should be in charge of washing, drying and ironing. The scale and the nature of these jobs varied as a consequence of the size of family and the form of its washing machinery (if any). These factors in combination with the wife's normal washing habits, the couple's working hours and the respondent's view of the nature of washing work, ordered the perceived practicality of delegating either labour or related decision-making. Those who had an automatic washing machine (a mixture of H1, H2 and H3 respondents owned such equipment) only had to select an appropriate programme and then load the machine with a pile of pre-sorted washing. Most believed that their husband could turn on a pre-programmed ready loaded washing machine and often asked him to do so.

"Yes well we used to have a twin tub and we used to do it between us

on a Saturday morning...I was sort of more or less in charge but he would help now and then but now we've got an automatic he is quite willing to put a load in but I mostly do that."

[H2, no children, younger]

"He's not too keen on temperatures and which colours you can put with which and which soap powders to use. I have different soap powders depending on what I'm washing ..soap flakes and a biological and we've got an automatic one ...he wouldn't really know I don't think he'd do it if I asked, if I said everything is ready all you've got to do is turn it on, he would quite happily turn it on ...he wouldn't take it out and he couldn't organise himself to put a wash on.. He wouldn't think it was about time the sheets were washed, he doesn't even notice but then I don't notice when the oil needs changing in the car."

[H1, no children, younger]

While these wives were quite prepared to delegate the very simple job of doing the washing (given that it involved turning a switch) only a few also expected their husband to take charge of the decisions associated with the jobs of programming and loading. Several presented descriptions of their husband's past failure as evidence of his total incapacity to act as even a temporary washerwoman.

"No he couldn't wash he's never washed in his life, not even now we have got an automatic. No, well no not really I think he washed once when I had David [son] at home he washed some nappies out for me and I got up to have a look at them out of the window and I've never seen anything so funny ...there were all these nappies on the line and there were about eight pegs in each nappy and ..isn't it funny ...he's never washed and he's never ironed ...I can't say he hasn't pressed his trousers occasionally but he's never washed and he's never ironed. He hoovers and does most other things. It's funny isn't it."

[H3, 16+]

A couple of H2s concluded that switching on and loading or programming were all part of the same job and believed that this was something which the wife should not delegate even if her husband was willing and capable. Both organised their domestic routine such that they took complete control of the washing.

"Well that's basically mine. I'm in all day so I might as well do it. He's never washed or ironed, it's one of those things but now it's just a case of ...well I've shown him how to use the machine because it's simple well it's just an automatic and I had him ironing a shirt for me, ...well it was his shirt but he ironed it for me. I was more or less thinking that when I go into hospital [to have a child] he is going to have to fend for himself well Abigail [her friend] says she'll come and do it for me she says she will pop in and look after him so that should be alright....I feel really I feel that washing and ironing is really a it's a womans job really. I mean I don't mind him chipping in with the cleaning up and washing up and cooking and so on

but with washing and ironing I really feel that's a woman's job to do that.

[H2, no children, younger]

Interestingly, husbands were expected to have rather more to do with launderette washing than with the home based version. Several H2 and H3 husbands were obliged to go to the launderette because their wives could not drive and/or because this job, like supermarket shopping, involved an element of "heavy" labour.

"We usually go to the launderette on Saturday morning about 8 or 9 am, and get that done, or if Nick is at work we'll maybe have to go on Sunday. We always go together, yes, well we have to really because of the car."

[H1, no children, younger]

Although launderette machines offered few choices, none of the husbands were asked to make any of the necessary "programming" decisions. They were expected to be in attendance and to carry the heavy bags but were never asked to go to the launderette alone.

Respondents who actually had to spend some time doing the washing, or, at least, giving their washing machinery fairly close attention, were much less likely to delegate any of the associated work let alone the necessary decision-making. Doing the washing was a "real" and demanding job and one which was comprehensively defined as "women's work".

"I usually do it on a week-end because I've got a twin tub. If I had an automatic I more than likely I'd just do it in the week and leave it on on a morning, or get him to put it on when he goes out to work, you know, that's the way most people use an automatic ..but I have a twin tub so I tend to take all the clothes each day and put them in the basket and then as I say I have a week's wash at the week-end. I mean obviously if I've a weeks holiday then that's different I would do it when I want to."

[H2, no children, older]

In effect, the more elaborate the washing machinery and the less the "work" involved, the more likely it was that the wife would delegate the few remaining tasks.

Those without a special drying machine but with a yard or garden hung their washing out to dry. Several H2 respondents observed that their husbands

would be willing to help bring in the washing but would refuse to hang it out (20).

"If I leave a pile for him ...if I'm going out he will put it in the machine, it's an automatic so he'll do that for me, but he'll never... he's always drawn the line and he'll never take the clothes out, he definitely draws the line at pegging out. He'll bring the washing in but that's it. Well he doesn't even like bringing the washing in. He will if I ask him but I think he is a bit sort of...he thinks it's ..it looks stupid, you know. I think he honestly thinks that's a woman's job ...he is good on everything else but that's one thing he draws the line at."

[H2, pre-school age]

"I do it now, he used to help when I was working. When I worked full-time he used to help. He'd put the washer on and that sort of thing but he'd always leave me to peg it out. You know, he didn't like the idea of doing that ...but he would do some of it [the washing] for me. Since I went on part time I thought I don't see why he should have that to do."

[H2, no children, older]

While most husbands were prepared to do the washing (in the sense that they would turn on the automatic machine) they were not prepared to be seen in the "washerwoman" role. Although the machine had done the work, not they, this distinction would not be clear to those who watched them hanging out the wet clothes. In these cases the problem was the association of the pegger out with the washerwoman image, not the nature of the pegging job itself. Ironing was an equally sensitive issue, but for different reasons. Nearly all respondents believed that their husbands should not do the ironing, not because that might imply that he had done the washing, but because it was in itself an inappropriate task. Described patterns of delegation once more reflected respondent's views of the work involved and the practical limits set by the normal washing/drying/ironing routine. Those who had set days for each job were usually able to complete the work in their husband's absence. Others found that they were ironing at the week-end and were therefore able (if not willing) to ask for help. Whatever the practical possibility of delegation only a few of the younger H1 respondents ever asked for assistance. The rest of the sample concluded that ironing was a relatively difficult job (it was certainly thought to be more skilled than the job of switching on the automatic

washing machine) and one which demanded what were seen as particularly "feminine" qualities. Even though some kinds of ironing demanded more skill than others, none were routinely delegated.

"He doesn't like ironing, well he can't really do it. He once ironed a table cloth once ...one table cloth I said 'Do the ironing dear I'm shattered' and he was very good, he got the board out and got the iron heated up ...it's a steam iron and you have to put water in it and this table cloth was really dry ...he charged into the kitchen and filled it up with water and waited for it to heat up, and it's a round one [the table cloth] and he had to keep going round 360 degrees and he could only do about three degrees at a time on the board and he got to the end of the table cloth and he was shattered and he'd got it all in the wrong place and there were patches that he'd missed altogether right in the middle. He gave it up after that"

[H1, no children, younger]

"He never irons that's about the only thing he never does. I'd feel funny if he ironed, I don't think I'd like it. When I was in hospital my mother came in and did it, so, if anything like that happened again she'd come in and help out."

[H2, school age]

So, nearly all respondents expected to take charge of decisions about the family washing. If they had a machine then they were prepared to delegate the task of turning the switch, although the rest of the work, drying and ironing, was firmly their responsibility. Described patterns of delegation consequently reflected ownership of washing machinery as well as respondents' view of different components of the laundering task (21).

Having examined the particular qualities of a range of routine jobs usually classed as housework, I shall now consider two general issues which appeared to order patterns of delegation. First, respondents were more or less likely to delegate either the labour or the decision-making associated with "their" domestic work depending on the structure of their daily routine. Those who were highly organised were much less likely to ask for help than were those who adopted a more spontaneous style of housework. Second, those who concluded that the housework ought to be the particular responsibility of the wife were far less willing to ask for help compared with those who took a more pragmatic view of the matter. These two variables appeared to order the form and the volume of described

delegation, as illustrated in the diagram below.

FIGURE 12

THE DELEGATION OF HOUSEWORK

WIFE'S ROUTINE	RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF HOUSEWORK	
	GENDER SPECIFIC	GENDER NEUTRAL
REGULAR	H3/H2 Delegation in times of crisis only. Urgent jobs delegated in "emergency".	H1 The husband has his own helping routine and his own "specialist" role.
IRREGULAR	H2/H3 Occasional delegation if it is justified in the circumstances. The wife delegates "easy" jobs.	H1/H2 Occasional delegation as required. The wife is prepared to delegate "difficult" as well as "easy" jobs.

As the table suggests, different sections of the sample were likely to adopt different practices of delegation, and, it is, perhaps, useful to outline these general strategies so as to emphasise the housing specific variations. Broadly, H3 respondents appeared to have the most precise definitions of gender appropriate behaviour and were most likely to have some kind of organising domestic routine. Not surprisingly, then, many H3 respondents were only prepared to delegated housework if the circumstances justified what would normally be seen to be inappropriate behaviour. Accordingly, H3 husbands tended to take over a narrow range of immediately pressing jobs in extreme circumstances. H2 respondents arranged their housework rather differently. While many had a routine, few had such a fixed view of the meaning of "women's work". Although they were in principle prepared to delegate the housework, they were usually able to cope with it all themselves. H2 husbands consequently helped out, if at

all, at their wives' specific request. Most were therefore directed towards particular "easy" tasks. In comparison, H1s, especially the younger ones, adopted a quite different approach. Very few had what could be described as a fixed routine. Even those who were full-time housewives did their jobs as they felt like it, or as "required", rather than according to a daily or weekly programme. While most still ended up in charge of the cooking, food shopping, cleaning and laundry, few argued that this was because such jobs were essentially feminine or because they believed that husbands should not have to take on such work. Rather, the argument went, this was because it was more convenient that way or because they happened to be "better" cooks etc. than their husband. In this context there were apparently no cultural limits to the range of house-work jobs which, in principle, could be delegated.

While described decisions about delegation reflected these general patterns of belief and practice, detailed arrangements were influenced by a whole range of technical, temporal, and subject specific factors, such as the nature of the family's household equipment, the organisational implications of preferred shopping styles, the family's normal meal time, the couples' working hours, etc. etc. The practical inter-relation of component tasks further complicated the picture. For example, food had to be bought, prepared, cooked, and eaten according to a certain time schedule. Similarly, respondents could not iron until they had washed, and that job had to be done before the family ran out of clean clothes. More important, perhaps, such self-contained sequence of events as those described above had to interlock such that family life continued as "normal": for example the family could hardly starve for two days just because the wife wanted to get the ironing done. This inter-relation produced a certain diffuse pressure on the wife. Whether she approached her jobs in a flexible or a rigidly routine fashion she had to ensure that all work was done "on time". On the other hand, those who were in charge of such a network of

interlocking jobs had an equally broad network of influence, and, because the outcome of decisions about housework had implications for other everyday family choices, respondents were able to order a much wider range of decisions than those for which they were formally responsible. As I shall suggest in the next section, husbands, who were typically responsible for one-off or irregular jobs, had nothing like this level of day-to-day authority or decision-making influence.

2. DECISIONS ABOUT IRREGULAR TYPES OF HOUSEWORK

Most household tasks which fell by default to the husbands were irregular jobs which demanded what were seen as specialist skills. Of course, the actual range of irregular repair and maintenance work varied depending on the size and condition of the respondent's home and on the couple's willingness or ability to employ relevant experts (22). Although this makes cross sample comparison difficult, it is still possible to review the kinds of circumstances in which husbands were expected to take charge, and to consider respondents' views of the possibility of delegating either the work, or, less commonly, the decision-making associated with those sorts of domestic responsibilities. Essentially, husbands were expected to be responsible for one of two types of irregular repair/maintenance work. First, they were obliged to resolve immediate and unpredictable problems occasioned by breakdown or failure: they mended broken gates, bicycles, windows, washing machines and hoovers. Second, they were obliged to keep up to date with a long term maintenance programme: cleaning out the gutters, painting the house, and so on. I shall consider an example of each of these more and less predictable types of "husband's" work so as to highlight the general issues that informed what were, in detail, idiosyncratic patterns of work and delegation.

I shall first review respondents' accounts of the allocation and delegation of responsibility for dealing with household crises occasioned by

electrical failures. While all husbands were normally expected to wire plugs and replace fuses, wives occasionally faced decisions about whether or not to take on this responsibility so as to resolve an immediate problem. Their response depended on three factors: first on their own ability to do the work; second, on their husband's presence or absence at the time of the crisis and third, their view of their husband's domestic role and of the overall balance of domestic responsibility.

50% of the sample (including respondents from all housing categories and of all ages) observed that they could change a plug and/or replace a fuse but that they would only take charge of such work if they were on their own and if the job was especially urgent.

"Electrical stuff I know basically what to do. I'm not saying I'd do it ..if he's here I'd let him do it ...but I wouldn't be stuck"
[H2, school age]

"Well I'd ask him to do it. I can do it if I'm on my own I'll do it but if he is in I'll ask him to do it. There's not much else he does so I might as well let him do that."
[H2, pre-school age]

The rest explained that they lacked the necessary skill, not because it was a naturally masculine capacity but because they had never had the need to learn. In effect their incapacity stood as proof of the fact that they had never been left to manage without a man to "take care" of them. These dependent respondents were obliged to wait for assistance whatever the nature of the crisis.

"Oh I hate working electricals, I'm always frightened in case I do the wrong thing, in case I put the wrong wire in the wrong place and blow everything up. When he was away I got his brother to come round when I needed things like that doing. So no, I'm afraid to say that I don't know how to change a plug."
[H3, pre-school age]

"Oh Gary does that I can't do things like that, I can't do anything like that, the fuse went in the ...I think I could change a fuse, but er I don't know I couldn't wire a plug on or anything like that Gary would have to do that when he came home....it doesn't really worry me no, it doesn't bother me at all, I've got enough to do without changing plugs..anyway I'd be interfering if I asked him how to do it so er, no, he does that."
[H3, school age]

Both those who were theoretically capable and those who were dependent routinely expected their husband to take on the role of family electrician. The view described above was common. If the wife took over this job she would only make more work for herself and so upset the balance of his and her responsibilities; provided that she did not positively enjoy changing plugs there was no reason why she should get involved with anything other than emergency repairs. Essentially, then, those who were able to do such work were only willing to take over in extreme circumstances. If the job could wait, they argued, it was better to leave it for the husband so as not to disturb the equilibrium of the normal and appropriate balance of domestic responsibility.

In comparison decisions about the allocation and delegation of responsibility for irregular but predictable household jobs were characteristically informed by a rather different array of beliefs and expectations. Although decorating was typically defined as husband's work, there was room for debate about allocation of responsibility for particular component tasks or about the nature and form of the wife's helping role.

35% of the sample (a mixture of H1s, H2s and H3s) expected their husband to take charge of all the decorating work on the grounds that this was properly his job, or, less commonly, because they believed that he was a better painter and paperer than they and so better suited to the role of family decorator. The following examples illustrate both views.

"I wouldn't lift a paintbrush, I don't do anything, no none at all, I get dressed up and go out and leave him to it. I think really it's his job isn't it."
[H3, no children, younger]

"He does it all. I did it once and I got the wallpaper on I'd never been shown how to do it and he'd left this one bedroom to do. I thought I'll finish it while he's at work and instead of measuring it [the wallpaper] on the wall I cut it all before on the floor and it repeated ... so when I put it up it didn't match so it all had to be taken off. So he says 'whatever you do don't ever touch a wall again' so no, I know my limits."
[H2, no children, older]

In these cases the wives occasionally helped out with what was agreed to be the husband's responsibility. Several respondents, mostly H1s, felt that they should be in attendance full-time in order to do such jobs as handing tools or holding tricky pieces of wallpaper in place. Others, mostly H2s and H3s, got on with their normal domestic routine but expected to have to do "extra" cleaning as a consequence of their husband's decorating activities. The following examples illustrate both positions.

"Usually I help him ...when my husband is doing things he's, he did a lot of painting as well he had a week off and I helped him. Quite often jobs can only be done by one person so I end up just being there really and just giving him tools or whatever..er usually its him that does it and I watch or just help."

[H1, no children, younger]

"Say he's emulsioneing, I prepare the room and lay newspapers down. If he's on the ladder and he says 'I'm going into that corner next, move those papers', I do that you see...I make coffee when he wants a hot drink and then I put the rooms straight or get them ready for doing you see ...like most ladies do."

[H2, no children, older]

The rest of the sample believed that there was room for choice about the allocation of responsibility for some or all the component decorating tasks. Indeed, four respondents had taken over all the associated work on the grounds that they had somehow managed to acquire more painting and decorating skills than their husbands (23).

"He's no patience for decorating so I don't let him touch the walls. Well you see I was a box maker at Rowntrees and once you've done that you know how to put it [wallpaper] on so I do all that and he does the labouring." [H2, school age]

"Well I do most of it because I'm at home but if he's at home he might do some painting. He's left handed you see and he's heavy handed, he labours for me you see...but I usually do it when he's at work."

[H1, no children, younger]

Another 20% decided that they and their husband would each take charge of the decoration of different areas of the house. In most of these cases husband and wife expected to work "together" but, having found that this led to disagreement, chose to revise their decorating strategy. As they described it, they adopted the separate room arrangement so as to avoid otherwise insoluble arguments about decorating standards.

"I do a lot of it only I'm a bit slapdash. I'm all for getting it up and he wants to faff around with plumb lines. His way is best, my way suits me better. The hall and the toilet downstairs he wasn't going to bother, so while he was away I did it all you see, two nights work that's all and he was quite pleased I think but it wasn't quite the way he'd have done it but if I'd had to wait for him to take the initiative and supervise me we'd never have got it done. We do have arguments about decorating and we decided the best thing to do is to do different rooms. Well the main problem was he is a perfectionist and I'm not. He just won't condescend not to do it perfect and you can't really fault him. You can't fault perfection can you but if you've got to faff around its no fun is it? He insists on taking all the plugs off and putting them all back on again. I just cut around and paint it up but the only way is for him to do a room and me to do another one. I don't see why I should be a perfectionist. I was quite happy to do it like that and if I want to decorate, if I feel so moved I'll do it because I enjoy it."

[H1, no children, younger]

Others ended up dividing the decorating in this way because the wife chose to re-do particular rooms during the day time. Though the husband was still believed to be in charge of the decorating there were some areas which could be left out because they had recently been done by the wife.

"I sometimes decide to do a room by myself. I like decorating and I'll sometimes do it during the week while they are both out. He would hang wallpaper because I'm useless at that but we tend to... He does a lot of it when we do the whole house. I do what I can in the day but most of it gets done at week-ends when we do it properly, which isn't often."

[H1, school age]

Alternatively, 30% of the sample decided to divide the work such that husband and wife each took charge of separate types of decorating. Respondents who settled upon this strategy had either failed to work "together" amicably or had believed from the start that one would be a better painter/paperer than the other. Whatever the history of the arrangement, decorating responsibilities were reported to be allocated on grounds of expertise. Most argued that they, or their husband, just happened to be better at the painting than the papering (or vice versa). However, a few believed that certain necessary characteristics such as patience and dexterity were particularly feminine attributes. A subsection of this group concluded that women were therefore inherently better painters (especially "fiddly" gloss painters) than men. Others concluded,

with equal conviction, that these special qualities meant that women were better at papering than painting.

"He usually does all the painting. I do all the papering because we found we worked better that way. I'm better at papering than him. He doesn't like the fiddle but he is good at painting so it works out that way."

[H3, no children, younger]

"I do the painting because I'm a bit more careful. He tends to slop it all over so we have each got our own roles. If we both do it ..like if we both try putting the paper up we are likely to lose tempers and everything gets a bit hot under the collar. So I would do the painting first and then he gets on with the papering"

[H2, pre-school age]

Although there was no overall pattern to the identity of those defined as the "expert" painter or the "expert" paperer, the described sub-divisions of component painting or papering responsibilities were much less varied. For example, those who painted "together" almost always expected the husband to do the emulsioneing and the wife to paint the woodwork. Similarly, respondents who "shared" the papering expected to paste whilst their husbands positioned the wallpaper (24).

Overall, the allocation of component decorating or maintenance tasks was ordered by respondents' perceptions of gender appropriate behaviour. However, these irregular jobs seemed to have rather less symbolic significance than, say, cooking or washing. None of the wives overtly objected to the very idea that they might do some of the decorating, just as none of the husbands absolutely refused all offers of help. Most sections of the sample were prepared to believe that relevant skills might be individually distributed even if most also expected their husbands to have more to do with such work than they. While the perceived possibility of delegation varied depending on definitions of individual skill, respondents were more and less willing to take advantage of such opportunities depending on their view of justice and of the current balance of domestic responsibility. Thus wives chose not to get involved on the grounds that they would thereby make more (unnecessary) work for themselves

and would upset the notional division of labour. Interestingly, several respondents claimed that their husband "did" the decorating despite the fact that they were personally responsible for, say, all the gloss painting and/or for pasting the wallpaper. These wives were able to maintain the appearance of a balance of domestic responsibility (the wife doing the housework, the husband the repairing and the decorating) however much they helped.

To conclude, then, beliefs about the gender specific nature of irregular household tasks, in combination with actual patterns of ability, ordered perceived possibilities of delegation. Opportunities to delegate were variously taken up depending on respondents' beliefs about the consequences of such action in terms of the overall balance of domestic responsibility and on the urgency of the task in question. Though many were able to do "their husband's" work they either chose not to get involved at all (or only in emergency) or defined their role as that of assistant and so maintained the case that both partners took on their fair share of domestic responsibilities (25).

3. DECISIONS ABOUT CHILD-CARE

In this last section I want to consider the ways in which parents made decisions about the allocation or delegation of responsibility for work or for choices particularly associated with child-care. This means that I shall not consider the ways in which respondents dealt with "extra" cleaning cooking and washing jobs which arose as a consequence of having more than two people living in the house (26). Equally, I am not concerned to document the degree to which mothers and fathers "shared" the work of bringing up their children. As before I am more interested in decision-making practices and in perceptions of choice than in the actual distribution of labour within the family.

Even having limited the focus of analysis in this way, however, the range of potentially relevant child-related choices was enormous. Furthermore, that range varied depending on the size of the family, on the age of the child/ren, on the parents' approach to child-care, and on the couples' working hours. This made it difficult to pin down a common core of child-related decisions which I might usefully examine. For example, only some parents had made decisions about, say, the nature of their child/rens' schooling. Others had not acknowledged this as a discrete issue or as something about which there was any choice, and still others were parents of children under the age of 5.

Despite these complications I was able to group accounts of child-related decision-making into three categories. First, there were decisions about delegating the diffuse task of "looking after" the child; second, there were decisions about delegating more specific tasks, the exact nature of which varied depending on the child's age; and third, there were decisions about approaches to child rearing and discipline.

A survey of respondents' descriptions under these broad headings illuminates at least some of the beliefs and expectations which informed perceptions of choice about child-related decision-making. I shall first consider the responses of parents of pre-school children and then the accounts provided by those whose children were of school age.

Most mothers of pre-school age children presumed that they would routinely take charge of the ever present but diffuse task of "looking after" their offspring whether or not their husband was at home. They consequently made positive requests for assistance only if they were, for some reason, unable to manage as "normal" (27).

"If I'm doing the ironing and he starts crying or wants something then I'll ask him [husband] to take him out or he will take him upstairs we've got a black and white TV upstairs."

[H3, pre-school age]

"A lot of men don't realise looking after kids is a full time job. You have to feed them, clean them, you've got to have eyes in the back of your head and they are a handful. A lot of fellers don't know that but he does. Oh yes, he has her all day on Saturday and then sometimes on a Friday night if they are busy I go in then [to work] as well."

[H2, pre-school age]

The circumstances in which such delegation was believed to be legitimate varied. On the whole, H2s and H3s expected to have charge of their children unless they "had to" go to work or unless they were especially busy. In comparison, several of the H1 respondents, including the one quoted below, found that their husbands were willing to take over whether or not there was some extraordinary justifying reason.

"We don't have any kind of set things ...it all just sort of falls into place. Robert is one of these fathers who... if he is around he just does things with them, he always ...whatever seems to be appropriate if there are any jobs or things that ought to be done with them he just sort of knows."

[H1, pre-school age]

Views on the practicality of delegating specific tasks such as bathing, or changing nappies varied just as systematically. Fathers took over such work if they were to hand when it needed doing and if they and their wife concluded that such delegation was appropriate in the circumstances. The described conceptions of propriety reflected respondents' beliefs about parenthood and about the proper roles of mother and father. Different sections of the sample placed different emphasis on jointness and sharing as opposed to gender specific behaviour and made their decisions accordingly. Several of the H1 respondents went out of their way to delegate what were still seen to be basically "their" responsibilities so as to share all forms of child-related labour in what they believed to be the "ideal" way. Most of these found that their husbands were unable to play as great a part in their children's lives as they would have liked because of their working hours.

"Well we try to share him [son] as much as we can but obviously it's difficult because he [husband] is out at work all day"

[H1, pre-school age]

In contrast, H2 and H3 mothers maintained a very clear distinction between

tasks which they believed they could and could not delegate. Most observed that their husbands should not have to change a nappy, or bath the child/ren, although they hoped that they might receive some help with other more "appropriate" forms of child-care.

"He gave them their bottle and everything like that, the thing he wouldn't do was change them, that's one thing, he is so squeamish he is terrible squeamish like that 'I'm not changing them' but apart from that, everything else he would do you know he would sit and nurse them and he would play with them he would do everything you know he would even take them for walks and that"

[H2, pre-school age]

Of course it was not always possible to maintain such ideals. Several of the H3 and H2 mothers "had to" return to work and so leave their husbands responsible for what might otherwise have counted as inappropriate jobs.

"No no, he is quite happy with them now, he'll bath them and change nappies, he could do any job now... He has had to learn really. He's got used to it now so it doesn't bother him. Afer the first week it didn't bother him."

[H3, pre-school age]

All these respondents agreed that the volume of work which the husband could legitimately refuse to take on decreased as the child got older and as the character of associated child-care tasks changed.

"With a child that is out of nappies yes [he would help] but a child that is in nappies he doesn't want to know. He is better now he is, I think with already having gone through it once he is better."

[H2, pre-school age]

"I think a man should show as much interest as what a woman does I must say my husband has shown a lot more interest since they've got more interesting. When they was little he hadn't much interest in them at all. Now he will sit and read a story on a night or he might do a bit of drawing with them and er such forth."

[H2, pre-school age]

In particular, husbands were expected to become involved with decisions about the control and discipline of their children. Although most claimed that they had arrived at a joint definition of misbehaviour, mothers had much greater practical experience of implementing the agreed policy. Because they made most of the day-to-day decisions they built up what they saw as an area of special expertise. While they were keen to observe that their child-care policy was joint, they acknowledged that there might be

disagreement about its application.

"He is just too soft with him. I think you have to, you know, you can't let them get away with everything. We agree about that, but he is too soft, he is you know we've sort of had disagreements over it but he lets me get on with it."

[H3, pre-school age]

"Oh I do that he doesn't do that, no not really, he's too soft with them ...it's just the way he is, it's just in his nature. Like he'd tell him off for being naughty but he wouldn't think he was a naughty child. If I tell him, 'I say you ought to tell him off, you know he shouldn't do that' ...he might tell him off then but he wouldn't think to on his own."

[H2, pre-school age]

The job of "looking after" demanded less and less parental attention as the child/ren got older and, at some stage, the task became so "invisible" that it was impossible to identify decisions about the allocation or delegation of this responsibility. For example, if the husband was around and the wife was out then he was notionally left in charge and vice versa. In practice, neither might notice the switch.

Parents of school age children also found it difficult to pin down specific child-related areas of responsibility. The vaguest yet the most commonly mentioned job was that of getting the children off to school. Many of the component tasks (washing, cleaning and cooking) were routinely defined as the wife's responsibility and were only delegated in specific and unusual circumstances.

"Well we both accept that it is our responsibility but because I'm home say if there is anything to be done for school I tend to deal with that because I'm more available than he is. I take her in to school in York at ten to eight and then I'm back here. She goes to York College for Girls. She is still of an age where I take her in but she manages the journey home."

[H1, school age]

"If I'm at home I'm always up by 7.15 because I've got the children to get off to school so I always see them off. If I'm working [nights] I'm not back till 8.30 or 9 am and he has to get them up and ready for school but that only happens on Monday mornings."

[H2, school age]

A few were obliged to transport or accompany their children to school or to other activities. Most, including the mother quoted below, claimed that

this job was shared as "convenient".

"On Tuesday Helen goes to Brownies, on a Wednesday she goes to guides, on a Thursday she goes to gym and this Friday she is starting badminton. To Brownies there are two of us [sets of parents], to guides there is more than two and to gym we take it in turns. My husband sometimes goes, he doesn't mind... it's whatever is convenient really. If we go shopping at Prestos [supermarket] while she is at gym then he will drive. You know, you can't let them come home on their own so you are tied, well, you know your pattern of life changes"

[H2, school age children]

Again respondents were keen to observe that they and their husband shared the same ideas about how to bring up a family even if it was the wife rather than the husband who applied those principles. In practice the fathers of school age children were hardly ever involved in routine discipline. While most were expected to react if the child misbehaved in their presence, such overt deviance decreased as the child got older. The more common pattern was for the wife to ask for her husband's help when the child had done something "seriously" wrong or if the offender was a boy.

"It's shared really. It's something we've never had to do you see they've never been really bad. We've never had any real bother with them. Oh well I says there isn't any bother with them, if there has been an argument in the street I tend to deal with that myself. As I say there hasn't been any real, and now they are older they argue between themselves and I can't stop them once I've said it a few times then Jack will say that's enough and they just stop. They tend to take more notice of what he says. They tend to take me for granted, they know they can get at me."

[H2, school age]

"... the discipline of the children. That really fell very much to me early on and remained with me until I grew resentful about it and made a statement of such and we talked that out. We agreed that it was a shared responsibility really so there it was. It has made a change really ...he is much more positive, there is more communication between Steve and myself as to what needed to be checked and what shouldn't be. There is a much more positive approach on his part, particularly with the boys. Steve is much better than I am really I get more emotional about it whereas he doesn't and certainly teenage boys are better with a matter of fact approach than an emotional appeal. I think it's personality very much and I think partly that it is a male influence."

[H1, school age]

In conclusion, different sections of the sample held characteristically different views of the degree to which fathers should be involved with the general task of "looking after" their child/ren, or with more specific

child-related jobs. Not all were able to arrange their own domestic lives in line with their ideals. Some of the H1 fathers were less involved than they might have liked because they spent so much time at work. Similarly, some of the H2 and H3 fathers were more involved than they might have expected because their wife had to go out to work and leave them in charge. Yet whatever the detail of their everyday arrangements, all parents claimed to "share the responsibility" of child rearing. While the mother might take charge of the bulk of the child-related work, most respondents were keen to observe that their husbands were involved with general decisions about strategies of child-care, about the meaning of disobedience and about the proper response to such misbehaviour.

Housework and child-care

In this chapter I have reviewed the contexts in which respondents and their husbands made decisions about the allocation and delegation of a selected range of domestic responsibilities. The pattern that emerged was one in which wives were typically in charge of an enormous network of inter-related areas of routine domestic decision-making while husbands were responsible for a few irregular jobs. All sections of the sample expected to bracket together otherwise debatable choices such that the wife took charge of those associated with cooking, shopping, cleaning, laundry and the care of the children. In other words, all respondents expected that they would have authority over these areas of decision-making. This meant, first, that almost all day-to-day decision-making was hidden from family view, and, second, that it was the respondent rather than her husband who was able to determine the outcome of those invisible choices. While all expected to retain control over the details of everyday family life, different sections of the sample had different conceptions of the grounds on which such a right to decide was based, and further, of the circumstances in which delegation would or would not be legitimate. Most

H3s believed that they were in charge of the cooking, the cleaning, etc., because that was what a wife should do. From this point of view it would be positively wrong of the husband to have to take on such gender inappropriate tasks as ironing, polishing, baking or nappy changing. In comparison, most H1s, especially the younger ones, believed that while they did all these jobs, this was because it happened to be more convenient that way. From this point of view it was not inherently inappropriate for the husband to take on what would normally be the wife's role; it would just be a less efficient arrangement. Though these beliefs made little practical difference to the way in which responsibilities were allocated, they did affect perceptions of the possibility of delegating work, and, perhaps more important, they ordered the course of any dispute about performance or allocation of such work. In case of argument H3s would have, for example, immediate recourse to what was believed to be a shared model of gender appropriate behaviour. A could argue that B should not behave in a certain way because that was not what a proper husband or wife should do in the circumstances. In comparison, H1s would have to make more elaborate and particular appeals to a notion of family interest, and/or to the meaning of convenience, efficiency or domestic justice in the present circumstances.

Interestingly, jobs which were notionally the husband's responsibility were rarely presented in such gender specific terms as those used to describe allocation of responsibility for what was seen as "womens' work". Thus no respondents felt it was positively wrong for a wife to take charge of the painting. Indeed, most expected to have something to do with decorating on the grounds that the component jobs required what they believed to be individual rather than gender specific skills. Yet whatever the level of delegation, the husband was still presumed to "do" the decorating/repairing. It seemed that it was important to maintain such a view in order to sustain the notion that the total burden of domestic work was divided "equally". Arguments about allocation or performance of these

responsibilities were therefore informed by two competing themes. The idea that decorating skills were individual rather than gender specific qualities undermined the value of an appeal to the absolute legitimacy of the husband's role as decorator. However, if couples were to divide domestic responsibilities "equally", then most believed that such work should fall to the husband rather than the wife. If that were the case then there were hardly any circumstances which might legitimately justify the total delegation of what were characteristically irregular, one-off tasks.

In sum, wives from all sections of the sample typically took charge of a massive portion of the day-to-day decision-making, either because this was more convenient or efficient, or on the grounds that this was properly "their" job. This gave respondents an unquestioned authority over all those areas of decision-making for which they were responsible and an influence which spread even further. In comparison husbands had few areas of equivalent control. They were typically expected to have overall responsibility for such work as the decorating and/or repairing, and sometimes the discipline of children who had committed a "serious" offence. However, these jobs were irregular, often unpredictable, and certainly unrelated to each other. The resulting pockets of associated authority never combined to form a base of day-to-day control such as that which characterised the wife's position in the family.

CHAPTER 10: NOTES

1. In other words, I am not concerned with questions about the equality (or otherwise) of the division of domestic labour, about the amount of housework done by husband and wife, or about the time which each spends on such activities.
2. By "authority" I mean the legitimate right to decide.
3. Here I am using the term "power" to refer to A's ability to get B to do what B would not otherwise do, in case of overt dispute.
4. See chapter 1
5. As Janet Radcliffe Richards has noted, advocates of the argument that women's work (including housework) ought to be re-evaluated and accorded a higher status have on the whole failed to make explicit the definitions of value embedded in this position. She writes: "We have first to decide whether the work is of a kind which ought to be highly valued, or whether it is possible for it to be highly valued. Those are questions which ought to be answered before any practical attempt is made to get people to value women's work..." (Richards, 1980, p159)
6. The level at which the dependence argument is pitched varies. For example, Benston writes "in a society in which money determines value, women are a group who work outside the money economy. Their work is not worth money, is therefore valueless, is therefore not even real work" (Benston, 1980, p121). In comparison, Hunt locates her version of this argument at an immediate everyday level: "With the cessation of outside employment the domestic worker becomes excessively dependent on the breadwinner. This dependency takes several forms, the most obvious of which is financial dependency" (Hunt, 1980, p37). Either way the case is that women's responsibility for unpaid housework, and the associated dependency and devaluation, represent key dimensions of their oppression.
7. Some of those who have been concerned with the allocation of housework have documented differences in the respective roles of husband and wife.

This work, which is not necessarily informed by a feminist commitment, has classified domestic arrangements as joint, segregated (Bott, 1957), traditional, modern or symmetrical (Young and Willmott, 1957, 1973). Attention has focused on the degree to which husbands "help" with what are traditionally feminine roles (and, occasionally, vice versa). In criticism of this work, or at least of that which implies that housework is increasingly "shared", feminist writers have observed that the underlying patterns of responsibility remain the same despite superficial changes in domestic behaviour. For example, Oakley writes: "Housewives are sharply aware of the fact that, however much or little husbands may share domestic tasks with them, the responsibility for getting the work done remains theirs" (Oakley, 1974, p92). Pollert presents a similar case: "with most women it became apparent that 'sharing' meant a limited delegation of specific tasks to their husbands while they bore the responsibility for the endless, undefined, niggling work." (Pollert, 1981, p115)

8. As Oakley observes: "Housework is not a single activity. It is a collection of heterogenous tasks which demand a variety of skills and kinds of action. Washing a floor contrasts with shopping for groceries, peeling potatoes with washing dirty socks and planning a week's meals" (Oakley, 1976, p48). For my purposes this is significant in that the kinds of decisions associated with each component task vary considerably.

9. Few writers have attended to the way in which component tasks are inter-related both in terms of time and in terms of function. In this context the work of Berk and Berk is especially interesting. They write "We shall consider the degree to which activities necessarily interlock with one another (eg., one must wash dishes before drying them) and what this implies about the constraints placed on people's household lives.. How are meal preparation, child care, and more general housework sequenced and/or integrated with one another?" (Berk and Berk, 1979, p13)

10. Circumstantial events which might legitimate delegation had more and

less impact depending on respondents' domestic routines. For example, those who felt that they had to do x by time y might seek assistance if that was not possible. In comparison, those who were prepared to fit in job x as "convenient" were less likely to feel that they might legitimately ask for help. In addition, those who had a rigid routine had an equally precise notion of success and failure. If they did not keep up with their self-imposed schedule then, by definition, they were failing to do their job properly. Those who adopted a more flexible approach had a correspondingly elastic definition of failure.

11. As Delphy (1979), Kerr (1986) and Murcott (1983) have acknowledged, this does not mean that the wife's decisions were made without reference to her knowledge of the husband's preference. It is of course difficult to identify the nature of this indirect influence or to evaluate its "agenda setting" significance. While an analysis of such "invisible" nondecision-making processes would prove interesting, I am currently concerned with respondents' accounts of the kinds of choice associated with overt, jointly debatable domestic decisions; not with those which were simply made as a matter of course by the relevant authoritative figure.

12. In both cases this was possible because the husband elected to do the supermarket shopping on the grounds that this was the lesser of two evils. One picked the shopping rather than the child-care option but expected to be relieved of this responsibility when his son was older. The other went shopping in his lunch hour so as to avoid "wasting" time at the week-end.

13. In particular, married women were not "allowed" to carry heavy bags of shopping. The view described below was common.

"Oh yes we always go together. He says 'you are not to carry anything heavy' so this is lovely and I've always had to struggle with, he can't realise that I've done all my own shopping before I married him."

[H1, no children, older]

14. To some degree, then, the perceived practicality of delegating cooking responsibilities depended on the types of meals which respondents expected

to consume. In this context it is important to observe that H3s and H2s routinely prepared rather simpler meals than did H1s.

15. As I noted above, the wife's decisions about what to buy and so about what to cook may be informed by a knowledge of her husband's preferences and tastes. However, most of these decisions were made "automatically" and were only the subject of family debate if the result did not meet with the husband's approval. Dobash and Dobash (1980) describe such dispute.

16. Another 10% of H2s and H3s were sometimes in this position depending on their husbands' shifts.

17. In practice decisions about what was or was not clean were routinely made by the wife in the course of her normal cleaning/tidying work. It was she who determined the tidying routine (if any), she who noticed the dust, and she who then dusted. While husband and wife might have different definitions of what was and what was not clean, it seems that the wife's standards were typically "higher" than those of her husband. The house was therefore usually "tidier" than the husband would have deemed necessary. Several wives observed that their husband's standards were so low that he could not be relied upon to acknowledge that it was time to clean. While they could perhaps delegate some of the component cleaning jobs, very few expected to be able to delegate the associated decision-making, as the following examples illustrate.

"He could do anything if he had to. Oh yes, but I mean he wouldn't think of doing things, like my big Welsh dresser we moved yesterday and you'd be surprised what was underneath there, but I don't think, no he wouldn't think to move it...I don't think any man would...Well yes I think women would be [tidier]"
[H1, 16+]

"He is quite good. Some things he knows need doing, like the washing up, if I'm at work he'll do that or he'll clean the cooker sometimes. He is quite good in that respect but he would never dream of going into the sitting room and shaking the cushions or moving dead flowers, or dusting. If the dust was an inch thick he wouldn't notice it, he wouldn't do anything about it, and I've known flowers if I've had flowers in and they have died unless I move them, ...I once left them for a few days and you know they just ...they would have stayed there forever if I hadn't moved them but he doesn't notice things like that. That's typical of men I think...but yes he is quite good, if I said

'right now in the morning would you put the vacuum on please and dust round and make sure its tidy' he would do that."

[H1, 16+]

18. While working wives expected "additional" assistance, there was always a limit to what counted as legitimate delegation. Even those who employed a cleaning lady observed that there were still some jobs which they felt obliged to do themselves.

"I had a house-keeper when I was working but there are so many jobs only a mum can do, you know cleaning the bath, and doing the dustbins, and the cooker and things like that so it was hard work but very enjoyable."

[H1, 16+]

19. The meaning of "help" depended on the couple's definition of "cleaning" as opposed to "normal, considerate social behaviour". For example, if everyone was expected to fold their own clothes or to put away their own books and papers then the fact that the husband behaved in this way could not be taken as evidence of his willingness to "help". He was simply behaving "properly". In comparison, respondents who normally expected to have to pick up all the dirty clothes would define, say, their husband's sock hunting behaviour as "help".

20. Yeandle reports similar views: "Other men were reluctant to undertake tasks which they identified as 'a woman's job', and several women reported their husbands' refusal to do any domestic task which was publicly visible" (Yeandle, 1984, p145)

21. Writers on domestic technology, for example, Bose, Berano and Malloy (1984), Ravetz (1965), Busch (1983), Thrall (1982), Vaneck (1978) and Davidoff (1976) have variously examined the degree to which "labour saving devices" in fact reduce the time spend on housework, the ways in which such technology alters definitions of cleanliness, and the social histories of the development of particular pieces of household equipment. Curiously very little attention has been paid to the relationship between technological development and changes in perceptions of the gender specificity of particular household tasks. For example, if the washing

machines do the washing, then the washing is no longer the wife's job. In this context, husbands may well be asked to become involved with an area of domestic work which was previously firmly demarcated as "feminine". Perhaps "labour saving" devices are of more significance in this respect than in the degree to which they literally minimise the time spent doing particular sorts of domestic labour.

22. For example, some expected to clean out the gutters/sweep the chimney/have a go at mending the washing machine themselves while others expected to pay for such services. More important perhaps, different sections of the sample drew this line with reference to characteristically different criteria. H1s and some H2s chose to pay someone to do work which they (or their husband) did not enjoy doing, or which was for some reason inconvenient. In comparison, H3s and some H2s only selected this option when they were for some reason unable to do the work themselves. Of the four who employed a decorator, or whose decorating was done by a friend or relative, two (both H2s) claimed that they were too old to do their own painting while the other two observed that this was an awkward or unpleasant job which they preferred not to do themselves. The following examples illustrate both views.

"Our Derek [son] comes to do it. We wish we could do our own because everybody has their own work to do but as I say, we've a great family"
[H2, 16+]

"We got somebody in to do it for us because it was putting up wallpaper and that is a tricky operation. In any case I don't think we would do it ourselves, no, not with a small baby, it is just impractical."
[H1, pre-school age]

23. Because these four normally got on with the decorating whilst their husband was at work they were consequently unable to rely on their partner for the kind of clearing up or labouring help which the decorating husbands were able to ask for or expect.

24. These general patterns were occasionally modified with reference to the other equally common expectation that wives could not climb ladders.

25. Those who allocated domestic responsibilities with reference to a fixed notion of the proper role of husband and wife usually believed that the resulting division of labour was "naturally" just. In comparison, those who concluded that housework was "just work" were obliged to take steps to ensure that component jobs were distributed fairly. Actions which threatened to upset the balance (ie. attempts to interfere) were of different significance depending on the grounds on which that "just" division of labour was based.

26. Although it might be difficult for respondents to distinguish between housework and child-care work, it was possible to identify decisions which were essentially child-related. That is not to deny that respondents felt that the the two tasks "merged". As Oakley notes: "The two jobs are carried out simultaneously, and there is a general lack of differentiation" (Oakley, 1974, p172). In practice, the detail of the merger depended on the precise nature of the child-care component. Unlike housework, this task changed as the children got older.

27. Hunt describes the position in these terms: "If the mother is to have time away from her children, in almost every case she has to make the arrangements which permit her absence; and the very act of arranging this transfer of responsibility is in itself an acknowledgement that the primary responsibility is her own" (Hunt, 1980, p54). Allen also observes that fathers remain "peripheral in terms of everyday responsibility" (Allen, 1985, p42).

FAMILIES, POWER AND DECISION-MAKING

In this concluding chapter I shall consider some general characteristics of respondents' descriptions of domestic decision-making conflict and, more important, of the contexts ordering the course of such dispute. The first two sections of the chapter review the overall patterns of similarity and difference in terms of the form and location of particular decisions and associated perceptions of choice. I shall suggest, on the basis of the material presented in chapters 5 to 10, that different sections of the sample faced characteristically different family decisions, and that described perceptions of choice varied just as systematically. Such patterns of decision-making and perceptions of choice are important because, as argued in chapters 1,3 and 4, they order the form and likely course of decision-related disputes and so structure domestic power relations. My first task, then, is to outline the general patterns which emerge from the preceding chapters. Having done so I shall go on to draw out some of the implications of this research material with reference first to feminist and then to more general sociological analyses of power relations. Sections 3 and 4, therefore, reconsider some of the issues raised in chapter 1, but now in the light of the summary presented in the first half of this chapter.

Of course, areas of similarity and difference can be distinguished in any number of ways depending on the informing criteria employed. I have chosen to summarise the material of chapters 5 to 10 with reference to two key issues. First, respondents' perceptions of the kind of choice associated with a series of common decisions (1). Second, the ways in which different sections of the sample allocated areas of domestic authority, so bracketing together otherwise debatable domestic decisions (2). If I am now to examine the general characteristics of domestic decision-making, it clearly

is important to consider variation in both these areas. Note, however, that I am only concerned to highlight the most obvious aspects of similarity and difference, and that this chapter inevitably neglects some of the complexities of domestic decision-making practices documented in earlier chapters.

1. AREAS OF SIMILARITY

There proved to be relatively little cross sample regularity in respondents' perceptions of choice associated with the decisions documented in chapters 5 (family and career), 6 (house and home), 7 (leisure) and 8 (holidays). In other words, there were few issues about which all sections of the sample appeared to share basically the same definitions of choice (3). Not surprisingly, the few areas of genuine overlap arose in relation to what were widely believed to be the most important of all domestic decisions: decisions about starting a family, about family size and those which were informed by notions of family obligation. This is not to suggest that such decisions were made in similar domestic contexts; only that, compared with, say, choices about leisure time, holiday making, house buying or furnishing, these areas of choice seemed to function within a common core of informing belief and a common definition of appropriate behaviour. Although views about family size and structure varied, all respondents described what they saw as the ideal arrangement with reference to two beliefs: one revolving around a positive evaluation of "unselfishness" and the other concerning welfare of children. Given these convictions, few believed that there was any doubt about how they ought to design their family which was generally expected to consist of two parents and two children. Provided that the couple could afford it, this was the option which was believed to most closely meet the demands imposed by beliefs about parental unselfishness and the welfare of children. Most respondents also expected that their first child would be born somewhere

between three and five years after marriage and that the second would "arrive" about two years later. The fact that different housing and age groups evidenced varied beliefs about their capacity to actually control family planning did nothing to undermine frequent articulation of this ideal or its associated rationalisations.

While different sections of the sample faced different sorts of employment related choices, few parents believed that they had any alternative but to choose the option which most closely met the demands imposed by their family priorities. Thus, all sections of the sample believed that fathers "ought" to take the best paid job available and that mothers' career choices "ought" to be ordered, if not determined, by their family obligations. In detail, however, hierarchies of family versus other types of domestic or personal priority differed. Some believed, for example, that children's education was more important than income, or that living near friends and family was more important than promotion. However, few respondents believed that they had any choice about decisions which were directly informed by such powerful beliefs as those about "normal" family life or the welfare of children.

Although other discrete decisions were seen to involve similar types of generalised commitment - decisions about holidays, for example, were frequently informed by an overall vision of proper holiday making - they always allowed some scope for "personal preference" type perceptions as well as for definitions of "no choice". In comparison, decisions about family size and structure were more immediately constrained by a common, yet fairly precise, model of a normal family career. Similarly, parents' decisions about their own employment were directly ordered by common conceptions of family priority. While there were other areas of overlap, these were the most striking both in the sense that choices were uniformly and directly ordered by a model of what should happen, and in the sense

that most respondents agreed about the content of that informing model.

As chapters 9 and 10 suggest, there was also little variation in the ways in which domestic responsibilities and areas of associated authority were divided and allocated. Chapter 9 explored the implications of methods of financial management in terms of individual access to what was seen as independently disposable money and in terms of the allocated responsibility for different categories of expenditure. Whatever the other differences (4), all four key forms of financial management (joint and separate accounts, "taken from" and "given to" systems of housekeeping) permitted, and indeed favoured, what were essentially the same patterns of spending responsibility. Husband and wife took charge of much the same kinds of shopping however they managed their money. Thus, all wives had access to money which could, and in some cases should, be spent on family food. Equally, all husbands had access to money which could, and perhaps should, be used to pay the bill when the couple went out for a meal or for a drink. In addition, the wife's own income (if any) was defined as "extra", whatever the sums involved and whatever the method of financial management. In effect, then, all accounts of domestic finance reflected the common assumption that it was the husband's job to earn the family income and the wife's job to spend it. Everyday financial decisions were bracketed together in ways which reflected these beliefs. So, different sections of the sample parcelled out areas of financial responsibility in extremely similar ways regardless of their chosen method of financial management. This meant that all respondents described what were essentially common patterns of "visible" and "invisible" choice about expenditure and family finance.

Furthermore, almost all respondents were in charge of much the same range of everyday domestic responsibilities. As described in the chapter on housework and child-care, wives were usually responsible for, and so

accorded the right to make decisions about, cooking, cleaning, washing and child-care. Although such arrangements were reportedly informed by a wide range of different beliefs about marriage as a partnership, about sharing, equality and justice as well as about gender and role appropriate behaviour, the end results were remarkably uniform. While the everyday meaning of domestic tasks and the perceived possibility of delegation varied according to housing and age, the division of labour and associated patterns of responsibility was broadly similar. The location and form of domestic dispute about matters of responsibility was structured accordingly.

Thus far, then, I have identified decisions about which almost all respondents shared the same perception of choice, or, rather, of "no choice". Essentially these were decisions which were directly informed by a cluster of beliefs about normal family life and welfare of children. I also observed that respondents from all sections of the sample divided and allocated areas of domestic responsibility and authority in much the same way. This meant that the form and likelihood of debate about domestic decision-making was structured by a similarly general network of routines and taken-for-granted expectations. In many respects, to be sure, the material and cultural worlds in which these ordering beliefs and routines had effect varied dramatically. Yet, despite such differences, common conceptions of normal family life and common domestic habits structured the perceptions of choice associated with, a considerable range of domestic decision-making.

2. AREAS OF DIFFERENCE

This section highlights some of the more significant dimensions of difference and considers the decision-making implications of cross sample variations in terms of both the location and visibility of particular

decisions and associated perceptions of choice. The interview material documented in chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8 illustrated, among other things, the variety of social and material contexts in which apparently similar decisions were set. Decisions about holiday making illustrate the point. While all respondents made choices about holidays, different sections of the sample held quite different views about the meaning of a holiday and, consequently, described contrasting holiday-going aspirations. In this respect, as in others, informing definitions of "normality" differed, though they always functioned to order the location of potentially contentious decisions and so structured associated perception of choice. To continue with the holiday example, those sections of the sample with pre-school age children believed that they had "no choice" about holiday accomodation: they had to be self-catering because of the children. In other family contexts, however, there was room for real debate about holiday accomodation. Similarly, those H3s who wanted a foreign holiday had to make that decision some months in advance, and had to make a set of related choices about how to save the necessary finance and about how much they could afford. However, having made what was seen as an essentially financial decision, few then described any doubt about exactly which country to visit (Spain being the automatic choice) or what to do when they got there. In comparison, H1s, who were ususally "free" of such strictly financial problems, described holiday-going choices in terms of selecting one rather than another country and/or one rather than another style of touring. Differences in the location of component decisions were just as evident in respondents' accounts of, for example, choices about leisure, or about house buying. In a sense, then, different respondents lived in what were effectively different decision-making worlds. Issues which were routinely taken-for-granted by some were highly visible and sometimes contentious for others. Equally, what some respondents believed to be viable options were quite inconceivable for others. The actual list of

"visible" and debatable as opposed to taken-for-granted and routine decisions about, say, leisure, furnishing, holidays, house buying or career, varied from one section of the sample to another. This is important in that such patterns of visibility ordered issues which might become subjects of overt dispute and which might provide occasions for an exercise of "one dimensional" power. Furthermore, such patterns ordered the potential in any situation for agenda setting and domestic nondecision-making (5).

Reported perceptions of choice associated with certain commonly visible decisions were just as varied. As I observed in chapters 1, 3 and 4 respondents' definitions of relevant capacities appeared to depend on their perception of the kind of choice associated with the decision in question. Arguments about matters of preference were characteristically resolved with reference to a different set of resources compared to those which were marshalled in cases of dispute about, say, matters of appropriate behaviour or about issues in which there was deemed to be "no choice". If different sections of the sample saw the same issue in different ways then each would arrive at a different definition of relevant capacities with respect to that issue. Overall, H1s, H2s, and H3s did believe themselves to have different types of choice in relation to what were formally similar decision-making issues. For example, H1 respondents, especially those without children, explained that they made choices about their own career plans on grounds of personal preference. In comparison, H2 and H3 respondents typically observed that they had "no choice" but to take whatever suitable work they could find. Broadly the picture was one in which H1s believed themselves to have rather more control over their everyday decision-making than did the other sections of the sample. Accordingly, they claimed to make what were essentially personal choices about their social lives, their employment, their furniture, their house, etc. etc. Each believed that their lifestyle was the product of a series of

individual choices, the outcome of which varied depending on their own idiosyncratic interests and preferences. At the other extreme, H3 respondents, especially the older ones, presented a rather more fatalistic account of their decision-making processes. That is not to say that they were unhappy with the results; only that they tended to believe that the outcome was determined by factors beyond their personal control. Thus, this section of the sample explained that they changed jobs as a consequence of what were seen to be externally imposed pressures, that they then took whatever job was on offer at the time, that their children "came along", that they always went out to the same pub every Friday night, always with the same friends, etc. etc.

Similarly, although the concrete outcomes were much the same, different sections of the sample offered characteristically different accounts of how they had come to allocate their domestic responsibilities. H1s and some H2s claimed that their arrangement was simply the most convenient given their particular domestic circumstances, whilst H3s and the remaining H2s maintained that they "automatically" allocated domestic work in what they believed to be the "proper" way.

I can roughly plot the accounts provided by each section of the sample on an amended version of the diagram with which I concluded chapter 4. This allows me to illustrate the perceptions of choice characteristically defined by H1s, H2s and H3s. If each dot represents respondents' perceptions of the type of choice associated with a particular decision then the overall distribution might look something like this.

FIGURE 13

Types of decision	Types of conflict	Types of resources	H1	H2	H3
Open	Matters of preference	Material or normative - good reasons			
Limited	Appropriate behaviour	Normative - proper behaviour			
Closed	No choice	None or normative - proper behaviour			

This summary diagram should not be interpreted to mean that H1s necessarily argued more because, as they saw it, fewer decisions were determined by factors beyond their control or constrained by conventional expectations of appropriate behaviour. The point is, rather, that because H1s tended to face what they saw as more "open" decisions they resolved disputes with reference to particular sorts of capacities. Very broadly, different capacities were more or less likely to have effect as resources in different sections of the sample because each section was likely to take a different view of the kinds of choice associated with particular domestic decision-making issues.

In sum, then, different sections of the sample made choices in what were in many respects different cultural, social and material worlds. This meant that the character of visible and potentially debatable decisions varied.

Choices which were routine for some were the subject of joint discussion in other domestic contexts. Although it would be possible to isolate certain choices on grounds of their characteristic visibility - for example, some sections of the sample (mostly H3s) faced decisions about which TV channel to watch, while others (mostly H1s) equated the on/off decision with that of programme selection - it is difficult to detect any general pattern to the kinds of discrete decisions which each section of the sample took-for-granted, or acknowledged as "visible".

In comparison, there was some apparent order to variations in perceptions of choice associated with the kind of decisions discussed in chapters 5 to 8. Very generally, H1s seemed to define decisions as open "matters of preference" rather more frequently than respondents from other sections of the sample. At the other extreme, H3s typically believed that they had "no choice" about the outcome of many of their routine domestic decisions. This pattern was significant in that it was likely to order respondents' definitions of relevant capacities and so structure the form of associated disputes. Note, however, that perceptions of choice also varied with the subject at issue, and that the pattern described above is therefore of the most general kind.

3. POWER, DECISION-MAKING AND WOMEN'S POSITION IN THE FAMILY

I shall now give some thought to the implications of this research for an account of women and power within the family. This is a speculative exercise, not least because the research could be variously interpreted depending on the observer's view of power and so of women's "real interests". I want to suggest that the kinds of conclusions which might be reached with the aid of a definition of power which depends on a generalised theory of disadvantage (in this case of women's disadvantage) are of a different order compared with those which might result from an

analysis informed by a concern with the structure of the social world in which particular individuals secure particular preferences.

As suggested in the first two sections of this chapter, the "visibility" and type of choice associated with particular domestic decisions seemed to be informed by a series of common beliefs about proper family life. Despite these areas of overlap, however, there were also systematic differences in perceptions of choice as those were characteristically expressed by each housing section of the sample. To make such observations relevant to a generalised account of women's position in the family the observer has to make certain assumptions about both the character of respondents' accounts and about the nature of women's real interests. In this context it is useful to outline three alternative interpretations of the research material, each of which reflect a different view of the respondents' accounts, of domestic power relations, and of women's real interests. Consider first the conclusions which might be reached by those who presume that respondents' accounts are in some way illustrative of women's real position in the family. Those who took this view could claim that all women, respondents included, are in fact disadvantaged in the domestic context. The argument would be that women are unable to realise their "real interests" because of the networks of routine, belief, and material inequality which constitute their domestic world/s. Given this initial "knowledge" of disadvantage, analysis of the interview material would be pitched at a level general enough to incorporate the described cross-sample differences. So, for example, differences in accounts of the allocation and delegation of responsibility for cooking or cleaning could be seen as variations in the form of what is basically the same underlying system of patriarchal power. Accordingly, the interview material could be treated as a whole, as an undifferentiated assembly of evidence of women's powerlessness in the family. What is reported simply confirms what is already known to be the case, though perhaps in more detail, or with

reference to previously unexplored issues. From this point of view respondents' accounts, like all other information about everyday domestic habits, could be said to further document our understanding of women's powerless position within the family.

The second option is to limit the analysis of power to a study of overt dispute. If this strategy were adopted, it would only be possible to talk of women's powerful or powerless position if it were possible to establish that all women were in fact unable to realise their stated preferences in the domestic context. For example, if all explicitly objected to the notion that they should be responsible for housework, then beliefs and expectations which left them with "no choice" but to take on that responsibility might be said to work to their collective disadvantage. It is difficult to see how one might collect the data needed to support a claim about the powerlessness or otherwise of the category "women". The interview material provides only a tiny fraction of the necessary information and so makes a correspondingly minute contribution to this sort of an analysis of women's position of power within the family. However, even this limited range of interview data serves to raise a general issue which would face those concerned to reach some evaluation of power on the basis of information about stated preferences. Imagine, for a moment, that there was some vast database of the preferences of all women. Imagine, too, that domestic decision-making contexts were systematically varied in something like the fashion documented in this thesis. If all women had the same stated preferences, then the argument would have to be that some wives were more disadvantaged with respect to their husbands than others, since the domestic worlds which ordered the realisation or otherwise of those preferences certainly differed. Alternatively, if the argument were that all women were equally disadvantaged, that is if all were equally unable to realise their stated preferences, then the observer would have to presume

that those preferences were systematically varied.

Finally, one could suggest that the contextual regularities identified in the interview material might, if generalisable, serve to the disadvantage of all women who found themselves in certain decision-making circumstances. As I argued in concluding chapter 4, those who have superior access to capacities, that is to means which might have effect as resources, have potential power. If husbands had more capacities than their wives, they would have greater potential power. Yet, as I also observed, the relation between potential and actual power is extremely complicated, and appeared to be ordered by two critical factors. The first was the level of opposition. If there was no opposition, perhaps because decisions were automatically taken by the relevant authoritative figure or simply because the potential opponent was disinterested or indifferent, then there was no occasion for an exercise of actual power and no reason to realise the potential. The second factor was the definition of "relevant" capacities. Different capacities were believed to be of more and less relevance in relation to different sorts of contentious decision-making. The ability to make use of capacities therefore depended on definitions of relevance, which they in turn related to participants' perceptions of the type of choice associated with what proved to be contentious decisions. Patterns of actual advantage therefore reflect a combination of a) personal preferences and levels of opposition, b) the distribution of capacities, and c) contextual patterns of perception of choice, location of decision, informing beliefs and expectations. Even if all women had less potential power than all men (ie. fewer capacities), variations in the factors ordering the realisation of that potential complicate the picture such that potential cannot be equated with actual power. The mediating variables which order conversion of potential to actual power are thus critical.

In this context it is important to note that respondents' abilities to

realise potential power appeared to be systematically structured according to housing and age. If this pattern were generalisable, then, by implication, wives with the same capacities and the same preferences would have different chances of getting their way depending on their membership of a particular age or housing class. If this were the case, it might be possible to characterise the key features of typical domestic contexts and to conclude that, say, those in a position equivalent to that of the H1 category would be likely to face decisions x, y and z, and to define capacities p, q and r as "relevant" in those decision-making circumstances. Of course, documentation of such contextual regularities would not in itself reveal the distribution of actual power. That could only be identified if it were also possible to predict preferences and levels of opposition.

In sum, then, there may well be gender differences in access to capacities which might prove relevant in case of overt dispute. However, the significance of this differential distribution appears to depend on a complex network of factors which intervene in the process of actualising potential power. These ordering factors appear to vary systematically across my sample. However, even if this variation is generalisable, it would be impossible to arrive at any general conclusion about women's position of power, for such a claim would also depend on knowledge of personal preferences and levels of opposition.

I have suggested that it would be possible to interpret the research material with reference to three sorts of arguments about women's position of power. First, the interview data could be used to illustrate what is "known" to be women's oppressed position. Because this position is founded on a prior and essentially moral definition of women's real interests there is no room for debate about the nature of domestic power relations. Arguments which do not rest on prior definitions of real interests follow

one of two routes. First, statements about power relations can be limited to statements about instances in which individuals were unable to realise their stated preferences. While the observer might be able to make some estimate of the relative power of individual respondents, it is impossible to generalise from this so as to arrive at any wider conclusion about women's position of power. Alternatively, the analyst can broaden the scope of enquiry and attend to dimensions of the social worlds which order individual's abilities to secure particular preferences in particular domestic circumstances. Of course, to observe that the context of conflict is systematically ordered is not to conclude that patterns of actual power correspond. In other words, conclusions which concern features of the ordering social world do not necessarily translate into conclusions about consequent advantage. However, statements about the contexts of conflict can be pitched at a general level and while they are not strictly about women's position of power they do describe critical dimensions of the social worlds in which particular husbands and wives actually exercise power.

4. POWER AND DECISION-MAKING

In this final section I want to review those issues which relate more directly to the sociology of power. There is evidently much to be gained from an exploration of power in the family context. Whatever else it might do, such an exercise highlights a number of critical issues which are routinely ignored even by those who are concerned to consider family relations in terms of inequality and injustice. In chapter 1 I suggested that those who want to identify an exercise of power (defined in the oppositional terms of A getting B to do what B would not otherwise do) regardless of the views of the parties involved, are obliged to identify the relevant counterfactual. That is, they are obliged to arrive at some conclusion about what would have happened if it were not for A's presumed

exercise of power. While statements about women's powerless position in the family are rarely advanced with reference to an explicit view of how the world would be if it were not for, say, a system of patriarchal power, some such notion, and so some conception of women's real interests, implicitly underlies all such argument. It is important to acknowledge this characteristic of oppositional accounts of power which seek to go beyond a simple "one dimensional" analysis.

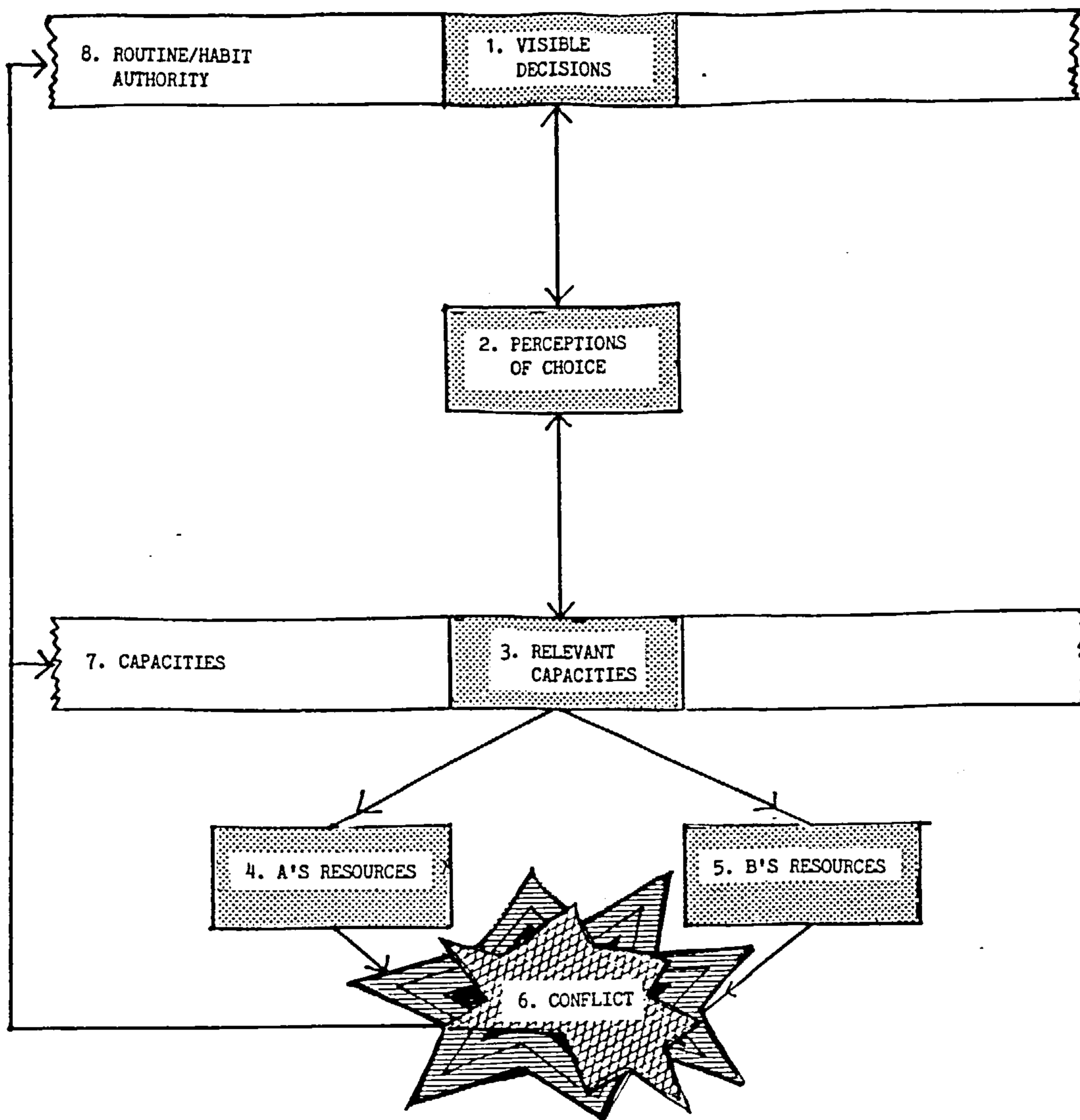
For the reasons developed in chapter 1, I chose to concentrate on the context of conflict and to order that analysis without reference to questions of advantage or disadvantage. While I reserved the term power to describe instances of overt conflict, I was primarily concerned to consider the ways in which those instances were ordered by networks of domestic routine, perceptions of choice, and definitions of relevant capacities. This strategy permitted an analysis of power relations and of the ordering domestic worlds in which power was exercised in terms which did not embody assumptions about the real interests of husband or wife but which did go beyond analysis restricted to situations of overt dispute.

My research suggests that respondents' perceptions of kinds of choice seemed to provide the critical link in a chain connecting context to conflict. Focus on this part of the decision-making sequence was particularly useful in that it also drew attention to the second critical power related issue identified in chapter 1: the relation between responsible action and structural determination. I suggested that A got B to do what B would not otherwise do in case of overt dispute with the aid of what were defined as A's relevant capacities. In this limited sense, the exercise of power did depend on "responsible action" and, as I was using the term, an attribution of power was also an attribution of total or partial responsibility for certain consequences (Lukes, 1974, p56). However, this was only a small part of the more general picture with which

I was concerned. The factors which ordered the outcome of domestic disputes, and which included the definition of relevant capacities, were complex, but clearly related to respondents' perceptions of the kinds of choice at issue. These perceptions of choice were in turn ordered by such variables as domestic routine, identification of external pressure, and definitions of appropriate behaviour. These contextual components could usefully be seen to belong in a kind of limbo, not entirely determined by individual action nor yet entirely fixed by factors beyond individual control. Rather, structuring patterns of regularity, domestic order, and taken-for-granted expectation could be seen in such a way as to blur the presumed distinction between responsible action and structural determination, between agency and structure (6).

The diagram below illustrates the of model of power which emerges from the above observations. The darker areas, [1] visible decision, [2] perception of choice, and [3] relevant capacities represent those dimensions of the domestic world which directly impinge on a particular instance of conflict [6]. The diagram is an idealised snapshot of a particular case of domestic dispute. In this case, this was the visible decision, this the perception of choice, this the associated definition of relevant capacities, and, at the time, this the distribution of relevant capacities between husband and wife. If we imagine these darker areas sliding across the contextual bands of routine/authority/habit [7] and of capacities [8] the diagram could then depict different sorts of decision-making dispute, each case concerning issues located somewhere in a network of routine [1], associated with different perceptions of choice [2] and concluded with reference to different classes of capacities [3]. To complicate matters further, definitions of relevant capacities and recognition of potentially debatable issues is dependent on past experience of conflict. If there had never been any discussion in the past there was no reason to expect any in the future. The lines of feedback from [6] to [7] and [8] suggest these connections.

FIGURE 14



This model emphasises the importance of actors' perceptions of choice and the consequences of those perceptions in terms of their definition of relevant capacities. It therefore directs attention toward issues which have interested "two dimensional" analysts: for example, issues about the visibility or otherwise of discrete decisions and about the association between these patterns of visibility and structures of authority, habit and routine. The range of what would count as relevant belief or action is evidently broader than that which would be incorporated in a simple oppositional account of power. What is interesting is the relation between features of the social world surrounding instances of overt dispute. From this point of view, study of capacities and of definitions of relevance, exploration of the processes through which invisible decisions become the subject of debate, and classification of perceptions of choice are critical components of any analysis of domestic power relations. The sociology of power has tended to neglect these issues because its agenda has been set by those who have adopted an essentially oppositional view of their subject. This thesis suggests that such a view is both conceptually unnecessary and empirically restrictive. Power, in the fullest sense, is a central feature of family relations just as it is central to other aspects of social life, for it is an irreducible component of our capacity to act in and upon the social world.

CHAPTER 11: NOTES

1. See Chapters 5 to 8.
2. See Chapters 9 and 10.
3. As described in chapters 5 to 8, different sections of the sample identified different decisions, and perceived different kinds of alternatives in relation to, for example, choices about furnishing, about television viewing, or about holiday location.
4. For example, there was considerable variation in the way in which respondent's defined what could be used as "their own" money and in the way in which cash or cheques were actually handled, if not in the ultimate allocation of particular types of spending responsibility.
5. For example, there were different probabilities of debate about food shopping depending on the wife's menu planning practices and so on the location of potentially debatable decisions. Those who decided what to eat say a week in advance made different choices compared with those whose decision-making was frequent and unpredictable. The husband's ability to become involved varied accordingly.
6. As Giddens writes "Resources (focussed via signification and legitimation) are structured properties of social systems, drawn upon and reproduced by knowledgeable agents in the course of interaction" (Giddens, 1984, p15). Giddens uses the term "resources" to cover what I have described as capacities and, to some degree, the processes which order the definition of decisions and the associated perceptions of choice.

APPENDIX 2

Dear

I am writing to invite you to take part in a research project, currently based at the University of York, and broadly related to the theme of Family life. The aspect on which I am now working concerns family routines and day to day decision-making.

Part of this study involves talking with a selected sample of wives (those who go out to work as well as those who are full-time housewives) - about such routine matters as how they organize their time, how common domestic decisions are made and about how the responsibility for a number of household tasks is shared within the family. You have been included in the sample, and although you are under no obligation to take part, I hope that you will be willing to do so, and that you will find the experience interesting.

Any conversation which I may have with you would of course be entirely confidential and you would remain completely anonymous in any resulting research report.

I shall visit you some time during the next few days to introduce myself and to tell you more about the research. This will give you the opportunity to decide whether you are interested in taking part. If my visit is inconvenient I can easily arrange to call at another time.

I look forward to meeting you.

Yours sincerely,

Elizabeth Shove

THE INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

The list of issues covered during the course of the interviews barely counted as a proper interview schedule. I did not always ask the same questions in the same order or in exactly the same way. What follows, then, is more an account of the areas in which I was interested than a precise description of the questions which I asked.

Whatever the subsequent modifications, I always began with a series of enquiries about age, occupation and children.

1. Background information and decisions about work

As a guide, I referred to these questions:

Do you have any children?

(If so) **How old are they now? Are they boys or girls?**

How long have you been married? How old were you when you got married?

Is your husband older or younger than you?

I then tried to find out about the respondent's working life and hence about the nature of her experience of employment-related decisions. The sequence of relevant decisions obviously varied depending on the respondent's present working status. I began with the following question:

Are you working now? and continued the discussion in one of two ways depending on the response. Those who were working were asked:

How long have you done that job for?

What was the first job you did? How did you come to do that?

And after that? How did you come to change jobs? How did you come to choose the next one? (repeated as relevant)

If the respondent had stopped work for a period but had then returned, I asked:

Why did you stop? Why did you return?

In this way I traced the respondent's working history from the time she left school to the present. I then tried to find out more about her current job.

What hours do you work now?

Do you find that convenient?

Would you like to work more hours? Why?

Would you like to work less hours? Why?

What does your husband think about your work?

At some stage I tried to create the opportunity for the respondent to express a general view about the propriety of wives and/or mothers going out or returning to work and about the circumstances in which this was, or was not, believed to be legitimate.

The questions addressed to those who did not work covered much the same ground:

What was your first job?

And then? Why did you change jobs ..? I traced the employment history in the way described above and then focussed on the present arrangement.

Why did you stop work?

Do you plan to return?

When and why? (If so) What kind of job would you look for?

What is your husband's view on this matter?

Again I tried to create the space for a general discussion of the circumstances in which the respondent believed that wives and/or mothers should or should not take up paid employment.

I went on to ask questions about the husband's career. Here too I wanted to identify the history of employment-related decisions.

What does your husband do?

Has he always done that? What was his first job?

(If not) Why did he change?

Have you had to move because of his job? Tell me about that decision

(If not) Do you think you would ever have to move because of his job? What would you do?

What hours is he working now?

In this first part of the interview I tried to find out how respondents viewed their own work in relation to their family commitments and how they saw their husband's employment related decisions. I was also concerned to collect background information about working hours and about the nature of the husband's and the wife's occupation.

2. Daily routine

I decided to set the scene for detailed enquiry about specific topics (cooking, cleaning etc.) in the guise of a discussion about every-day routine. The "typicality" or otherwise of the resulting accounts was not especially relevant. The "What do you do on a normal week-day" discussion simply served to link together a series of question areas in what appeared to be a coherent fashion. I introduced it in these terms.

The next group of questions are about daily routines. Tell me what you would do on a normal week-day.

How do you begin the day?

Ask about breakfast, about washing up after breakfast (if any)

When does your husband start work?

How does he get there?

(If children) Ask about getting them off to school, about child-care arrangements and/or school holiday arrangements. (If work) When do you start work?

How do you get there?

Do you get time off during the day? When? What do you do with it? When do you get home? What do you do then?

(If full-time housewife) What do you do in the mornings? What do you do in

the afternoons?

(All) When does your husband get home? What happens then?

When do you have your main meal?

Do you eat together?

So far I had been concerned to collect information which I could refer back to later in the interview. However, when talking about the use of evening and, later, of week-end time, I wanted to identify what the respondent believed to be a "normal" leisure option and to document patterns of what was seen to be uncommitted time. The discussion was ordered with reference to these kinds of questions.

What do you do in the evenings?

Do you watch the television?

What do you watch?

Is there anything which you always watch?

Do you (and your husband) agree about what to have on? If not, what happens?

Do you take turns to choose? How do you resolve conflict about what to watch? Who usually wins?

Have you got more than one television? What is the other used for? When?

Do you have a video? (If video) Who uses it, for what purpose?

Check for time shifting and ask about the use of video libraries.

What do you do if you are at home but not watching the television? Check for hobbies, entertaining, other forms of home-based leisure.

What about "going out"? Do you go out as a couple?

(If yes) Where to you go? What do you do? Check, as relevant, for eating, drinking, clubs, societies, evening classes, routine and irregular leisure options. Establish who organises joint trips, who makes the time, who makes the arrangements, who arranges babysitter (if any) and who pays for the meal, drink, tickets.

Do you go out on your own or with friends?

What do you do? Who do you go with?

Would you like to get out more than you do at the moment?

(If yes) What is the problem?

Does your husband go out on his own or with his friends?

Where does he go? What does he do?

Is that a problem?

I also wanted to identify separate and joint patterns of friendship and to document visiting and entertaining habits.

Do you have any relatives living nearby?

Who? Where? Do you see them?

Check for problems with the husband's relatives and vice versa.

What about friends? Do you have joint friends? When do you see them? How do you come to know them?

Separate friends? Neighbours? Friends from work? Friends from school?

Friends made via the children? When do you see your own friends?

Some where around this point I introduced the notion of the week-end, or, more commonly, followed up respondent's accounts of week-end visiting. I wanted to compare week-end with week-day routine and to define particularly week-end practices. I tried to run through the week-end routine (if any) and to find out whether respondents got up later, whether they ate at different times, whether they ate different food (did they have a special Sunday lunch?), whether they went out more or took part in some especially week-end activity etc.

In this section I aimed to get respondents to follow their own every-day "story" line but in such a way as to introduce the subjects in which I was interested. I sometimes chose to follow up relevant topics as they arose. Other times I simply remembered relevant details and went back, using that detail as an introduction later in the interview. For example, I often used the tactic of presenting specific questions in this form "Earlier you

said that you always had a proper Sunday dinner. Do you do all the cooking?". In what I felt to be the most successful cases I amassed a wealth of detail which I then used in the course of the rest of the discussion. In even the "worst" cases the resulting outline of everyday routine provided a baseline from which to view subsequent accounts of the allocation of particular domestic responsibilities and, perhaps more important, it provided a picture of how discrete areas of decision-making and domestic responsibility inter-related and fitted together.

If I were following the sequence according to plan, I ended this part of the interview by saying something like this:

That is all about family routines. The next group of questions are about the ways in which you allocate responsibility for a variety of household tasks - starting with the shopping.

3. Areas of domestic responsibility

Experience with the pilot interviewees and with the first few of the "real" sample suggested that it was indeed awkward to initiate discussion of family finance unless that discussion were apparently tied to an immediately obvious problem. I wanted to create a situation in which the respondents would "have to" tell me about the way in which they arranged their money in order to effectively explain some other aspect of their domestic lives. I tried to order the discussion of shopping with this aim in mind though I was also genuinely interested in finding out how respondents allocated and delegated responsibility for such work. Ideally, the sequence went something like this:

Do you do the food shopping?

(If so) Does your husband help? When? What does he do? Is he good at it? Do you give him a list? Would he know what to buy?

When do you go shopping? Do you have a day for shopping? (check for

routines and for use of the car)

Do you make a list? When do you decide what to buy? Do you always buy the same things?

(If yes) So, does that mean you always spend the same amount? Do you have a set amount of money to spend on food?

(If no) So, that means you spend different amounts each time you go? Do you have a set amount of money to spend on food?

Having got this far I could then say:

What money do you use? Is that from your own account, a joint account, or is it housekeeping money?

(If it were some form of housekeeping) Does that money include, say, things for the garden, loo paper, plugs, cleaning things ...? What doesn't it include? Clothes? Bills? How is the sum fixed? When does the housekeeping go up? Why?

(If it were joint or separate account money) Do you keep track of what money you use? What else do you use your or your joint account for? Clothes? Bills?

I was immediately engulfed with information about methods of financial management. Because this was a complex area I often had to spend some time trying to find out what the arrangements were. Framed in this way, the respondents volunteered information in an attempt to help me untangle the details of their family finances. For example, they often set out to explain exactly what could be bought with "their" or "their husband's money". In the course of this discussion I aimed to find out about the respondent's perceptions of different categories of money, about responsibility for particular forms of expenditure and about the fate of the wages of those who worked. In detail the questions took a different form depending on the structure of the respondent's method of financial management. Whatever the system, I asked about:

a) The origins of the system of financial management

Have you always arranged your money that way?

How did you decide to arrange your money like that?

Do you know if that was what your parents did?

Do you think yours is an unusual method of managing money?

Did you consider any other way of arranging your money?

b) Methods of spending and saving

Who pays for the gas/electricity/telephone/rent/rates/television licence?

Does the other know what those bills come to?

Who actually writes out the cheque or who delivers the cash for the bills?

Do you save any money? How? What for?

I then asked those who were working:

How are you paid and what happens to your wages (ie. what form are they in and where are they stored ... cash/account/savings account)

What are your wages used for? (ie. for what types of expenditure)

Is your income necessary?

c) The formal details of cash and accounts

Do you have an account? What is it for? What money goes into it? Who gets money out of it? Who keeps track of it?

Where do you get your every-day cash from?

Do you give your husband cash?

Does he give you cash?

d) The respondent's felt access to different categories of money

Do you feel happy about buying things for yourself with your own income, with money from the joint account, with the savings, with the housekeeping etc.?

What money do you use when you want to buy your husband a present? Is that awkward?

What money does he use when buying you a present? Is that awkward?

Do you have your own spending money? (If so) What do you use it for? (If

not) Would you like any? What for? Do you ask for money? Do you ask for permission to spend the family's money?

Does your husband do the same? Does your husband have his own spending money? If so what does he use it for?

What money do you use when you go out on your own or with your own friends?

What difference did it make when you started/stopped working? Is it easier/more difficult to buy things for yourself now?

e) Details of financial knowledge

Do you know about the present state of the account/family funds?

Does your husband? (if relevant) Do you read the bank statements? Does your husband?

Do you save money? How? What for?

Who is most careful with money? How does that show?

Having covered these issues I then had to find some route back to a discussion of the ways in which respondents allocated and delegated other domestic responsibilities. Again I adopted the strategy of referring back to some earlier discussion and re-directing it so as to cover different ground. For example, I often chose to go back to the discussion of food shopping as a way into the subject of cooking. I could say, for instance, "You mentioned that you had housekeeping money and that you bought the food. Does that mean that you decide what the family will eat or that you do the cooking?"

Do you do all the cooking?

Does your husband take over? When?

Can your husband cook?

What would he/does he cook? Does he have any specialities?

Does he help you when you are cooking?

When? in what way?

Alternatively, I might follow another track and introduce the subject of cleaning. For example:

You said earlier that you always went shopping on Saturday morning and that you cleaned the house out on Saturday afternoon. Do you do all the housework?

Who would be the first to notice that a room needed tidying?

Who has the highest standards?

Do you share the housework (If so) How do you divide it?

Are there any jobs that your husband would not do? (If so) What are they?

Do you mind?

Does he do those jobs efficiently? Did you/would you teach him?

Are there any jobs which you would not want him to do?

From here I might go on to ask about responsibility for the decorating.

Who suggests that it is time to re-decorate?

Who does the decorating?

What part of it (if any) do you do? Why?

Find out how responsibilities for pasting, paper hanging, painting, emulsion painting, and gloss painting were allocated.

Could you do all these jobs?

What about other jobs in the house? mending plugs, getting things repaired?

Who does that? Would you/he know what to do?

Although I did not use the resulting information I also asked about the ways in which respondents allocated responsibility for the care of pets, the car and/or the garden. Not all had first hand experience of these jobs and so I had to begin with a question designed to establish the relevance of each issue.

Do you have any pets? (If yes) Who feeds it/them?

(If dog) Who walks it?

Do you have a car?

(If yes) Who gets it serviced? Who cleans it inside? Who cleans it outside?

Who pays for the petrol?

Can you drive?

(If yes) Who drives the car when you go out together?

(If more than one car) Which do you use when together? Who takes care of "yours"? of "his"? Who pays for the petrol? Who pays the other associated bills?

What about the garden? Do you have any? (If so) Who does the gardening? Do you/does he help? What do you/does he do? Check for mowing, digging, planting etc.

What about indoor plants? Do you have any? (If so) Who looks after them?

If relevant, I also asked about the way in which the respondents allocated responsibility for looking after the children. This was difficult because the range of applicable questions varied depending on the age and number of children.

Those who were mothers of pre-school children were asked:

What does your husband do for the children?

Are there any jobs that he will not do?

Are there any jobs that you would not expect him to do?

Who is the softest with the children?

Do you and your husband agree about how you should bring the children up?

I had already gathered details which I could use to inform the way in which I put these questions. For example, I knew about the respondent's working hours (if any) and about the identity of the person normally in charge of routine child minding. I had collected similar background details about the daily lives of those who were mothers of school age children and attempted to frame the following questions in as relevant a way as possible.

Who disciplines the children when they misbehave?

Who is the softest with them?

Do you and your husband agree about how to bring up the children?

Who sees them off to school? (if necessary)

Who takes them out to and/or picks them up from out of school activities?

Have you had to decide about schools? (If so) Tell me about that

Even if I had not followed the sequence set out in this "schedule", I usually tried to extend the discussion of responsibility for the children to a discussion of the decision to start a family. In this way I introduced the next section of the interview.

4. Domestic decision-making

Those with children were then asked:

Did you always expect to have children or was that a positive decision?

How did you decide when to have them?

(If relevant) When, and how did you decide to have the next one?

Did you have to save up?

Where were you living at the time? (asked in order to link this section with the subsequent discussion of decisions about housing)

Childless respondents were typically asked about their family planning decisions rather later in the interview. However, I shall list the questions areas here.

Have you ever thought of having any children?

(If yes) Follow up with discussion of planning

(If no) Discussion of that decision

From decisions about children I went on to ask about housing and furniture choices.

What about other decisions? How did you come to live in this house?

How long have you lived here?

Where were you living before?

Why did you move?

How did you choose this house ? Were there any alternatives?

Did you have any furniture before you came?

Who would suggest that you needed new furniture?

Do you have the same tastes in furniture, pictures, ornaments, colours,

wallpaper, re-decoration, tiles, carpets?

Do you have anything which is especially yours?

What did you have before you were married?

Is there anywhere that you normally sit?

In this section I encouraged respondents to describe how they had come to acquire the pieces of furniture and the pictures which I could see around me.

I also asked about the decision-making associated with the choice of last year's holiday. This part of the interview sometimes took place as an extension of the earlier discussion of leisure and week-end activity, sometimes in relation to a review of spending and saving habits and sometimes as one amongst other domestic decisions. Either way I wanted to ask:

Where did you go on holiday? What did you do? Where did you stay?

What were the alternatives?

Which did you prefer? How did you decide?

Have you had that kind of holiday before?

What are your plans for next year?

I concluded this section of the interview by asking something like:

Can you think of any decisions which we have not talked about?

5. General issues

If I had managed to cover all the question areas described above, I aimed to finish with discussion of such general themes as sharing and equality. By this stage, the respondents were able to refer back to specific events or practices as illustrations of a general approach to family life. This meant that I could ask something like:

Do you think that you and your husband share more than, say, your parents did? and then follow up the response with some more detailed question such as How does that show in terms of, say, the way you manage your money or

the way in which you share the children?

This concluding section of the interview gave respondents a chance to locate their own domestic arrangements in a comparative or historical context, and to describe the points at which they believed that their domestic strategies differed from those of their friends, parents or children.

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