ADVENTURES OF A DIASPORIC INTELLECTUAL:
R.W. CONNELL, FROM SOCIAL CLASS TO THE SYNTHETIC TURN IN GENDER ANALYSIS

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ADVENTURES OF A DIASPORIC INTELLECTUAL:

R. W. Connell, from social class to the synthetic turn in gender analysis

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A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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"If nature is thereby rendered social, so, conversely, the social is brought within the sphere of nature"

R.W. Connell, (1977c: 10)

"The classic opposition between the intellectual and society is, then, a false opposition"


"We must abandon the conventional dichotomy of changing culture and unchanging bodies"


"Subjectivity and objectivity, then, are not opposites"


"To some postmodern thinkers, any attempt to state general goals, or mobilize large numbers of people around common principles reeks of totalitarianism... In the face of the conservative reaction of the 1980s and the 1990s, both feminists and gay activists have worried that an emphasis on diversity means growing division, and that deconstructive approaches to gender have demobilizing rather than energizing effects. There are no easy solutions to these problems. I think, however, that a necessary response to them is to take a pragmatic approach to theory. 'Pragmatic' does not mean cynical or 'anti-intellectual'; it means looking carefully at the uses of theory and research, at the effects of knowledge, and in the practical processes through which knowledge is created and disseminated"

Abstract

The focus of this thesis is Connell’s work on gender relations, including his work on masculinities. My central argument, however, is that Connell’s social theory of gender cannot be fully understood without grasping the complexity of his work in other fields, especially his early work on social class. I argue that Connell’s work in different research areas, and on different aspects within the same field, has a unity. I call this unity the theoretico-political *problematique of synthesis*.

The *problematique of synthesis* is a practical achievement, a theoretico-political formation reached through laborious engagement in complex debates of politics and theory and it is constantly subject to modifications and renewals. This *problematique* is a set of actively produced theoretico-political generative dispositions that are embedded in certain concepts of Connell’s theory (like ‘structure’, ‘hegemony’ or ‘situation’) and facilitate a way of posing theoretical questions and of identifying and addressing political problems that center on the reconciliation and transcendence of opposing, or even contradictory approaches, theories and political strategies.

I argue that Connell’s social theory of gender can be understood as a systematic attempt to reconcile, synthesize and move beyond the oppositions of structure and practice, category and identity, and the body and society. Connell, however, refuses to grasp such oppositions in terms of one-way determinations and replaces them with mediating concepts centered on collective struggle and historical dynamics.

This thesis goes beyond Connell’s work to use the theoretical understandings of major social theorists to show a number of inconsistencies in Connell’s arguments. It seeks to produce and encourage further development of original theoretical constructions on gender, structuration, relationships and identities, power, hegemony and resistance, using historical and sociological analyses to “argue with Connell against Connell”.
This thesis is dedicated to my parents
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DECLARATION

We, Dr Jan Larbalestier and Professor Bettina Cass, Supervisors of the PhD thesis of Demetrakis Zannettos Demetriou, declare that this thesis, submitted posthumously on behalf of Demetrakis Zannettos Demetriou, in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Sociology and Social Policy at the University of Sydney, is wholly his own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

Dr Jan Larbalestier
2005

Professor Bettina Cass
2005
Introduction

Three events from a single year testify to the impact of the work of Australian sociologist Robert William Connell in three different areas of research and forms of social struggle: gender, class and education.

In February 2002, the international academic journal Theoretical Criminology published a special issue on Connell’s concept of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ (see Hall, 2002; Jefferson, 2002a; Connell, 2002e). The papers discuss, criticize and reconstruct what has become Connell’s most influential concept. Connell developed the idea of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ in order to theorize gender inequalities, and to account for the subordination of women and for the dominance of particular groups of men. It occupies a central place in Connell’s (1987) ‘social theory of gender’ and it has had a huge impact in fields like the sociology of masculinity, sexuality, sport and crime (see Donaldson, 1993; Demetriou, 2001; Hearn, 2004). It has also played a vital role in the formation of ‘men’s studies’, a field in which ‘Connell... has been heralded as one of the founding fathers’ (Davis, 1997: 561).

In July the same year, the Melbourne-based magazine Overland published a special issue and organized a conference to mark the 25th anniversary of Connell’s (1977a) Ruling Class Ruling Culture - a now classic book that in early 2003 members of the Australian Sociological Association singled out as the most influential book of Australian sociology. Many conference papers by researchers and political activists discussed the importance of Connell’s early work on social class, emphasizing its theoretical complexity, its empirical grounding and its continuing relevance (Hollier, 2004). Connell’s work on social class deals with the nature of economic exploitation and cultural domination, the complexity of class struggle and the possibility of historical transformation (Demetriou, 2004).
In December 2002, the journal *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* published a special section to mark the 20th anniversary of *Making the Difference* (see Arnot, 2002; Connell, 2002d; Thrupp, 2002; Yates, 2002). This book is a theoretically complex and empirically rich work published by Connell and his collaborators in the early 1980s to explain the relationship between schools, families and class/gender inequalities and to propose alternative policies centered on social and 'curricular' justice (Connell, Ashenden, Kessler and Dowssett, 1982). As the contributors emphasized, *Making the Difference* had an enormous impact on the sociology of education, both in Australia and abroad (Arnot, 2002: 348). The book attracted attention not only from professional sociologists but also from teachers and teacher unions (Yates, 2002: 329).

For most of those contributing papers, and possibly for many of their readers the three events were rather isolated phenomena, not connected to one another. This was certainly the case for the contributors to *Theoretical Criminology* and, presumably, for most of the international audience of this journal. In local events, a connection was more likely to be made but there was almost no substantial mention of, and engagement with, Connell's work on gender in the *Ruling Class, Ruling Culture* conference (with the notable exception of Donaldson and Poynting, 2004). Only the papers in *Discourse* discussed Connell's work in other fields, mainly because *Making the Difference* addresses class and gender inequalities as well as (and in the context of) education (see, especially, Arnot, 2002).

The major focus of this thesis is Connell's work on gender relations (Connell, 1987; 2002a), including his work on masculinities (Connell, 1995a; 2000b), but my central argument is that Connell's social theory of gender cannot be fully understood without grasping the complexity of his work in other fields, especially his early work on social class. I argue that Connell's work in different research areas, and on different aspects
within the same field, has a unity. I call this unity the theoretico-political

problematique of synthesis.

The 'problematique of synthesis' is neither an abstract theoretical postulate nor a closed system. It is a practical achievement, a theoretico-political formation reached through laborious engagement in complex debates of politics and theory and it is constantly subject to modifications and renewals. It can be defined as a set of actively produced 'theoretico-political generative dispositions' that are embedded in certain concepts of Connell's theory (like 'structure', 'hegemony' or 'situation') and facilitate a way of posing theoretical questions and of identifying and addressing political problems that center on the reconciliation and transcendence of opposing or even contradictory approaches, theories and political strategies. Thus, Connell's social theory of gender can be understood as a systematic attempt to reconcile, synthesize and move beyond the oppositions of structure and practice, category and identity, and the body and society. Connell refuses to grasp such oppositions in terms of one-way determinations and replaces them with mediating concepts centered on collective struggle and historical dynamics.

The thesis is divided in four parts. The first part traces the initial formation of the 'problematique of synthesis' in Connell's (1977a; 1983a) early work on social class. The three subsequent parts examine the further development of the problematique in Connell's social theory of gender, focusing on his work on structures, groups and bodies respectively, and they identify 'spaces of expansion'.

In Chapter I, I examine Connell's critiques of empiricist sociology and Althusserian Marxism as well as his critical engagement with E.P. Thompson (1968) and J. P. Sartre (1976), focusing on his attempt to move beyond the structure/practice and empirical investigation/theoretical analysis oppositions. I studied Connell's early work on social class in order to locate the origins of his idea of 'structure' and, hence,
to be able to grasp the complexity of his later work on 'gender structure' (Demetriou, 2004). I was soon led to the conclusion that through his engagement in debates pertaining to class analysis in the 1970s, Connell develops a sophisticated concept of 'structure' that is inseparable from his understanding of 'social practice' and that it is *this logic of 'inseparability' as a whole* (not merely the ideas of 'structure' and 'practice' or even the relationship between the two) that plays a formative role in his development of a social theory of gender. Hence, I argue that in the 1970s Connell fashions an overall approach to research and politics that emphasizes the need to move beyond certain kinds of oppositions. In other words, he fashions what I call the theoretico-political *problematique of synthesis*, a concept that I articulate in detail in Chapter II where I explore Connell's (1983a) gradual move from class to gender analysis. I argue that it is the *problematique of synthesis* itself that renders, amongst other things, 'structure' and 'practice' as inseparable dimensions of historical process and social struggle. Furthermore, I emphasize that the *problematique* is not an external logic that Connell imposes on gender relations but it is a set of 'generative rules' that he draws on and renews in and through his engagement with questions of gender theory and gender politics. It is a 'structure', but in Connell's (2004), not in Althusser and Balibar's (1970), sense of the term: *a process of practice and its effects*. Having analyzed the formation of the *problematique of synthesis* and having established its centrality, in the subsequent three parts of the thesis I explore its further development in Connell's social theory of gender. Connell's approach to gender is analyzed in terms of three interconnected *levels* of the *problematique*. Part II, *structuration*, explores Connell's understanding of 'gender structure' and 'gender practice' and his attempt to synthesize the two via a focus on the onto-formative effects of social practice, on historical processes and collective social struggles. Part III, *subjectification*, introduces Connell's theorization of group formation, focusing on his work that synthesizes the ideas that masculinities are 'places' in gender relations (categories) and 'configurations of gender practice' (identities) via an emphasis on

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'hegemonic struggles'. Part IV, *embodiment*, explores Connell's analysis of the relationship between bodies and social practice and bodies and groups and his synthetic concepts of 'negation', 'practical transformation' and 'reproductive arena'. Taken together, Connell's work on these three levels embodies a forceful analysis of power relationships and historical change centered on an original *tripartite conception of practice*, whose conditions, objects and effects are *structures, groups and bodies*: 'onto-formative', 'performative' and 'body-reflexive' practice respectively.

The three levels of the *problematique* are not independent of one another. They are interconnected and mutually reinforcing dimensions of a general approach to gender relations that emphasizes the *historicity* of social reality, the *effects* of social practice and the facts of *power* and *social struggle*. In this approach, gender structures are intractable but changeable; gender practices are creative but situated, embodied but not biologically determined; groups are both passively constituted and actively produced, both solid facts and historical creations; and bodies are not only inescapable and recalcitrant but also transformable and, hence, fully social and historical.

Two central facts structure my analysis of Connell's 'problematique of synthesis'. Firstly, Connell is not an isolated thinker who initiates a synthetic approach all by himself. Research and theory are cumulative phenomena, collective historical products: the result of trends from different directions, the mutually reinforcing conclusions of different research fields and the constantly contested outcome of diverse struggles. Hence, despite the specificity of his approach and the originality of his syntheses, Connell is part of a broader 'synthetic turn' in critical social analysis in general and in gender studies in particular. Furthermore, the first chapters of Parts II, III and IV introduce Connell's approach to 'structuration', 'subjectification' and 'embodiment' respectively by situating it in broader philosophical, sociological and political perspectives on synthesis. In Chapter III, I introduce and situate Connell's
synthetic approach to 'structuration' and his understanding of the 'onto-formative' dimensions of social practice by comparing it with Anthony Giddens' (1984) notion of the 'duality of structure and practice', Margaret Archer's (1995) 'morphogenetic approach', Nicos Mouzeli's (1991) critique of Giddens and the work of feminist thinkers including Sylvia Walby (1990), Sherry Ortner (1996) and Nancy Folbre (1994). In Chapter V, I introduce Connell's synthetic understanding of subjectification and his analysis of the 'performative' dimensions of practice through a critical analysis of its relationship to Judith Butler's (1990) theory of 'gender performativity' and the historical analysis of group formation developed in the 'gay historiography' of scholars like Jeffrey Weeks (1977) and George Chauncey (1994). In Chapter VII, I place Connell's synthetic understanding of 'social embodiment' and his notion of 'body-reflexive' practice in the context of the emerging sociology of the body (Turner, 1984; Crossley, 1995) and the feminist philosophical analysis of embodiment produced by Elizabeth Grosz (1994) and Iris Marion Young (1990a, 1994). On each and every level of the problématique, I emphasize the fact that Connell poses the question of synthesis not in an abstract theoretical manner but in a way that implicates questions of power and social struggle, that is in the context of a theoretico-political problématique. I also stress the distinctiveness of Connell's approach without underplaying either the common ground he shares with other thinkers or the fact that insights developed by other thinkers can complement and enrich Connell's approach.

The second idea that structures my analysis of Connell's approach to 'structuration', 'subjectification' and 'embodiment' is that, despite its originality and forcefulness, Connell's synthetic approach does not bring history, theory and political strategy to an end. The 'problématique of synthesis' is an open-ended and fully historical formation and, furthermore, on each and every level there are spaces for expansion, critical reconstruction and further development. This open-ended and expansionist dimension of the problématique is consistent with the Hegelian understanding of 'synthesis' as a
temporary transcendence of oppositions that gradually generates its own negations. Hence, the second chapters of Parts II, III and IV identify gaps in Connell's synthetic perspectives and pave the way for further developments and reconstructions. I call these 'gaps' sites or spaces of expansion to indicate that they are not mere 'problems' or 'limitations' to which I have definitive 'answers' or 'solutions' but, like Homi Bhabha's (1990) 'third spaces', they are places where creative developments can occur. Chapter IV, 'The Space of History', argues that while Connell's synthesis of structure and practice relies heavily on the theoretical concept of 'historicity', his work on gender lacks grounding on concrete historical analysis that is consistent with his theoretical understanding of the relationship between structure and practice. Chapter VI, 'The Space of Power' argues that the notion of 'hegemonic struggle' that enables Connell to reconcile 'category' and 'identity' tends to reduce power to explicit confrontations between opposing forces and thus to underplay the total complexity of domination. The two chapters on 'spaces' are shorter than the three chapters on 'syntheses' and their objective is to pave the way for an expansion of the whole problématique, not to offer definitive solutions to clear-cut problems.

The orderly organization of this thesis must not be taken to imply that social reality or the turn towards synthesis is ordered in this neat way. The distinction between the three levels of the problématique of synthesis, and the tripartite conception practice that corresponds to it, is analytical in character. In Connell's writings, these three levels and the three different ways of looking at social practice are constantly intermingled and they are not explicitly or systematically distinguished. Hence, in analyzing Connell's synthetic understanding of gender on each level, I constantly make reference to other levels and specify connections and interrelationships. Similarly, the 'spaces' of 'history', and 'power' are sites of expansion that pertain to every level but they are introduced in the analysis of 'structuration', and 'subjectification' respectively because it is in that context that the gaps in Connell's problématique become visible: it is in his theorization of the structure/practice
interconnection in terms of historical process that the lack of concrete historical analysis is best understood; it is in his analysis of group formation in terms of power struggles that the neglect of more complex and less overt forms of domination and power relationships becomes visible'. But these gaps pervade Connell's analysis of gender as a whole, affecting his synthetic approach on every level of the *problematique*.

Approaching Connell's 'social theory of gender' from the standpoint of the *problematique of synthesis* may not be the only possible way of looking at Connell's work but it has a number of crucial advantages. Firstly, it makes it possible to emphasize the *coherence* of Connell's approach by rearticulating his theory from the point of view of his *tripartite conception of social practice*. Secondly, it makes it possible to situate Connell's understanding of gender in the broader 'synthetic turn' in sociology and, especially, in critical gender analysis. In fact, this thesis can also be seen as a case study that takes Connell as a central figure in order to explore key issues in this 'synthetic turn' and to emphasize its *incompleteness*. Thirdly, it enables me to challenge the tendency to see Connell as a 'post-modernist' or a 'post-modern socialist feminist' (Maharaj, 1995). On each level of the problematic, I argue that Connell assigns a kind of *objectivity* to the conditions, objects and effects of practice that most 'post-modern thinking' has systematically underplayed: the *intractability* of structures, the *solidity* of groups and the *materiality* of bodies. And yet this 'objectivity', when approached from the standpoint of his 'tripartite conception of practice', is inseparable from a project of *de-reification* that renders structures, groups and bodies the historical *effects* of practice and dimensions of social struggle. Hence, his critiques of 'structuralism', 'categoricalism' and 'biological essentialism' respectively. Finally, it will make it possible to acknowledge Connell's theoretical *indebtedness* to certain currents of 'critical Marxism'. This indebtedness is not simply a question of borrowing and reworking particular concepts (e.g. 'hegemony' from Gramsci (1971) or 'the practico-inert' from Sartre (1976)). It is a whole
problematique that Connell institutes through an engagement with theoretico-political problems, and in debates, within Marxism.²

Some additional clarifications must be made before embarking on the analysis of the adventures of Connell’s ‘problematique’. This is not a ‘text’ on Connell that aims to introduce and explore each and every aspect of Connell’s work. The author of Gender and Power is a prolific writer. From 1967 (Connell and Gould, 1967) to 2002 (Connell, 2002a), he has authored or co-authored more than fifteen books, on issues ranging from children’s political consciousness (Connell, 1971) to Teacher’s Work (Connell, 1985c) and from Safe Sex (Kippax, Connell, Dowsett and Crawford, 1993) to feminism, bureaucracy and the state (Franzway, Court and Connell, 1989). He has also produced dozens of articles on issues as diverse as the history of sociology (Connell, 1997b), intellectual work (Connell and Wood, 2002) ‘Men’s Studies’ (Connell, 2003a) and Freud (1977c). Approaching Connell’s work from the standpoint of the ‘problematique of synthesis’ involves a selective focus. For instance, I do not analyze his work on health (e.g. 2001a) and I explore his work on education with a focus only on his theorization of group formation. Yet, I argue that my major theses (including the centrality of his concept of ‘structure’ and his ‘tripartite notion of practice’) concerns the very foundations of Connell’s theoretico-political perspective and it can be used to make sense of writings that are not discussed here explicitly or in detail. Needless to say, as the problematique is an actively constituted, constantly developing and situated formation, my argument does not apply to Connell’s future work.

Not being a ‘text on Connell’, this study also departs from Connell’s work in some important respects. It is not only in the ‘spaces’ where such departures occur. While I read Connell carefully, I take this thinker seriously and I am careful not to distort his approach, the centre) arguments developed here need not correspond- and in many respects they do not correspond, to Connell’s own conception of his work on gender.
and class or to dominant understandings of Connell's work. For instance, while Connell distances himself from Judith Butler's work (e.g. Ouzgane and Coleman, 1998), I emphasize that he shares extensive theoretical ground with Butler (1990). Similarly, I pay careful attention to and I centralize (i.e. bring to centre) concepts that occupy marginal positions in Connell's work while I problematize and marginalize concepts that Connell regards as being central to his approach or for which he is best known: while Connell has used the concept of 'onto-formativity' only sporadically (Connell, 1995a: 239; 1987: 79), I dedicate to this concept much more space and I argue that it is implicitly central in his analysis of the structure/practice relationship; while Connell is best known for his explicit theorization of the trio labour/power/cathexis (some problems with which are examined Chapter IV), I argue that if there is a trio in Connell's work that is unifying in its function and radical in its implications this is his latent 'tripartite conception of practice'. In this sense, the text as a whole, grounded on an expansionist reading and a contextualization of Connell's work, is a space.
Notes

1. Further it is in his theorization of gender embodiment that the question of the 'racialization' of gendered bodies appears to be marginalized (see chapter 8).

2. My centering on the 'problematique of synthesis' has some important limitations. There is a neglect of historical situations (1983a:241;2002a:115;1993a:31) and there is also a neglect of local literature as I have placed Connell in the international context of the synthetic turn to show that his approach has more than local significance.
CHAPTER ONE
CHAPTER ONE

A genealogy of Connell’s thought: class as a structure in the 1970s

I. Introduction

To appreciate the total complexity of R. W. Connell’s (1987; 2002a) approach to gender relations, including his systematic critical analysis of men and masculinities (Connell, 1995a; 2000), it is necessary to grasp some dimensions of his work on class analysis. In the course of the 1970s, Connell (1977a; 1983a) engages in a series of intellectual and political debates centred on the nature of class society, class domination and class struggle and on questions pertaining to the theoretical understanding of class processes, the development of relevant methodologies and the articulation of effective political techniques. These debates constitute the arena in which Connell fashions the conceptual vocabulary, develops methodological techniques and forms an overall ‘political problematique’ that informs his general understanding of power relationships in society and history. Hence, in this part of the thesis I introduce Connell’s approach to class analysis in order to produce a solid foundation for the analysis of Connell’s approach to gender, undertaken in the three subsequent parts. This chapter offers a systematic exposition and contextualisation of Connell’s engagement in debates of class analysis and introduces a series of concepts, including ‘structure’, ‘practice’, ‘hegemony’ and ‘categoricalism’. The next chapter explores the implications of Connell’s early work on social class via an examination of his gradual move from class to gender analysis.

II. The intellectual context: The ‘Orthodox Consensus’, Althusserianism and subjectivist Marxism in the 1970s

Connell’s concept of class was developed through his engagement in two intersecting intellectual and political debates that emerged in the 1970s with the rise of
Althusserian structuralism. The first debate was methodological in character and it manifested itself in the opposition between stratificationist sociology and other empiricist understandings of class, on the one hand, and Althusserian structuralism’s methodological objectivism and anti-empiricism, on the other. The second debate, which was not independent from the first but it deserves to be analytically distinguished because it was developed in a relatively distinct intellectual context, was theoretical in character and it emerged in the opposition between Althusserianism’s deterministic, structuralist understanding of class and the activist account of class formation produced mainly by E. P. Thompson (1968). Thus, Althusserian Marxism was opposed not only to the positivist and empiricist understanding of class that dominated sociology during the 1950s and the 1960s but also to an emerging trend in Marxist theory that tended to focus on practice and collective agency rather than structural constraint and determination. These two oppositions, at the centre of which was Althusserian structuralism, represented two major, interconnected conflicts focused on different aspects of the relationship between the subjective and the objective dimensions of class analysis.

Althusserian Marxism sided itself with objectivism on both a methodological and a theoretical level. On a methodological level, the Althusserian critique of subjectivism manifested itself through an opposition to the empiricism that characterised mainstream sociological class analysis during the 1950s and the 1960s, an era in which social theory was dominated by what Anthony Giddens (1984: xiii-xv) has famously called the ‘orthodox consensus’. In this immediate post-war period, which was bound up with the dominance of a positivist framework and the hegemony of American sociology in general and Talcott Parsons’ functionalism in particular, class analysis was objectivist in its ontology and epistemology in that it treated classes as objective entities that need to be identified and measured and it assumed that objective knowledge of them is possible. Yet, its methodology was subjectivist through and through: knowledge about the existence and the characteristics of classes...
could be acquired subjectively, through empirical observation and investigation, not through a priori theoretical identification. Althusserian class analysis was established as an alternative framework during the 1970s and it opposed to the subjectivist methodology of the 'orthodox consensus' the methodology of 'scientific Marxism'. Althusserians, most notably Louis Althusser and Etienne Balibar (1970) and Nicos Poulantzas (1975), argued that knowledge about classes is not acquired through observation but through theoretical identification and exploration of the class structure. Furthermore, classes were understood not in terms of groups of individuals that can be empirically identified and investigated but in terms of their structural location, place or position in an objective system of relations. Thus, class analysis was conducted at a high level of abstraction, through conceptual elaboration of the objective structure of the existing mode of production, without paying systematic attention to concrete empirical detail. 'Theoreticism' is probably the best term to describe the epistemology and methodology of Althusserian Marxism in that theory was not simply granted absolute primacy but it acquired an epistemological and methodological value (Jones, 1983; see also Althusser and Balibar, 1970: 7-8; and Althusser, 1975: 105-106; 119-125). In this way, the opposition between the 'orthodox consensus' in sociology and Althusserian Marxism can be understood in terms of a methodological opposition between subjectivism and empiricism, on the one hand, and objectivism and theoreticism on the other.

Althusserianism was at the same time involved in another intellectual conflict, in a debate within Marxism that also centred on the question of the relationship between subjectivism and objectivism. This debate can be understood in the context of the opposition between 'critical' and 'scientific' Marxism, that is between the humanist, subjectivist and anti-scientific Marxism associated mainly with the founding fathers of Hegelian, Western Marxism (George Lukacs, Karl Korsch, and Antonio Gramsci) and the French existentialist Marxists (Jean-Paul Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty), on the one hand, and the epistemological objectivism and 'scientism' espoused.
initially by the Second International (especially by Karl Kautsky) and afterwards by the ‘scientific’, anti-Hegelian critics of Marxist humanism in Italy (Galvano Della Volpe and his pupil Lucio Colletti) and by Louis Althusser in France1. In this context, Althusser and his followers contributed towards the revival of objectivist and scientific Marxism at a time when Marxism was increasingly understood in a subjectivist, critical way. In the area of Marxist class analysis, the conflict between ‘critical’ and ‘scientific’ Marxism manifested itself in what came to be known as the ‘Thompson-Althusser debate’ in England and the ‘Sartre-Althusser debate’ in France. These debates had an epistemological and methodological dimension (see, for example, Thompson, 1978) but their main focus was theoretical. That is, they were centred on the relationship between structure and agency, which is usually regarded, especially in contemporary British sociological theory literature, as the central theoretical question (Giddens, 1984; Layder, 1994; Archer, 1995; Mouzelis, 1995). Contrary to Althusserians’ exclusive focus on ‘class structure’, Thompson (1968) and Sartre (1976) stressed, in different ways, the subjective dimensions of class formation through a systematic emphasis on practice and collective agency. Thus, whereas Althusserians granted absolute primacy to objective structures and reduced subjects to passive bearers of those structures, the subjectivist Marxism of Thompson and Sartre portrayed ‘class’ in its process of construction, focusing on the practices through which classes are constituted.

It is in the context of the subjectivism/objectivism opposition and its methodological and theoretical manifestations (empiricism/theoreticism and structure/agency) that Connell formulated his theory of class. Connell intervened in these debates during the late 1970s and the early 1980s, recognising that these methodological and theoretical conflicts had also important political dimensions. His primary objective was not to take sides with Althusserianism or its opponents (even though he did so on specific questions) but to draw on their work in order to transcend the dichotomous oppositions involved, that is in order to produce a notion of class that reconciles

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subjectivism and objectivism, empirical investigation and theoretical analysis and, more importantly, structure and agency (see Figure I). In order to do so, Connell also drew on a variety of other intellectual sources, including George Lukacs, Antonio Gramsci, Noam Chomsky, and Jean Piaget. Moreover, he saw his analysis of class as part of an emerging trend in social theory that linked subjectivism and objectivism by stressing the dialectical interdependence and interpenetration of structure and agency. This trend was represented by Pierre Bourdieu (1977) in France and by Anthony Giddens (1979) in England while, according to Connell (1982a), its basic theoretical principles could be also found in Sartre’s (1976) ‘theory of practice’.

Figure I: The intellectual context: Debates in the 1970s and the formation of Connell’s concept of class

In what follows, I offer an exposition of Connell’s theory of class as it was developed in his engagement in these two debates. I pay particular attention to his understanding of ‘structure’ and ‘practice’ and to his more general conception of the relationship between objectivism and subjectivism. Having introduced the broader context, the
debates can be now explored in some detail in three consecutive steps. I begin by examining Connell's critique of 'categorical theory', a term he employs to refer to the concept of class shared mainly, but not exclusively, by empiricist historians and stratificationist sociologists during the time of the 'orthodox consensus'. I will then turn to Connell's methodological and theoretical critique of the Althusserian conception of class before turning to his critical engagement with the Marxist subjectivist understanding of class proposed by Thompson and Sartre.

III. The critique of the 'orthodox consensus': 'categoricalism' and the notion of 'structure'

Connell's (1977a) first book on social class, *Ruling Class, Ruling Culture (RCRC)*, develops a systematic critique of the notion of class shared by empiricist historians and stratificationist sociologists in Australia during the 1950s and the 1960s. He named their approach 'categorical' because they conceptualised 'class' as a category of people marked out by common characteristics, as a social group whose unity is based on some shared identifiable attributes, such as power, prestige or wealth. Although his focus was exclusively on Australian sociology and historiography, Connell argued that 'categorical thinking' was part of a broader intellectual trend. As he put it,

'[t]his is the conception of class that underlies most of the modern sociology of stratification, including survey research on mobility... some American functionalist theories of social hierarchy, and neo-Weberian stratification theories... [as well as] versions of Marxism which take a bourgeois-proletarian distinction as a fixed framework and devote themselves to fitting particular groups into it...' (Connell, 1977a: 4).

In *RCRC*, Connell does not analyse this body of Anglo-American literature systematically but he does so in an article that was published in the same year and focuses on the 'dimensional logic' of stratification theory, on its tendency to rank 'categories' in a number of different dimensions (political, economic, occupational, etc.) without grasping the interconnections between different categories and between
different kinds of inequality (Connell, 1977b). In these two works, Connell develops a sophisticated critique of 'categoricalism' centred primarily on its empiricist methodology, its ahistorical, apolitical and atheoretical character and its subsequent inability to develop a notion of 'structure'. He also outlines the main elements of a 'generative approach' to class, which would circumvent the problems of categoricalism.

'Categoricalism': the critique of empiricism

Connell's initial and most fundamental critique of 'categoricalism' is methodological in character. *RCRC* begins with an analysis and critique of empiricist methodology, of 'a methodology that constitutes the immediately given as the unique object of study' (Connell, 1977a: 22). Connell (1977a: 8-38) analyses a series of historical studies published in Australia during the 1960s, including Robin Gollan's (1960) *Radical and Working Class Politics* and Ian Turner's (1965) *Industrial Labour and Politics*, and argues that class analysis was conducted in a very atheoretical way. Historians were mainly concerned with empirical identification and description, not relational analysis and synthesis. Furthermore, they identified a large number of classes ('propertied class', 'middle class', 'ruling class', 'poorer class', 'working class', 'professional class', a 'class of bushworkers' and so on), which they saw as objective categories and 'unproblematic facts'. Their focus was not on the historical formation of those classes or on their social and political context but on their (empirically derived) characteristics. For empiricist historians, as Connell (1977a: 11) put it, 'class is what the documents say it is.' Thus, although from an ontological point of view class was assumed to have an objective existence, the methods employed in these analyses relied on the subjective experiences and arbitrary categorizations of the actors and the historians themselves.
The empiricist logic of Australian historiography was carried to an extreme by the contemporaneous emergence of stratificationist sociology. The sociologists associated with the Research School of Social Sciences at the Australian National University undertook large-scale studies of stratification and social mobility, within an empiricist, consensus-based framework (e.g. Broom, Jones, and Zubrzycki, 1968). Their work represented the Australian version of the 'orthodox consensus' in sociology (Baldock, 1994: 596-598). They usually distinguished between different 'dimensions of stratification' (based on wealth, prestige, occupation and so on) and applied descriptive survey methods in order to identify, measure and compare 'classes' or 'strata' and their characteristics on each dimension. Moreover, classes were understood as 'pigeon-holes' for the classification of respondents (Connell, 1977a: 32). Any number of classes could be distinguished since defining a class was a purely subjectivist question, based on the subjective experiences of respondents and the researchers' distinctions and classifications. Thus, as with empiricist historiography, the stratificationist literature relied on a 'peculiarly bloodless empiricism, where the lived reality of class is reduced to an abstraction for the purpose of statistical treatment' (Connell, 1977a: 33). Classes were again treated as objective entities that can be identified and compared and the focus was on their similarities and differences, not on their relations.

Connell (1977a; 1977b) argues that there are three main, interrelated problems in these categorical understandings of class: the problems of arbitrariness, power-blindness and ahistoricity. The first problem is related to the difficulty of determining how many classes can be distinguished. Since the focus is on subjective experiences and self-definitions, class categorizations, as Connell (1977b: 87-88; 1977a: 26-27) repeatedly argues, are usually arbitrary and the boundaries between classes appear to be imprecise and ambiguous. There is, in other words, lack of a theoretical basis that would provide a foundation for consistent and less arbitrary distinctions. Additionally, the methodological focus on the empirical characteristics that distinguish classes tends
to reify 'class' and directs attention away from class relations, making it difficult to account for class conflict, oppression and exploitation. The second problem is thus related to the systematic neglect of power relations and class struggle. This gives rise to a third problem in that an account of class that fails to develop a theory of internal contradiction, a concept of 'class dynamics' (Connell, 1977a: 27), or 'some notion of dialectics' (Connell, 1977b: 89) is intrinsically unable to explain historical changes. It can describe changes through concepts like 'social mobility' but it cannot explain complex historical processes, such as the emergence and consolidation of historically novel 'dimensions of stratification' or the construction and reconstruction of classes themselves. Categorical thinking is thus ahistorical since 'time' and historical process are 'actively suppressed' (Connell, 1977b: 96).

For Connell, these three problems are the product of the central methodological assumption that underlies categorical understandings of class: that the unit of analysis is 'the category', the empirically identifiable sets of people, not the larger 'structure' of class relationships or the social order as a whole. By focussing on the characteristics that distinguish 'classes', categoricalism misses the broader social, political, economic and cultural context and fails to develop a notion of 'structure', class struggle and dynamics and, ultimately, historical change. Thus, in order to circumvent the problems of categoricalism, Connell articulates a concept of class as a 'structure' and argues that it is the class structure as a whole that constitutes the primary focus of analysis. As he put it, 'it is the category of class structure, rather than the category of class, that is fundamental to class analysis' (Connell, 1977b: 92). In this way, Connell's theoretical work during the late 1970s and early 1980s can be seen as a systematic attempt to develop and elaborate a notion of 'structure' in the context of the theory of class, a notion that would serve as a main foundation for the development of a theory of gender some years later.
‘Structure’: ‘patterns’ and ‘traditions’

Even though it was not until 1977 that Connell started to develop a sophisticated notion of ‘class structure’, the meaning he attached to the concept of ‘structure’ can be traced back to his doctoral dissertation. The Child’s Construction of Politics, which was submitted as a PhD thesis at the University of Sydney in 1969 and published by Melbourne University Press two years later, is a study of the formation and transformation of children’s political thinking influenced by Jean Piaget’s (1949) ‘theory of intellectual development’. Therein, Connell (1971) offers a detailed description and interpretation of children’s ideas about politics, attempts to account for the changes that can be seen in them with increasing age, formulates a theory of the development of political thought and develops a well-articulated critique of the concept of ‘political socialization’. In doing so, Connell uses the term ‘structure’ in two main ways which correspond, as I will suggest below, to the synchronic and diachronic dimensions of structural analysis respectively: structure as ‘pattern’ and as ‘tradition’.

In the first instance, Connell employs the notion of ‘structure’ to refer to patterns in children’s political beliefs. Hence, the terms ‘structures of belief’ and ‘patterns of belief’ are often used interchangeably (e.g. Connell, 1971: 2; 64-65; 114; 233-237). Connell (1971: 64) saw children’s political thinking as consisting of particular elements, small details that are combined into larger units, which are in turn ‘integrated into a total structure’. Thus, to say that, in the stage of what Piaget calls ‘concrete operations’ (from about age 7 to 12), children’s political beliefs are ‘patterned’ or ‘structured’ is to suggest that children begin to perform some ‘mental operations’ (what Piaget calls ‘classificatory’ and ‘relational’ operations) and are thus able to classify objects and actions and relate them to one another. Furthermore, their political beliefs ‘are not isolated: they stand in a reciprocal relationship to each other…. they form the elements of a lattice.’ (Connell, 1972a: 251-252).
Against 'systems theory' and its concept of 'political socialization' and more generally against what Connell (1967) had previously called 'production-line theory' of attitude formation, Connell argues that the development of these 'structures' or 'patterns' of belief cannot be understood in terms of 'mechanical function or input of a system' (Connell, 1971: 235). They are rather the product of a contingent process in which the children themselves are actively and creatively engaged: '[they] selectively appropriate the material provided by schools, by mass media, by parents, and built of them individual structures' (Connell, 1971: 233). Thus, Connell’s understanding of 'structure' in terms of 'patterns' embodies the activist aspect of Piaget’s (1971: 62-63; 140-141) radical ‘constructivism’, according to which individuals actively make sense of the world rather than merely being conditioned by it. As Connell (2004: 20) put it in retrospect, '[r]eadng Piaget gave an idea of 'structure' as something that constituted the intellectual activity of the growing person, rather than something that bore down on the individual from outside'.

Yet, although he found Piaget’s theory invaluable in developing a notion of structure as 'pattern', Connell (1972: 256) was convinced that ‘Piaget’s theory is more a partial theory than he has been willing to acknowledge’. According to Connell (1972: 255), the problem begins with Piaget’s ‘idea of the reversibility of thought’ or his ‘axiom of inversion’ which claims that, when children perform an operation in thought, they are capable of returning back to where they began. In considering this axiom, Connell ‘thinks with Piaget against Piaget’ and argues that his theory fails to address questions of ‘temporality’ or ‘historicity’:

When a twelve-year-old annuls an operation in thought, [he or she] does not arrive back exactly where [they] began. All of Piaget’s researches go to show this: the child’s behaviour is influenced by the fact that [he or she] has performed that operation... The child’s thought, like adult thought, is historical...: a succession of events in time (Connell, 1972: 256).
In this way, Connell is in a position to show that the structures of children’s political thought should be understood not simply as patterns of interrelated beliefs existing at a particular moment in time (the synchronic dimension) but also as being fully historical since the elements they are composed of are part of the historical juncture in which those children find themselves (the diachronic dimension). Thus, Connell (1972: 256) suggests that Piaget’s theory ‘must be filled out by locating operations in the historical context of the child’s thought’. In the concluding chapter of The Child’s Construction of Politics, Connell talks about the diachronic or historical dimension of ‘structure’ through the concept of ‘tradition’:

A tradition we may define, broadly, as that type of social structure in which the relationships between persons are the historical relationships of transmission and acceptance of elements of culture. We are accustomed to think of a ‘social structure’ as a set of relationships between people at one point of time, but there is no reason why we should not think of social relationships along the dimension of time, and think of a structure of relationships extending over a very considerable period (Connell, 1971: 235).

As in Anthony Giddens’ theoretical language, ‘tradition’ becomes a medium for incorporating ‘time’ into social analysis. ‘It is a means’, as Giddens put it in a recent interview, ‘whereby the past lives in the present and thereby shapes the future’ (Giddens and Pierson, 1998: 127-128).

In conceptualising ‘structure’ as both ‘patterns’ and ‘traditions’, Connell does not simply historicize Piaget’s conception of ‘structure’. He also implicitly challenges a broader trend in structuralist thought: the widespread tendency, most explicit in Ferdinand de Saussure’s (1916) Course in General Linguistics, to grant primacy to the synchronic over the diachronic dimension of structures and the subsequent hostility to historical analysis.
To recapitulate so far, Connell’s conception of ‘structure’ was from the beginning opposed to what the Italian philosopher Sebastiano Timpanaro (1975: 53) calls ‘Cuvierian’ structuralism, that is to a structuralism that makes the ‘structure’ it studies ‘into something closed and intrinsically coherent’ and reveals no interest in its ‘genesis from below...[and] contempt or indifference towards diachronic studies’. Connell’s ‘anti-Cuvierian’ conception of structure embodies not only the activist element of Piaget’s ‘constructivism’ but also an emphasis on the diachronic dimensions of structural analysis developed through the concept of ‘tradition’. After 1971, Connell’s ‘anti-Cuvierian’ understanding of ‘structure’ was further developed and elaborated in the context of the theory of class and served as a foundation for the articulation of a critique of categoricalism.

The ‘generative’ approach to class: situation, constraint, possibility

During the early 1970s, Connell published a series of class analyses in which he develops a somewhat more concrete account of ‘structure’, an account that incorporates the notions of ‘patterns’ and ‘traditions’ and the historicism and activism they embody. In ‘Class Structure and Personal Socialization’, Connell (1972b) examined the impact of ‘class structure’ on personal growth giving ‘structure’ a material rather than mental definition and linking the concept to the analysis of power relations in a more direct way. The focus was again on the diachronic dimension of structure, emphasising the possibility of historical change. As he put it,

class structure is not a static thing; it exists in history and develops and changes through historical time. To persist it must in some way reproduce itself from generation to generation, and the process of its reproduction is one of the critical points in class dynamics where change in the whole structure can begin (Connell, 1972b: 57-58).

As with his understanding of ‘structures of beliefs’, Connell’s notion of ‘class structure’ was from the beginning linked to the concept of ‘pattern’: ‘[w]hen we talk about ‘class structure’ in Australia’, as Connell and Irving (1973: 31) noted, ‘we are
saying that the facts of power, privilege and poverty in this country have a definite pattern, one which is familiar over much of the world.' In an article on the character of the ruling class in Australia, which was later incorporated in *RCRC*, Connell (1975: 227) went on to grant these 'patterns' or 'structures' methodological primacy by arguing that the practices and attitudes of the ruling class can be understood 'only through a grasp of the structure of the situation'. Thus, Connell's early work on class was largely based on an extension of his understanding of 'structure' developed in the analysis of children's political thinking.

In 1977, with the publication of *RCRC*, Connell incorporates this notion of 'class structure' into a broader theory of class that draws mainly on Karl Marx's (1867-93) analysis of the history of capitalism in *Capital* and Noam Chomsky's (1957) 'generative grammar' and opposes categorical thinking in a more explicit way. Through an analogy to Chomsky's conception of language, Connell (1977a: 5; 1977b: 93) names his approach to class 'generative' and he argues that it shares none of the problems of categorical thinking. According to Connell's 'generative logic', the unit of analysis is no longer 'the class', understood as a category of people, but the class structure, understood in the activist and historicist way mentioned above. Furthermore, the stress is not on ahistorical categories and their empirically derived characteristics, but on the dynamic historical processes through which class structures generate new structures and social groupings are actively formed and transformed.

The formal model of generative theory which Connell draws on to produce a generative approach to class was developed by Chomsky in his 'transformational linguistics'. Chomsky's (1957) linguistics is largely an attempt to account for what he calls 'linguistic competence', that is for the capacity of speakers to generate intelligible sentences that are not identical to the ones that they have already heard. This is what he calls the 'creativity' or the 'creative aspect' of language and he argues that it is the product of an innate body of 'transformational rules' that make it possible
for speakers-hearers to produce or recognise an unbounded set of sentences from the existence of certain fixed ‘kernel sentences’. Thus, like Piaget’s theory of intellectual development, Chomsky’s transformational linguistics does not account for the development of speech in terms of passive adaptation to established linguistic norms. Rather, it has an activist dimension in that it sees speakers as competent linguistic actors capable of producing complex structures of sentences out of some elementary structures of ‘kernel sentences’ and a set of transformational rules. It also offers a way of accounting for the diachronic dimension of structures in that, unlike Piaget’s ‘constructivism’ which fails to grasp the historical context of children’s thought, it speaks of the production of historically novel structures of actual utterances. Yet, in some sense, this opening towards history is limited by the theory’s inbuilt ‘innatism’, by the belief in the existence of a transhistorical ‘formative kernel’ which makes the thesis of ‘innate linguistic competence’ possible and reveals the Cartesian origins of Chomsky’s (1966) thought but this does not prevent Connell from embracing the ‘creative and expansionist’ character of the theory. As Connell put it in retrospect when accounting for the origin’s of this notion of ‘structure’,

In Chomsky’s theory, logical transformations do not operate only within a closed system, as in Piaget’s and Levi-Strauss’s theorising. On the contrary, they are creative and expansionist, converting limited initial stages into the richness of actual spoken language... More than any other author I know he showed the capacity for growth and development within a structuralist paradigm (Connell, 2004: 14).

Thus, in the late 1970s, Connell thought that Chomsky’s model could serve as a basis for the development of a generative theory of class. ‘The model is useful’, as Connell (1977b: 93) put it, ‘in characterising the logic of any theory that speaks of the production of a structure out of another structure; and this plainly is what class theory does’. In other words, Chomsky’s model introduces a notion of ‘incompleteness’ and offers a way of specifying possible transformations of a given structure and, in doing so, it performs ‘a vital political function’ in that it ‘provide[s] a way of thinking the possibility of an end [of class society]’ (Connell, 1977b: 97). Of course Chomsky was
very well aware of the political implications of his generative linguistics. In fact, albeit developed independently of one another, his linguistic theory and political analysis, as Chomsky (1969: 31-32) explained in an interview published in the *New Left Review*, share a common emphasis on the fundamental human capacity for self-expression.

Yet, in explaining the character of a generative theory of class, Connell’s major example is taken from Marx’s historical analysis of capitalism rather than from Chomsky’s political theory. Although some versions of Marxism, as mentioned earlier, tend to rely on categorical understandings of class, Marx’s own theory, as seen by Connell (1977a: 5) in the introductory chapter of *RCRC*, is ‘the most important and fully developed instance of generative theory’. Connell concentrates exclusively on Marx’s (1867-1893) late work and argues that the analysis of capitalism developed in the three volumes of *Capital* is based not on a systematic exposition of class categories but on an analysis of class as a structure generated by some fundamental processes. Marx analyses social structure from the point of view of its reproduction and *Capital*, as Connell’s (1977b: 92-93) notes in a Chomskyan language, can be seen as ‘an attempt to detail the transformational rules according to which capitalist social relations are reproduced and, in their reproduction, changed’. These transformational rules are mainly the internal ‘laws’ of capitalist development (most notably the contradiction between the forces and the relations of productions; and the ‘cycle of activity’ that characterizes the worker-capitalist relationship and leads to the extraction of surplus value) which, like Chomsky’s ‘kernel sentences’, become the basis for specifying a series of possible transformations or what Connell (1977b: 94) calls ‘the lateral extension of class relations’ (such as the creation of unemployment, the tendency of the rate of profit to fall, over-production and crises). Thus, in examining Marx’s ‘generative logic’, Connell’s intention is not to formulate any concrete rules of transformation but to show that the main objective of class analysis is to offer an account of the generative historical processes through which structures
are produced out of previous structures; to incorporate a notion of 'incompleteness' and 'historical dynamics' into class analysis; and to offer a way for thinking about the possibility of historical change.

The conditions that make historical change possible are specified in a more concrete way in *Socialism and Labor*, a twenty-five page long pamphlet that deals mainly with questions of strategy (Connell, 1978). Therein, Connell defines capitalism as a 'system', a term he rarely employs and he finds somehow obscure (see Connell, 1987: 46), rather than a 'structure' but the main theoretical logic that underlies the analysis reinforces his notion of 'generative thinking': capitalism operates as a system that systematically produces problems like unemployment and environmental destruction, problems that are interrelated and inseparable (Connell, 1978: 2-6). Yet, this system also generates the possibility of its own transformation. As Connell's (1978: 7) stresses, '[capitalism] has made an alternative possible... [it] has given us the technology and the knowledge with which we could create a new civilization... We know have the possibility of a world without want...'.

Social change is therefore possible and desirable but not 'mechanical' and inevitable. Generative thinking makes it possible to theorise historical transformations but it does not 'guarantee[ ] that class society will end' (Connell, 1977b: 97) and this is why the question of practice and resistance becomes important. In fact, the last chapter of *RCRC* attempts to explain precisely why change may fail to occur. Therein, Connell (1977a: 205-222) focuses on capitalism's 'non-economic defences', on a series of issues pertaining to 'the general problem of hegemony' (on questions of cultural leadership and control; the winning of mass support for repressive social systems; and reproduction achieved through 'psychological mechanisms') and in doing so he introduces another important concept of structural analysis: the notion of 'situation'. The concept is introduced in the analysis of Gramsci's (1971) notion of 'hegemony', which Connell (1977a: 206) defines 'as a situation, a moment in history in which
control is effectively exercised'. As used by Connell, 'situation' refers to the structural constraints that operate in a generative process at a particular historical moment, to the historically specific circumstances to which practice responds and transforms. It is thus similar to the notion of 'conjuncture' in that it highlights the specificity of a historical moment. Yet, it places greater emphasis on the potential for change. That is, in defining hegemony as 'a situation', Connell emphasises not only the constraining dimensions of a particular historical moment, its intractabilities, but also the possibilities for 'counter-hegemonic activity' (Connell, 1977a: 220). The emphasis on counter-hegemony expresses the generative capacity of human practice in a given historical situation without collapsing into voluntarism.

The concept of structure as 'situation' is the product of the same logic in which structure is understood in terms of 'patterns' and 'traditions'. Yet, albeit interrelated, these three different understandings of structure are, analytically, irreducible to one another in that they emphasise different dimensions of structure or different (but complementary) ways of looking at structural processes. Whereas the notion of 'pattern' emphasises mainly active construction and synchronic interrelatedness and the notion of 'tradition' focuses primarily on historicity and on the diachronic dimension of structure, the concept of 'situation' stresses the elements of structural constraint and possibility. Taken together, these three concepts of structural analysis provide an account of structure as a historically and actively produced pattern of social relations that constrains social practice in a given situation and specifies the possibilities of transformation. Inherent in this definition is the idea that structure can be looked at both synchronically and diachronically, that it is not only a system of 'intractabilities' but also a system of possibilities, not merely the medium through which practice is constituted but also the outcome of practice.

To summarise so far, Connell's early work on class analysis (from the early 1970s to 1977) offers a systematic critique of the Australian version of the 'Orthodox
Consensus' in theories of class, which is seen as an instance of ‘categorical thinking’, focusing primarily on its empiricist methodology and on its subsequent inability to develop a notion of ‘structure’. In doing so, he formulates a ‘generative theory of class’, an approach to class analysis that focuses on the class structure as a whole, and he examines its active construction and historicity. It is thus hardly surprising that after 1977 Connell engages with the work of Althusserian Marxists in a systematic way: the Althusserian approach to class also developed in opposition to empiricist sociology. Yet, Althusserians proposed a radically different understanding of ‘class’, an understanding that was grounded on an objectivist, ‘scientist’ and anti-humanist notion of ‘structure’ and on a systematic neglect of concrete historical detail. In other words, in offering an alternative to subjectivism and empiricism, Althusserians collapsed into objectivism and ‘theoreticism’ (to be defined below). Far from assuming such a dualism, Connell’s post-1977 class analysis can be seen as a systematic, more explicit attempt to show that a critique of methodological subjectivism and empiricism does not necessarily involve embracing objectivism and structural determinism.

**IV The critique of Althusserian Marxism: ‘theoreticism’ and structuralism**

In a series of interlinked writings, published shortly after *RCRC*, Connell develops a systematic critique of the Althusserian approach to class (see, especially, Connell, 1979a; 1980; Connell and Irving, 1980). In these writings, the primary focus is neither on Louis Althusser (1969; 1971; 1973) as an individual thinker nor on the ‘Althusserian school’ as an isolated theoretical trend. Rather, by ‘Althusserian approach to class’ Connell refers to an Althusser-inspired framework of class analysis that was explicitly formulated by Nicos Poulantzas (1972; 1975), Guglielmo Carchedi (1977) and others and implicitly assumed even by critics of Althusserianism, like some members of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in Birmingham (see Connell, 1983c). Additionally, Connell approaches Althusserianism as an
intellectual response to particular political problems, as a highly politicised theory articulated within the context of two broader historical situations: as a post-war reaffirmation of ‘Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy’ and ‘scientism’ that constituted a methodological defence of the ‘vanguard party’ (Connell, 1979a: 101; 133); and as an instance of a ‘theory of social reproduction’ that attempts to explain the failure of the strategy of world revolution and the mechanisms that account for the continuity and reconstruction of capitalism (Connell, 1980: 141-142). In what follows, Connell’s ‘double contextualisation’ of the Althusserian approach to class will be used as a framework to analyse his critique of Althusserian objectivism on two interrelated levels: firstly, his critique of Althusserian methodology (scientism, theoreticism, anti- empiricism); and, secondly, his attack on the Althusserian conception of ‘structure’ (structuralism, anti-humanism, reproductionism). Approaching Connell’s critique of Althusserianism from the standpoint of this ‘double contextualization’ is also useful in grasping Connell’s attempt to transcend what I have previously called the methodological (empiricism/theoreticism) and theoretical (agency/structure) manifestations of the subjectivism/objectivism opposition (see Figure 1)\(^1\).

Methodological objectivism: the critique of anti- empiricism and ‘theoreticism’

As with his critique of empiricist understandings of class, the starting point of Connell’s critique of the Althusserian approach to class is methodological in character. In the introductory chapter of the first edition of *Class Structure in Australian History* (CSAH), which saw the light of day three years after the publication of *RCRC*, Connell and Irving (1980: 5) propose that the Althusserian concept of class is based on ‘the sharp distinction drawn by Althusser between empiricism and the kind of science represented by Marxism’. This distinction, as Connell (1979a) argues in an article on the Althusserian concept of class published a year earlier, is the product of Althusser’s anti- empiricist redefinition of the concept of ‘science’ itself. For Althusser, Connell (1979a: 104) explains, ‘the development of science is a process that occurs entirely within thought’ and, consequently, the

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products of scientific practice require no external confirmation through ‘any form of correspondence with contemporary facts (the fallacy of empiricism)’. Thus, in examining the Althusserian doctrine of class, Connell takes as a point of departure Althusser’s idea of the ‘radical inwardness’ of theoretical practice: his anti-empiricist insistence that verification is internal, not external to theory (Althusser and Balibar, 1970: 60).12

Connell (1979a: 105) argues that one of the most important implications of the Althusserian doctrine of science is that it ‘places a heavy stress on the primacy of theory, and indeed the most abstract levels of theory’. In the ‘Forward to the Italian Edition’ of Reading Capital and later in his Essays in Self Criticism, Althusser described this ‘primacy of theory’, the ‘one-sided insistence on theory’ that characterised his earlier work, as a ‘theoreticist deviation’. He admitted that it was an ‘erroneous tendency’ which he ‘pointed out... [and] gave it a name: theoreticism’ (Althusser, 1975: 105; 124; Althusser and Balibar, 1970: 7-8). Connell’s analysis shows that this ‘theoreticist tendency’ pervades the Althusserian analysis of class structure. As a result, the Althusserian understanding of class is based on abstract conceptual analysis, on the elaboration of theoretical concepts constructed ‘at a good distance from historical detail’ (Connell, 1979a: 106).

For Althusserians, the starting point and primary unit of analysis is the most general forms of social organization, what they call ‘modes of production’. The concept of a ‘mode of production’, as Connell (1979: 110) notes, is to be understood not as an actual society or, as Althusser (1969: 110) thought, as a ‘scientific discovery’ that reveals ‘a deeper, more concrete reality’. Rather, it is a theoretical abstraction, an ‘ideal type concept[] a la Weber’ (Connell, 1979a: 106). Yet, it is not an economistic concept in that ‘modes of production’ are seen as being composed of different and relatively autonomous ‘levels’ or ‘instances’. In the case of Poulantzas’ (1975: 22) theory of class, for example, the concept of mode of production ‘embraces relations of
production, political relations and ideological relations'. On this abstract level of
analysis, classes are conceptualised not as 'empirical groups of individuals', as in the
empiricist understandings of class that Connell encountered in his analysis of
Australian historiography and sociology, but as the occupants of 'objective places' in
a given mode of production (Poulantzas, 1975: 17, 14). In the capitalist mode of
production, these 'class places', which correspond to what Poulantzas (1975: 14) calls
'the structural determination of class', are defined with reference to ownership of the
means of production and to relations 'of political and ideological
domination/subordination'. Thus, Poulantzas (1975: 19) is able to talk about 'the
place of the dominant and exploiting class' and argue that these 'class places' (like the
mode of production itself) are simultaneously economic, political and ideological.
Furthermore, the main focus of class analysis is not the agents that compose classes
and their practices but the 'objective places' they occupy, 'places which are
independent of the will of these agents' and denote the structural determination of
class practices (Poulantzas, 1975: 14).

Connell argues that the objectivist understanding of class as a 'place' developed by
Althusserians is, in some important respects, an antidote to the subjectivism embodied
in empiricist notions of class. As he put it,

It avoids 'classes' defining themselves by the bootstraps, i.e. by their own images of
class-ness, and thus dissolving into subjectivity as they do in much of the modern
survey research on class...And it avoids 'classes' which are shapeless sets of people
who merely share a common characteristic, and thus have no necessary connection with
an account of social structure, as in much of the 'social stratification' literature...
(Connell, 1979a: 113).

The notion of class as a place, in other words, stresses the objective dimension of
structure, 'the intractability of historical situations' (Connell and Irving, 1980: 6), and
prevents class analysis from collapsing into a subjectivist and 'structureless' account
of 'class differences'. In doing so, Althusserian class analysis escapes two of the main
problems that Connell identified in his critique of categoricalism (summarised in the
previous section): it offers a solution to the problem of arbitrariness in that, by
distinguishing classes theoretically rather than empirically, it defines the boundaries
between them in an objectivist, less ambiguous and more consistent way; it also
challenges the power-blindness of stratificationist sociology in that, by defining
classes in terms of their places in a system of objective exploitative relations, it brings
them into a relationship of necessary antagonism and, for Althusserians, it is precisely
this antagonistic ‘relation that is the object of theory and the basis of the concept of
class...’ (Connell and Irving, 1980: 5). This is precisely what Althusser (1975: 49-50)
and Poulantzas (1975: 14) mean when they insist that ‘classes exist only in the class
struggle’.

Yet, the Althusserian concept of class does not solve the third problem encountered in
the analysis of empiricist history and stratificationist sociology (ahistoricity) and this
is precisely where Connell’s critique of Althusserianism begins. By concentrating on
the most abstract forms of social organization, Althusserianism discourages concrete
historical analysis. According to Connell (1979a: 123), the ‘theoreticist deviation’ and
the subsequent concentration on abstract conceptual analysis reveal that ‘[w]hat is
actually realised in the [Althusserian] theory of class... is a radical ahistoricity’:

History becomes a kaleidoscope, whose pieces can be re-arranged by a twirl of the
conceptual barrel. Historical events can legitimately be picked up if the arc ‘relevant
illustrations of the subject under investigation’, and put down again if they are not...
History can be schematised at will... Indeed history becomes to a considerable extent
redundant...: the class already exists, ahead of time, as a possibility within the
theoretical system.

The ‘ahistoricity’ that Connell criticises is the result of Althusser’s insistence that the
understanding of ‘history’ is a theoretical rather than empirical question. ‘The
knowledge of history’, as Althusser famously stated with reference to Baruch
Spinoza’s epistemology, ‘is no more historical [in the empirical sense of the term]
than the concept of sugar is sweet' (Althusser and Balibar, 1970: 106). Thus, 'history' becomes a theoretical question, unconnected from concrete empirical history.

In order to address the historical dimensions of class, as Connell (1979a: 108) goes on to argue, Althusserians are forced to draw distinctions within their original model through a 'top-down method of argument', through an argument that proceeds from the abstract to the concrete. Thus, Poulantzas distinguishes between the abstract level of the 'mode of production' and the more concrete level of 'social formation', which refers to the 'articulation' of different modes of production (e.g. feudal, capitalist, communist) in a concrete, singular society at a particular moment in time. Furthermore, whereas the former refers to field of the 'structural determination' of class relations where classes occupy objective 'places', the latter refers to the field of the 'conjuncture' where classes occupy 'positions', develop strategies and form alliances and 'power blocs' (Poulantzas, 1975: 14-15; 21-23). The treatment of class in the field of the conjuncture appears to be historical but, as Connell argues, the 'field distinction' is purely a definitional, linguistic one (Connell, 1979a: 123-124). It is 'more a matter of metaphor than anything else' and, in the final analysis, 'it is plain that some kind of priority is being attributed to the categories that arise in the abstract analysis of the mode of production over the categories yielded by the concrete complexities of history' (Connell, 1979a: 112).

Thus, having 'no historical method of proof' and no empirical grounding, Althusserians 'constantly fall back on sheer speculation' (Connell, 1979a: 124). To conceal the fact their positions are constructed by means of definition, speculation and postulation, and to make their arguments appear more forceful and convincing, they are repeatedly forced into a 'functionalist logic' and into what Connell calls 'as if' and 'only-an-effect' arguments:
In functionalism, things are analysed in terms of the contribution they make to the wellbeing or continued existence of a larger system of a given kind (Connell, 1979a: 127). In the ‘as if’ argument, the missing but required facts are conjured up in mid-air; in the ‘only-an-effect’ argument, the present but unpleasant facts are conjured away’ (Connell, 1979a: 130).

As a result, far from producing concrete theoretical analysis rooted in knowledge of actual historical situations, Althusserianism yields nothing but an abstract conceptual system that rarely touches ground, a series of definitional arguments and postulations ‘more reminiscent of a crossword puzzle than a social inquiry’ (Connell and Irving, 1992: 5).

This ahistorical, theoreticist and anti-empiricist methodology, as Connell goes on to note, has important political implications. It leads, ‘indirectly but inevitably’, to an elitist political theory that justifies the vanguard party (Connell, 1979a: 133). Not only is the Althusserian theory of class articulated on such a high level of abstraction that makes it inaccessible to the majority of workers and thus reinforces ‘the hegemony of the educated within workers’ parties’ (Connell, 1979a: 134), but its emphasis on science and on the priority of theory provides a methodological justification for a revolutionary vanguard who is presented as the bearer of Marxist science and is thus capable of articulating a political theory independently of the experiences of the workers (Connell, 1979a: 137). Thus, theoreticism in methodology and vangardism in politics go hand in hand.

To recapitulate, for Connell, ‘theoreticism’ does not offer an adequate methodological alternative to empiricism. Rather, it leads to the other extreme of the ‘subjectivist-objectivist divide’ in that, whereas empiricism ‘constitutes the immediately given as the unique object of study’ (Connell, 1977a: 22) and directs attention away from issues of power and structural determination, theoreticism ignores empirical-historical reality altogether and takes the ideas of abstract theory and structural determination to
their extreme. It replaces, in other words, empiricism's 'fetishism of facts' with a fetishism of 'theory' and 'structure'.

Connell attempts to transcend the antinomy between class as a 'category' and class as a 'place' and the subsequent opposition between empiricism and theoreticism through concrete historical analysis. Consistent with his activist understanding of 'structure' examined in the previous section of this chapter, he proposes that one should think of 'structure' not as a 'system of determination', abstracted from history, but in terms of the practices that compose it, in terms of what people actually do in concrete historical situations, and in terms of the possibilities and intractabilities embodied in those situations (Connell, 1992: 5). To do so, according to Connell, involves not only a systematic study of historical situations (which he undertakes in RCRC and CSAH) but also a theory of practice (which he develops out of his encounter with subjectivist Marxism to be analysed after considering his critique of Althusserian structuralism). And this is precisely what Althusserianism lacks: 'a systematic and sophisticated theory of practice' (Connell, 1982a: 65). Connell's critique of Althusserian structuralism, of Althusserians' conception of people and practices as the passive outcomes or determinations of structure, to which I now turn, is both an extension and a culmination of his critique of theoreticism.

**Althusserian structuralism: the critique of anti-humanism and 'reproductionism'**

Althusser's critique of empiricism and his subsequent 'theoreticist deviation' was accompanied by an equally objectivist and no less ahistorical conception of the relationship between structure and agency. That is, his attempt to establish a stronger 'scientific foundation' for Marxism was also characterised by a systematic attack on what he termed 'theoretical humanism': a predominantly Hegelian tradition within Marxism that had 'emerged from the German left, initially from Rosa Luxemburg and [Franz] Mehring', and then, after the 1917 Revolution, from a whole series of
theoreticians’, most notably Korsch, Lukacs and Gramsci, who were committed to a ‘humanist interpretation of Marx’ (Althusser and Balibar, 1970: 120). According to Althusser, ‘theoretical humanism’ is based on a ‘subject-centred’ conception of history (Elliott, 1987: 61), on the assumption that ‘history is the result of the action (what is done by) a subject’ (Althusser, 1975: 47). In Reading Capital, he exemplified this humanist conception of history by citing Gramsci’s (1917) celebrated article ‘The revolution against Capital’ which proclaimed that the Russian revolution of 1917 was not the necessary product of deterministic historical laws which mechanical Marxists had attempted to establish through their interpretation of Marx’s Capital. It was rather the outcome of a revolutionary strategy and the conscious actions of the Bolsheviks themselves (Althusser and Balibar, 1970: 120). However, for Althusser (1976: 59), the main representative or the ‘Master’ of humanist Marxism was Jean-Paul Sartre, ‘the philosopher of human liberty’ whose flirting with existentialism led him to emphasise human agency and people’s freedom to act.

Althusser argued that ‘theoretical humanism’ is based on subjectivist philosophical foundations and it has fatal political consequences. In philosophy, it ‘implies an idealism of the essence’ (Althusser, 1969: 226) and ‘a humanist universalism’ (Althusser and Balibar, 1970: 141) in that it assumes a universal human essence which is the subject of history and determines its direction. In politics, it leads to ‘voluntarism’ in that it grants absolute primacy to ‘political consciousness and determination’ (Althusser and Balibar, 1970: 138). In an attempt to do away with ‘the fetishism of ‘man’ [sic]’ (Althusser, 1976: 51) proposed by ‘theoretical humanism’, Althusser goes on to define Marxism as a form of ‘theoretical anti-humanism’ (Althusser, 1969: 229-230). By ‘theoretical anti-humanism’, as Elliot (1987: 63) explains, Althusser means that people ‘are not the constitutive subjects of history, but constituted subjects in history’. The concept of ‘the individual subject’ that is assumed to ‘make history’ is thus nothing but a myth of bourgeois ideology. Individuals are the outcome rather than the cause of historical processes in that every
social formation generates corresponding forms of subjectivity. Althusser (1976: 51) is thus in a position to state that history is 'a process without a subject' and to emphasise that it is structural causality (Althusser and Balibar, 1970) and class struggle (Althusser, 1976) rather than agency (in the humanist sense of the term) that constitute the 'motor of history'.

Althusser's anti-humanism set him apart from all forms of subjectivist, praxis-centred Marxism became increasingly popular in the 1960s. Yet, there was, as Elliot (1987: 62) put it, 'a convergence between the astringent anti-humanism of structuralism and his own Marxist positions'. Paradoxically, whereas within Marxism the 1960s was characterised by a return to the 'young Marx' and by a 'humanist revival' of revolutionary theory and a subsequent emphasis on action or praxis, in the broader area of (mainly French) social sciences the same decade was marked by the rise of 'structuralism'. Althusser appropriated some positions from structuralism (especially from Ferdinand de Saussure, Claude Levi-Strauss, and Jacques Lacan) and turned them against subjectivist Marxism in order to strengthen his anti-humanist positions. It is in this sense that he regarded Levi-Strauss to be 'more of an immediate ally to historical materialism than Sartre' (Elliott, 1987: 62).

In this way, this 'young pup called structuralism', as Althusser (1976: 125; 127) put it in retrospect, 'slipped between [his] legs' and constituted his second deviation 'buried beneath' the 'theoreticist deviation'. Yet this second deviation is, in some essential ways, incompatible with the 'anti-Cuvierian' notion of structure that Connell developed through his interpretation of Piaget's and Chomsky's work. It misses, according to Connell, the activist dimension of structure and this is precisely where his critique of the Althusserian account of the relationship between structure and agency begins. Just as Althusser's 'theoreticist deviation' leads to an objectivist methodological position that privileges abstract theory at the expense of concrete empirical and historical analysis, his 'structuralist deviation' and the critique of
'theoretical humanism' that accompanies it direct attention away from class practice, from 'what various groups of workers actually do in their daily lives' (Connell, 1979a: 115). People as active subjects 'or indeed as collectivities' are excluded in the Althusserian model because the object of analysis is but the objective system of relations that governs the lives of those people (Connell, 1979a: 103). People appear to be the puppets of social forces or, in Althusserian language, the 'bearers' or 'supports' of structures. 'In the Althusserian world', as Connell (1979a: 137) put it, even 'the revolution itself- a transformation of the structures, scientifically speaking-seems to occur behind the backs of the workers'. As a result, Althusserian structuralism leads to a politics of class that neglects the importance of spontaneity and popular mobilisation.

In an article on 'reproduction theory' that was published a year after his essay on the Althusserian understanding of class, Connell (1980) argues that Althusser's neglect of agency and the possibilities of active transformation is also reflected in his theory of social reproduction. By 'reproduction theory', Connell (1980: 140-142) refers to an internally differentiated body of socialist literature that emerged during the late 1960s and 1970s in order to account for the post-war reconstruction and reproduction of capitalism and for the failure and containment of resistance. Althusser's (1971) theory of ideology and the state along with Pierre Bourdieu and J. C. Passeron's (1977) work on education and Henri Lefebvre's (1976) analysis of urban space are cited as 'the three most influential' theories of reproduction (Connell, 1980: 142). Within this broader framework, Connell sees Althusser's theory of reproduction as the most 'closed' and the one most abstracted from practice. Contrary to Lefebvre's idea that reproduction is an open-ended process achieved in the course of social struggles, Althusser 'takes the 'capitalist mode of production' as an already-constructed and logically coherent system' whose reproduction is not a goal of strategy but is taken for granted in theoretical analysis (Connell, 1980: 144). And, unlike Bourdieu and Passeron's account of reproduction which (especially as it was subsequently
theoretically formalised in Bourdieu's (1977) *Outline of a Theory of Practice*) stresses that the reproduction of structures is explicable in terms of a perpetuation of social practices, Althusser's understanding of reproduction is totally abstracted from practice (Connell, 1980: 145). As a result, Althusser treats 'social structure as something persisting in its identity behind the backs of mortal people, who are inserted into their places by a cosmic cannery called Reproduction' (Connell, 1980: 149). Thus, the Althusserian concept of reproduction misses, according to Connell, not only a notion of 'open-endedness' and contingency but also the connection with practice.

Yet, for Connell, it is not only Althusser that fails to develop an adequate notion of practice. The under-theorisation of practice is a flaw of reproduction theory in general and it reflects the loss of 'confidence in what radical activity can do' and the deep pessimism shared by many Marxists in the 1970s (Connell, 1980: 154). According to Connell (1980: 149), even Bourdieu (1977), whose 'theory of practice' places much emphasis on practice as 'invention within limits', is only 'half-way there' because he fails to grasp the connection between action and temporality. He focuses, as Connell notes resounding his critique of Piaget's 'idea of the reversibility of thought' explicated earlier, on reproduction at the expense of production, on stability and identity rather than temporal 'succession':

[T]he actions people improvise occur in real historical time, on such-and-such an occasion in year \( x \) at place \( y \). Historical time itself forbids an identity between the practice (and the structure being constructed by it) of the 6th August and that of the 5th... The continuity, the persistence through time, with which theory is concerned, does not have the ontological structure of a reproduced identity, but that of an intelligible succession. It is not a relation of similarity between the structure today and the structure yesterday that is the point, but a relation of practice between them, the way one was produced out of the other (Connell, 1980: 149).

Thus, in criticising the theoretical idea of 'reproduction', Connell returns to some central concepts of his 'generative logic': the notions of active construction and
historicity. In this way, he is in a position to argue that the concept of reproduction is highly problematic. 'Reproduction' never occurs, 'it cannot occur' because practice has irreversible outcomes. It generates new situations out of the previous ones and, even if nothing else has happened, ‘everyone is a bit more experienced, the working class has had another strategic defeat, and the workers and their bosses are one day nearer to dying’ (Connell, 1980: 149). In class analysis, as Connell (1980: 150) concludes, one should speak of 'a process of generation', not of reproduction.

In conclusion, Connell’s critique of the Althusserian concept of class centres on a set of interrelated methodological and theoretical issues. As regards Althusser’s methodological critique of empiricism, Connell argues that it is an advance over the subjectivist and apolitical notion of class proposed by stratificationist sociologists and empiricist historians, mainly because it deals with questions of power. Yet, it does not offer a complete understanding of class because Althusserians’ exclusive and one-sided focus on theoretical analysis leads to a systematic neglect of concrete historical/empirical reality and to a subsequent methodological defence of the vanguard party. Similarly, just as Althusser’s methodology collapses into theoreticism and vanguardism, his understanding of the relationship between structure and agency collapses into ‘Cuvierian’ structuralism and reproductionism. ‘Structure’ is seen as an objective and closed system that constructs subjects and determines their practices and undergoes a process of reproduction independently of people’s will. Thus, Althusserianism privileges not only theory at the expense of empirical investigation but also structure at the expense of agency. Connell’s attempt to reconcile these methodological and theoretical oppositions reaches its culmination in the early 1980s when he encounters, and critically engages with, some more activist and historicist understandings of class.
Althusserians’ one-sided focus on the structural and objectivist dimensions of class analysis found its antithesis in two more activist and historicist understandings of class. In *The Making of the English Working Class*, the British historian Edward P. Thompson (1968) proposed that class is not a ‘structure’ or a ‘category’ but a historical phenomenon, an actively produced historical relationship. Additionally, Jean Paul Sartre’s (1976) late work proposed a more sophisticated ‘practice-based theory of class’. His *Critique of Dialectical Reason* argues that class can be understood as a multi-layered and multi-dimensional type of social practice. Like Althusser’s Marxism, Thompson’s historical analysis and Sartre’s ‘theory of practice’ were not isolated intellectual works. They were, according to Connell, central parts of two broader academic developments. Thompson (1968) was ‘the most distinguished representative’ of ‘the new labour history’ (Connell, 1983b: 169), which was the product of a shift in historiography during the late 1960s and the 1970s. This development, which was also reflected in the writings of H.G. Gutman (1976) in the United States, directed attention towards the investigation of class ‘as both lived reality and structuring process’ and emphasised the active role of the working class and the ‘interplay of experience and action’ (Connell and Irving, 1980: 12-13; Connell, 1983b: 168). Sartre’s late work reflected a contemporaneous set of developments in theoretical sociology ‘that can be loosely described as the development of a theory of practice’ (Connell, 1983b: 169). This second development, which was also embodied in different forms in the writings of Bourdieu (1977) and Giddens (1979), constituted an attempt to theorise the interplay of structure and agency (Connell, 1983b: 168; Connell and Irving, 1992: 5). As part of these two broader academic traditions, Thompson and Sartre’s work made it possible for Connell to attempt to overcome the empiricism/theoreticism and agency/structure oppositions. Yet, these subjectivist Marxist conceptions of class, and especially Thompson’s work, displayed a tendency towards voluntarism. Hence, Connell’s
project was not to juxtapose subjectivist Marxist conceptions of class to
Althusserianism but to synthesise the two perspectives in such a way as to develop the
activist and subjectivist dimensions of class without collapsing into voluntarism.

E.P. Thompson: historical analysis and agency

In contrast to Althusserian's one-sided focus on abstract theoretical analysis and
structural determination, Thompson's work embodies an understanding of class that
emphasises the importance of concrete historical analysis and stresses the element of
agency involved in the making of social classes. In the late 1970s, Thompson (1978)
published *The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays*, which contains a systematic and
explicit critique of Althusserian Marxism. Yet, it is on Thompson's (1968) earlier
work, *The Making of the English Working Class*, that Connell draws to develop his
theory of class. Therein Thompson's (1968) theoretical understanding of class is
articulated through a rich historical analysis but his explicit target is not Althusser
himself. Rather, Thompson (1968: 8-13) attacks what he saw as serious
misinterpretations of Marx's historical writings and some 'prevailing orthodoxies'.
Thompson (1968: 10), that the understanding of class embodied in these orthodoxies is a ‘static’ one, i.e. incapable of dealing with historical change.

Against the reified and static concept of class proposed by these orthodoxies, Thompson articulates a historicist and activist notion of class. He argues that class owes as much to agency as to conditioning. In this view, class cannot be studied from a synchronic, static or ahistorical perspective, as in the Althusserian tradition and in some of the orthodoxies Thompson attacks. ‘If we stop history at a given point, then there are no classes but simply a multitude of individuals with a multitude of experiences’ (Thompson, 1968: 11). Rather, the notion of class entails a historical relationship that can be studied through an analysis of real class situations in concrete historical contexts. Furthermore, in Thompson’s rich historical analysis, the emphasis is on the complex process through which the English working class came into being in the years between 1780 and 1832. This process included changes in property relations, new techniques of mobilization and social struggle as well as the emergence of a new language for social relations (Connell, 2004: 16). Far from being taken for granted in theoretical analysis, ‘class’ is here identified with the process through which people live their own history. In Thompson’s (1968: 11, 213) words, class is a ‘process’, an ‘event’, not a ‘thing’ or a ‘category’.

Connell and Irving came across Thompson’s historical analysis during the 1970s while working on the project that resulted in the publication of CSAH. ‘Irving and I were struck’, as Connell (2004: 16) has recently put it, ‘by the contrast between [Althusserianism] and the new labour history, epitomised in Thompson’s famous book *The Making of the English Working Class*’. That is, Thompson’s focus on agency and concrete historical analysis appeared to offer an antidote to Althusserian structuralism and theoreticism. In CSAH, Connell and Irving (1980: 9) do not suggest that Thompson’s work solves all the problems identified in the Althusserian approach to class but they do argue that it ‘moves a long way towards this’. It does so by
circumventing the problem of categoricalism and theoreticism. Yet, according to Connell, Thompson's understanding of structure and his notion of agency are underdeveloped.

One of the most important features of Thompson's work, as Connell and Irving (1980: 9-10) argue, is that it does not take class categories for granted. The characteristics that categorical understandings of class measure to define class categories (e.g. differences in wealth or prestige) are, in Thompson's work, seen as the 'historically produced material of experience, which are acted on... in a process of construction out of which a class as a category of people emerges' (Connell and Irving, 1980: 10). Thus, 'class' is identified with the active, historical process of its construction rather than with an ahistorical and reified category of people. It is actively and historically produced rather than passively constituted. The production of categories is now tightly linked to the actions of real people and to concrete historical time and this is precisely why Thompson's work challenges Althusserian's one-sided focus on theoretical analysis. The focus on history and agency forecloses the possibility of producing an a priori list of classes through abstract theoretical analysis. History is no longer 'known before the facts [are] gathered', as in the Althusserian approach (Connell, 2004: 16). It is therefore not a surprise that the title of Thompson's (1978) later critical essay on Althusserianism ('The Poverty of Theory') reflects precisely this hostility to a one-sided focus on theory. Similarly, the title of Connell's (1983a) edited collection of essays, Which Way is Up?, in which his critique of Althusserianism was re-printed, reflects his 'own ambivalence about abstract social theory' (Connell, 2004: 16) and reveals one of the reasons for his interest in Thompson's work.

Yet, although Thompson manages to circumvent Althusser's 'theoreticist deviation' without falling into empiricism or categoricalism, his understanding of 'structure' is limited (Connell and Irving, 1980: 10) and his concept of 'agency' 'remains
unsystematic’ (Connell, 1982a: 65). The main limitation of Thompson’s work is that it focuses on one class while class structure always implies at least two, existing in a certain relationship (Connell, 2004: 16). Thompson does recognise that ‘class is a relationship’, that classes exist and come into being together as parts of a class structure and that we cannot have two distinct classes (Thompson, 1968: 9; Connell and Irving, 1980: 11) but this recognition is not built into the design of his historical analysis. Rather, Thompson’s work focuses merely on the working class, a problem that Connell’s (2004: 14-15) calls ‘studying down’, i.e. studying only the powerless (the opposite of what Connell calls ‘studying up’). Thus, Thompson’s work misses a main dimension of structural analysis: the notion of ‘synchronic interrelatedness’, which, as it has been already noted, has been central in Connell’s understanding of structure. In contrast to this limitation of Thompson’s work, Connell and Irving’s (1980) CSAH grasps class dynamics by ‘studying the working class and the ruling class at the same time’ and thus incorporating a notion of social structure and interrelatedness into the analysis (Connell, 2004: 16-17). In Connell and Irving’s (1980: 10) historical narrative, what comes into being is not a single class, not even two classes, but ‘a-class-in-relationship-with-another-class’, a class structure.

Thompson’s under-theorisation of ‘structure’ is part of his more general tendency towards subjectivism. If Thompson’s historical approach is pushed to an extreme, as Connell and Irving (1980: 10-11) explain, ‘class’ becomes a ‘fluency which evades analysis’ and it is thus not at all clear at what point in the process of class formation a class is finally constituted. As a result, ‘[t]here seem no grounds of principle for choosing a particular cut-off point in this process, any more than there are for defining strata on a dimension in stratification theory’ (Connell and Irving, 1980: 11). This ‘total fluency’, Connell and Irving (1980:11) go on to argue, can be avoided by reintroducing the structuralist notion of ‘situation’ which expresses the intractability of a given set of relationships, a given historical moment in which classes have a real existence as groups of people.
Similar conceptual and theoretical difficulties, as Connell (1982a) argues in the introduction of his paper on Sartre’s theory of practice published shortly after the publication of CSAH, can be found in Thompson’s understanding of agency. Thompson’s notion of ‘agency’ is intended to explain historical change and his analysis provides ‘brilliant insights into the process of class mobilization’, the motor of historical change (Connell, 1982a: 65). It thus provides an antidote to Althusserian ‘reproductionism’. Yet, this concept of agency provides ‘very little grip on the problem of class de-mobilization’, on issues pertaining to the decline of working class politics and to social reproduction (Connell, 1982a: 65). As a result, Thompson’s understanding of agency appears to be an inversion rather than a solution of the problem of ‘reproductionism’ and thus equally one-sided in that it can explain change but not stability, production but not reproduction.

In short, in his joint work with Irving and in some scattered comments in other papers, Connell argues that Thompson’s understanding of class ‘moves a long way towards’ reconciling theoretical analysis and empirical investigation and it does so in a way that is fully historical and non-categorical. Yet, Thompson’s understanding of the relationship between structure and agency is limited both because the notion of structure as ‘synchronic interrelatedness’ is not fully appreciated and because his understanding of agency appears to be one-sided, focusing on production but not reproduction. Here, Connell seems to join forces with Perry Anderson (1980: 16-58) who, in his rather more systematic critique of Thompson’s work, argues that Thompson’s attack on Althusserian structuralism and objectivism is characterised by a tendency towards voluntarism and subjectivism, a tendency that manifests itself in his overemphasis on an under-theorised and simplistic notion of agency and in his neglect of structural constraint. It is precisely in an attempt to deal with problems like these that Connell (1982a) turns to Sartre’s systematic and sophisticated theory of practice.
J-P Sartre’s theory of practice

In the 1960s and 1970s, Jean-Paul Sartre’s (1958; 1976) name was associated mainly with existentialism and phenomenology and with concepts like freedom and angst (Connell, 1982a: 63-67). Within Marxism, it was the image of Sartre as a theorist of freedom and subjectivity that was dominant. Althusser’s (1976: 59) characterization of Sartre as the ‘Master’ of humanist Marxism played an important role in popularising this image. Yet, in Connell’s (1982a: 66) view, such an image does Sartre ‘a serious disservice’. Even in his early work, and particularly in Being and Nothingness, which deals mainly with questions of subjectivity and consciousness, Sartre (1958) does not treat consciousness as separate from social relations. Rather, Sartre’s work is to be seen as a systematic attempt, culminating in his unfinished Critique of Dialectical Reason (Sartre, 1976), to theorise the relationship between structure and agency through a sophisticated ‘theory of practice’ that grasps class categories as ‘both passively suffered and actively constructed’ (Connell, 1982a: 74).

The key element of Sartre’s approach to class and the medium through which he theorises the relationship between structure and agency, according to Connell’s (1982a: 72) interpretation, is his emphasis ‘on the different levels or structures of practice’. Connell’s (1982a: 67-79) analysis of Sartre’s theory of practice concentrates mainly on one of the last sections of the Critique of Dialectical Reason where Sartre (1976: 678-710) offers an account of the working class as ‘series’, ‘fused group’ and ‘institution’. These different forms of ‘class-being’ correspond to different forms of class practice.

A ‘series’ exists when a number of individuals are in one and the same situation and are thus loosely associated with one another through their relationship to an external structure (e.g. a number of individuals waiting for an airplane in an airport; or the
audience for a radio broadcast). This 'external structure' or what Sartre (1976: 318-320) calls 'the practico-inert field' is those aspects of social reality which are the products of past human practice and which oppose, or set limits to, subsequent human activities. The practico-inert field imposes on the individuals involved a 'unity-in-dispersion', a passive and temporary unity defined by a logic external to them, which is what Sartre (1976: 256-341) calls 'seriality'. Hence, on this level, class is passivity: 'a collective which receives its statute from the practico-inert field (through and by productive relations with other classes) (Sartre, 1976: 685).

Yet, for Sartre, 'seriality' is not the only form of class-being. Out of it arise two more advanced kinds of class groupings: the 'fused group' and the 'institutionalised group'. The former is achieved in situations when a seriality, based on the recognition of a common danger and on the realization of common interests, is transformed into a 'group-in-fusion' capable of challenging or transcending the existing situation through collective praxis, as in the case of a demonstration, a strike or a revolution (Sartre, 1976: 687). The latter involves moving beyond the fused group itself and acquiring new types of unity and ossification by institutionalising sovereignty, an in the case of parties and unions (Sartre, 1976: 591). These two kinds of class groupings, as Sartre argues, are not separate or independent from the series. They relate to the series ontologically in that their 'class-being' lies outside themselves in the series. 'Their statute', as Sartre (1976: 686) put it, 'is that their being-outside-themselves (the only group being) lies in the series from which they have emerged and which sustains them'. The practice of class groupings is thus simultaneously passive (in the sense that it is articulated within the practico-inert field) and creative.

In Sartre's (1976: 686) account of the 'triple reality of a developing historical class', Connell finds a way of surpassing one-sided conceptions of class, conceptions that dichotomise between structure and agency or production and reproduction. As Connell notes in a paragraph that deserves to be quoted in full, Sartre's account of the
internal complexity of class practice encompasses the one-sided understandings of
class proposed by stratificationism, Althusser and Thompson but it synthesises them
in such a way as to transcend the dichotomous oppositions involved:

At one level, [...] class can be understood in the way stratificationism and categorical
Marxism conceive of it ('pure passive dispersal') [series]. At another level, in the way
Thompson and some kinds of radicalism do ('pure combativity') [fused group]; and at
another, in terms of unions, companies, parties and governments [institution]. But each
of these is inadequate, and simply adding them together is also inadequate. Class, fully
understood, has to be understood as the developing relation among all these forms of
practice, the way they give rise to each other, oppose each other, and collapse into each
other, in the movement we call history (Connell, 1982a: 69).

As Connell’s stress on the relation among different types of class practice indicates,
class is not merely a group of people defined passively by an external structure, not
simply an activist collective or a party but the ‘moving relation’ (Sartre, 1976: 690)
between these different forms of practice. Thus, the emphasis must be on ‘the way
deliberately class-organised practices… arise out of a field of inertia’ (Connell,
1982a: 72), on the manner in which seriality is negated and transcended, but also on
the on the process through which ‘each kind of group and organization can relapse
into seriality’ (Connell, 1982a: 70). In this way, Sartre’s theory of practice offers a
way of explaining the relationship between mobilization and de-mobilization,
production and reproduction. It sustains, as Connell (1982a: 72) put it, a notion of
‘radical creativity’ without ignoring the ‘weight of inertia in history’.

Sartre’s theory of practice is consistent with the main dimensions of Connell’s
understanding of structure and this is precisely why it captured Connell’s attention in
the early 1980s. The notion of the ‘intractability of historical situations’ and the idea
of ‘active construction’ that Connell encountered in his analysis of Althusser’s and
Thompson’s (as well as Piaget’s) work respectively are, in Sartre’s theory of practice,
expressed in a combined and more complex way through the focus on the ‘practico-
Inert field' and on the forms of class groupings and institutions that arise out of it. Far from being one-sidedly identified with either structure or agency, class is now understood in terms of a set of collective practices that are constrained and constituted by the practico-inert class structure (which is itself produced by previous practice) and at the same time respond to it and negate or transcend it. Thus, this takes Connell back to the main principles of 'generative thinking' which he had previously encountered in Chomsky's linguistics: the idea that structures are actively produced out of previous structures (the active negation of the practico-inert field) and the notions of incompleteness and historical dynamics (the 'moving relation' between different forms of practice).

In short, in his analysis of Sartre's theory of practice, Connell suggests that the structure/agency dichotomy generated in the 'Althusser-Thompson debate' can be overcome by understanding 'practice' as being simultaneously passive and creative and by theorising 'structure' in terms of the practices that compose and potentially transform it. Structure, then, is a precondition for practice but it is also the outcome and object of practice. And practice cannot escape structure but it can be deliberately turned against it. Similar accounts of the relationship between structure and agency can be found in the work of Bourdieu (1977) and Giddens (1979) but Connell is less interested in this literature because, as he has repeatedly argued, it reconciles structure and agency in a rather problematic way (Connell, 1982a; 1987; 2004). On the one hand, Bourdieu's theory of practice, as noted in the section on Althusserian structuralism, collapses into 'reproductionism' while, on the other hand, Giddens' notion of the 'duality of structure' is articulated in such a high level of abstraction that it displays a tendency towards 'theoreticism' or even 'idealism' (Connell, 2004: 21-22). Sartre's theory of practice circumvents these problems but this does not mean that it is flawless. According to Connell (1982a: 72-74), Sartre's theory of practice is grounded on an essentialist, ahistorical and highly problematic notion of 'scarcity' (the 'necessary rivalry for resources', which is seen as the general condition of human
society) and on a systematic neglect of the agency of the body (which Sartre reduces ‘to the status of a tool’) and a subsequent marginalisation of issues pertaining to gender and sexuality. Yet these problems do not lessen the theoretical value of Sartre’s approach to class practice because his general understanding of the structure/agency relationship, as Connell (1982a: 74-79) argues in the second half of his analysis, provides a basis for developing a ‘practice-based theory of gender’ and this can be done without assuming the ‘postulate of scarcity’ and without ignoring issues of sexuality and the agency of the body. As it turned out, the development of such a theory of gender, of a theory that would also reconcile the two dichotomies explicated in this chapter, is precisely the project on which Connell has systematically worked for the last twenty years.

VI Conclusion

Connell’s (1982a) paper on ‘Class, gender, and Sartre’s theory of practice’ closes one chapter and opens another- both in terms of the orientation of Connell’s work and in terms of the structural organization of this thesis. It is one of Connell’s last systematic analyses of class structure and, at the same time, one of his first systematic theorizations of the structure of gender relations. It is also one of his few writings that focus systematically on the theoretical dimensions of the intersection or ‘articulation’ of the structures of class and gender (Connell, 1982a: 76-78; see also, 1983b; 1983d). It thus represents the moment of Connell’s passage from class to gender analysis, a gradual passage that begun in the late 1970s and early 1980s and led to the publication of *Gender and Power* in 1987. I examine this ‘passage’ and its theoretical implications in the next chapter but before doing so a recapitulation of the main argument is necessary.

In this chapter, I argue that Connell’s theory of class was developed during the 1970s and early 1980s through a critical engagement with three contemporary currents in class analysis: empiricist historiography and sociology; Althusserian structuralism;
and the emerging 'activist' approaches to class proposed by Thompson and Sartre (See Figure I). Connell attempts to synthesise these diverse and conflicting understandings of class in order to reconcile what I have called the empiricism/theoreticism and structure/agency dichotomies. In doing so, he also draws on Piaget's 'radical constructivism' and Chomsky's 'generative method' and he proposes a notion of structure that is both the condition and the outcome of practice and a methodology of class analysis that reconciles theory and concrete empirical investigation.
Notes

1. The conflict between these two currents in Marxism was initially described by Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1955) in terms of the opposition between ‘Western Marxism’ and ‘Leninism’ or ‘neo-Hegelian’ and ‘anti-Hegelian’ Marxists. Yet, since the publication of Perry Anderson’s (1976) Considerations on Western Marxism, the term ‘Western Marxism’ has acquired a broader, geographical rather than intellectual, meaning and it is sometimes employed to describe the work of European Marxist thinkers as different as Sartre and Althusser (e.g. Jay, 1984). Thus, I prefer to use ‘critical’ rather than Western Marxism because it conveys the theoretical specificity of subjectivist Marxists. The most adequate analysis of this conflict is to be found in Alvin W. Gouldner’s (1980) The Two Marxisms.

2. This is a criticism directed against stratificationist sociology and empiricist history, not against ‘categoricalism’ in general. Some versions of categoricalism do focus on class conflict even though they do so in an ahistorical way. ‘A careless or highly simplified interpretation of Marx’, for example, presents classes as the two contradictory and opposing categories of people but does not account for the historical construction and reconstruction of those categories (Connell and Irving, 1980: 4). I will return to this question again when considering Connell’s critique of the Althusserian approach to class.

3. Incidentally, such an activist definition of ‘structure’ is somewhat similar to the earliest English uses of the term, prevalent during the fifteenth and sixteenth century, where ‘structure’ was primarily a noun of process: ‘the action, practice or process of building or construction Now rare or obs’ (Oxford English Dictionary, Second Edition). See also Williams (1976: 253-259).

4. That is, he opposes one aspect of Piaget’s theory to another. The phrase is adapted from Anthony King (2000: 417-418) who, in his article ‘Thinking with Bourdieu against Bourdieu’, suggests that this is what Bourdieu seeks to do to other thinkers: ‘to think with a thinker against a thinker’.

5. Piaget’s structuralism is more complex than the schematic summary offered here may imply. In this analysis the focus is exclusively on Piaget’s work on intellectual development on which Connell critically draws to develop a notion of structure. Furthermore, I do not examine Piaget’s later writings, and especially his brief critical history of structuralist thought, in which he does deal with diachronic structures (see Piaget, 1971).

6. In Saussure’s (1916) case, the primacy of synchrony over diachrony is based on his conviction that a ‘scientific study of language’ must focus on its deep structure and that there is no need to pay attention to the capacity of a language to change unceasingly. Rather, the structure of a language can be ascertained only if we look at it synchronically. To illuminate this point, Saussure (1916: 87-89) draws an analogy between language and chess. At first sight, it seems that to study chess one would have to concentrate on the sum total of all the moves in a particular came and study them diachronically. But this, Saussure assures us, would give us a history of the moves in that game but not a structural account of chess as a game. To study chess properly, one has to concentrate on a particular state of the board (which corresponds exactly to a state of the language) and study it statically. Similarly, ‘the linguist who wishes to understand this state must rule out of consideration everything which brought that state about, and pay no attention to diachrony’ (Saussure, 1916: 81).

7. Reference is to Georges Cuvier (1769-1832), the French zoologists whose research into comparative anatomy, as the translator of Timpanaro’s On Materialism explains, ‘led him to postulate the principle of the ‘correlation of parts’, according to which the anatomical structure
of all the organs in an animal’s body are functionally related to one another; as a corollary to this principle, Cuvier maintained that no species had changed since Creation, for each was endowed with a perfect structural-functional coordination of its parts’ (Timpanaro, 1975: 135).

8. This account is largely based on Timpanaro’s (1975: 199-210) essay on the history of structuralism which offers a very good analysis of the relationship between Chomsky’s linguistic theory and his political convictions situated in the broader context of structuralist thought.

9. Connell seems to borrow the concept of ‘situation’ directly from Gramsci’s analysis of hegemony, where Gramsci uses the term in a way very similar, but not reducible, to ‘conjunction’. As Gramsci clarifies in the Prison Notebooks, ‘the conjunction can be defined as the set of circumstances which determine the market in a given phase, provided these are conceived of as being in movement... In Italian the meaning of ‘favourable or unfavourable economic situation (occasione)’ remains attached to the word ‘conjunction’. Difference between ‘situation’ and ‘conjunction’: the conjunction is the set of immediate and ephemeral characteristics of the economic situation...Study of the conjunction is thus more closely linked to immediate politics, to ‘tactics’ and agitation, while the ‘situation’ relates to ‘strategy’ and propaganda, etc.’ (Gramsci, 1977: 177). Similarly, Connell often explains the Althusserian concept of ‘conjunction’ using the word ‘situation’: ‘the field of the ‘conjunction’, or as we might put it, the actual historical situation’ (Connell and Irving, 1980: 6; see also Connell and Irving, 1992: 4-5); ‘the site of the ‘conjunction’, the current situation in which classes and other groupings appear in the guise of social forces’ (Connell, 1979a: 119).

10. In Connell’s (1983c: 224) words, ‘[e]very good Althusserian, including Althusser, repudiates Althusserianism, and the Birmingham researchers are no exceptions’.

11. As in Figure I, far from positing a methodology/theory dualism, the distinctions drawn here are analytical in character and the notions of ‘theory’ and ‘methodology’ are used in a rather loose sense. They do not refer to rigid, clearly differentiated domains of social analysis and, as in Connell’s writings where these dimensions are not explicitly distinguished, the focus will be on the interrelatedness of these dimensions.

12. The idea of the ‘radical inwardness’ of theoretical practice was part of Althusser’s attempt to defend the scientifi city of Marxism against the various schools of Hegelian, Western Marxism that had gained popularity in the late 1950s and early 1960s, an era characterised by a return to the ‘young Marx’. On the historical/intellectual context, see Elliott (1987: 38-59) and Callinicos (1976: 10-29).

13. This movement from the abstract to the concrete is, of course, part of Althusser’s systematic over-emphasis on theory and his anti-empiricism which he claims to have developed out of Marx’s later work. As he put it in Essays in Self-Criticism, ‘what interested me above all else in Marx’s text was his radical...opposition to empiricism...Marx argued that knowledge does not proceed from the concrete to the abstract but from the abstract to the concrete...And what fascinated me in all this argument was that one had to begin with the abstract.’ (Althusser, 1975: 190).

14. The term is borrowed from Nicos Mouzelis (2000).


16. Luxemburg and Mehring were amongst the main representatives of the ‘radical group’ within the German Left in the early twentieth century, of a small revolutionary group that emerged after 1910. In opposition to the ‘centre group’, which was led by Karl Kautsky and defended
reformist politics (the idea that capitalism can be reformed by gradual stages rather than by a revolutionary change), the radicals proposed an 'uncompromising revolutionarism' inspired mainly by the spontaneous uprising of the workers of the Tsarist empire in the Russian Revolution of 1905. Their 'humanism', to which Althusser refers, is closely linked to their revolutionary politics. The intellectual and historical context is elucidated in Kolakowski (1981c: 31-97).

17. Elliott (1987: 15-69) provides an excellent account of the broader context within which Althusser articulated his theory.

18. Connell's critique of Bourdieu's and Giddens' attempt to reconcile structure and agency is examined in some detail in the third chapter of this thesis.


21. As it will be explained in Chapter III, Connell's critique of these theories of practice is more sophisticated. On this, see also Connell (1987: 92-99) and, for Connell's critique of Giddens notion of the 'duality of structure', see Maharaj (1995).
CHAPTER TWO
CHAPTER TWO

Class, gender, education and the 'problematic of synthesis', 1974 – 1983

I. Introduction

Connell’s work takes a new turn during the early 1980s. His focus is no longer exclusively on class analysis, as in RCRC, in the first edition of CSAH and in most of the essays published in the course of the 1970s. Rather, there is now an increased emphasis on the intersection of the structures of class and gender. The question of ‘intersection’ or ‘articulation’ of structures is analysed from a theoretical perspective in some of the essays published in Connell’s (1983a) Which Way is Up? (WWU), which is subtitled ‘Essays on Class, Sex and Culture’. It is also empirically exemplified through an examination of Australian education and school practices in Connell, Ashenden, Kessler and Dowsett’s (1982) Making the Difference (MD). Yet, by the beginning of the second half of the 1980s, Connell’s focus on the intersection of the structures of class and gender is gradually replaced by a systematic attempt to theorise gender as a structure of social relations. This tendency towards a systematic theory of gender is already evident in his essays ‘Crisis tendencies in patriarchy and capitalism’ and ‘How should we theorise patriarchy?’ which, albeit first published in WWU in 1983, were written as early as 1979 and 1980 respectively (see Connell, 1983d: 33; 1983e: 50). And in 1985 Connell publishes his first article on systematic gender theory, ‘Theorising gender’, which is followed by (and heralds) his magnum opus, Gender and Power (G&P), published two years later (Connell, 1985; 1987). Hence, Connell’s analysis of the interconnection of class and gender during the early 1980s is to be understood not so much as an attempt to expand his theory of class through an emphasis on its interconnection with other structures of social relations but as the historical moment in which Connell moves from class to gender analysis, as a transitory moment that signifies the beginning of Connell’s systematic theory of gender.
It is precisely this ‘transitory moment’ and its theoretical/political implications that is the focus of this chapter. How can Connell’s gradual transition from class to gender analysis be understood? On a more general level, what is the relationship between Connell’s understanding of class and his theory of gender? Can this relationship be theorised in terms of the break/continuity dichotomy that is so commonly assumed in intellectual biographies? In other words, does Connell’s work on gender break with, or continue, the theoretical orientation developed in his analysis of social class?

Connell’s passage from class to gender analysis represents both a break and a continuity. It constitutes a ‘break’ in that his engagement in gender analysis opens a new set of theoretical questions. With Connell’s turn to gender analysis, issues that were virtually absent from his theorisation of class (like the theory of the body) become very relevant while theoretical perspectives that contributed only marginally to his analysis of class relations (like psychoanalysis) come to occupy a more central position’. Yet, the break embodied in Connell’s passage from class to gender research is ‘a break full of continuities’: his theorization of class relations provides not only the main concepts for the development of a theory of gender (like ‘structure’, ‘pattern’ or ‘active construction’) but also the whole framework within which theoretically novel questions (like the relationship between the biological and the social) are posed and explored. In this sense, ‘Connell’s break’ cannot be understood without considering the continuities that characterise it. I will argue that an understanding of his early work on class analysis is indispensable for grasping the total complexity of his social theory of gender.

In this chapter, I argue that Connell’s early work on class analysis contributes towards the construction of a theory of gender relations in three main ways. Firstly, it provides the theoretical logic and conceptual vocabulary that makes it possible to theorise gender as a structure of social relations. Secondly, it encourages the development of a
theoretical perspective that does not treat gender relations as a 'truncated structure' (Connell, 1983e: 55), as a structure independent of class relations and disconnected from the sphere of production. Thus, it paves the way for grasping the 'class structuring' of gender (Connell, 1982a: 77) and the interconnection and interaction of the two structures. Thirdly, a more hidden and implicit but more important, more complex and more sophisticated link between Connell’s early work on class analysis and his theory of gender relations is that the former establishes the whole theoretical ‘problematic’ (a way of posing questions and of approaching theoretical and political problems) within which the latter is developed. It institutes what I will call ‘the problematique of synthesis’: a ‘problematique’, developed through an engagement in debates within Marxism, that centres on the production of new concepts through a reconciliation or synthesis of opposing or even apparently contradictory political and theoretical perspectives.

In the three sections that make up this chapter, I analyse these three links between Connell’s work on class and his theory of gender through a focus on his work in the late 1970s and early 1980s. In doing so, I examine the major theoretical implications of Connell’s work on class as analysed in Chapter 1 while, at the same time, I pave the way for the next three parts of this thesis, which critically examine three central aspects of Connell’s theory of gender. In particular, in the last section I introduce the argument about ‘the problematique of synthesis’, which I develop and substantiate in the next three parts of the thesis.

II. From class to gender: the initial encounter

As it is shown in Chapter 1, Connell developed his theory of class during the 1970s. Most of the papers published in RCRC were initially written and presented in conferences and/or published as articles in the first half of the decade when Connell was at Flinders University in South Australia. The research that led to the publication
of CSAH started as early as the late 1960s and it was in progress for the next ten years. Yet, while Connell was immersed in class analysis, Australian social science was gradually moving in a new direction. In 1973, the year in which Connell becomes a staff member in the School of Behavioural Sciences at Flinders University, a few hundred meters away from his office, in the Philosophy Discipline at the same university, a female curriculum committee conceives and establishes the first ‘Women’s Studies’ units in the country (Magarey, Ryan and Sheridan, 1994: 287-288). This was representative of a broader change. The advent of ‘second-wave’ feminism and gay liberation at the end of the 1960s, both of which were largely centred around the universities, challenged the andocentric and heterosexist biases of existing academic scholarship and encouraged the development of research on gender and sexuality (Wotherspoon, 1991: 140-141, 176; Curthoys, 2000: 19-20). By the mid-1970s, keys texts, like Dennis Altman’s (1972) Homosexual: Oppression and Liberation and Ann Oakley’s (1972) Sex, Gender and Society, were published and widely read while the first feminist academic journals, like Refractory Girl (from 1973) and Hecate (from 1975), were established. As in the United States, from where the trend was arguably imported (Curthoys, 1994: 18-20), this was the time of the new social movements, sometimes grouped together as the ‘counter-culture’, which signifies the origins of a radical transformation of the social sciences in the academy.

Connell was not a distinguished pioneer of this new trend but he was certainly not blind to these developments. While at Flinders University (1973-1976), he organised and taught a course on ‘Love and Power in Australian Life’, which reflected his interest in psychoanalysis and in the connection between sexuality, society and power. Shortly after leaving Flinders, Connell (1977c) examined these issues in ‘Dr Freud and the course of history’ but his interest in questions of sexuality was already evident in his contemporaneous work on class analysis. In RCRC, he offers a brief analysis of the counter-cultural and sexual liberation movements where he argues that they constituted an opposition to the ruling class but, in so far as they were ‘marked...
by an extreme individualism', they were 'still contained within the boundaries of the dominant ideology' (Connell, 1977a: 188-189). Additionally, in his analysis of hegemony, he argues that the consumption patterns on which post-war capitalist development was based were intrinsically gendered (e.g. cars were sold specifically to men) and tended to reproduce not only the structure of capitalism but also the subordination of women (Connell, 1977a: 214-215). Yet, these analyses were still sporadic and underdeveloped. In CSAH, which Connell and Irving (1982: 34) finished writing in 1977, women's agency was almost invisible, as Kay Daniel's (1982) argued in a review of the book. Thus, in his early work on class analysis, Connell does display an awareness of the emergence of the new social movements and some appreciation of the importance of questions of gender and sexuality but these issues are not systematically incorporated into his work.

Rather, Connell's first focused analysis of issues of gender and, to a lesser extent, sexuality was developed parallel to (not as a part of) his work on class analysis. His first paper on gender, entitled 'You can't tell them apart nowadays, can you?', was published in 1974, in the midst of his socialist oeuvre, but it mentions social class only in passing (Connell 1974a). This analysis was part of a different project: a collaborative study of attitudes based on a mass survey of 12-20 year-old adolescents from Sydney carried out some years earlier (see Connell, Stroobant, Sinclair, Connell and Rogers, 1974; Connell, 1973; 1974b). In 1974, Connell reworked the findings to stress the existence of 'patterns of differences' between boys and girls and he presented his analysis at a national conference focused on 'the Australian family'. The conference itself is of major importance for understanding the political and intellectual atmosphere within which Connell's initial work on gender was produced. It reflected the emerging radical transformation of the social sciences and it marked Connell's first formal academic engagement in the new counter-culture. It accommodated gay and feminist critiques of the family (some of them inspired by Kate Millet's (1970) *Sexual Politics* and other second-wave feminist texts)⁸.
including a paper by Dennis Altman (1974) on ‘The homosexual and the family’ and a feminist historical critique of the family by Bettina Cass (1974). As Connell (2002c: 198) recalls, the conference constituted a ‘coup’, indicating that ‘... interest in gender questions [was] building’.

The most striking feature of Connell’s (1974a) ‘You can’t tell them apart nowadays, can you?’ is its strong emphasis on a concept of structural analysis that, as shown in the previous chapter, plays a vital role both in TCCP and in RCRC: the idea of pattern. Connell (1974a: 282) offers a description of young people’s attitudes and practices and, contrary to the ‘supposed convergence of the sexes’, he argues that there are sharp and consistent ‘sex differences’ in issues ranging from leisure pursuits and sexual permissiveness to anxiety over exams and job preferences. For instance, ‘girls go to church more often than boys, and drink, smoke, and go to pubs much less’ while boys are more aggressive and more permissive (on all issues but homosexuality) than girls and they are more likely to ‘head for university and upper professional jobs’ (Connell, 1974a: 283-284). For Connell, these ‘sex differences’ are not independent of one another or disconnected from the institution of the nuclear family or the labour market. Nor are they accidental, random or unpredictable. Rather, Connell is convinced that he is dealing with a ‘pattern of differences’, a pattern that is coherent and closely connected to the maintenance of traditional family structures and the ‘husband-and-wife roles’ they embody (Connell, 1974a: 283). Thus, Connell’s notion of ‘pattern’ in the context of his analysis of ‘sex differences’ involves again what I have previously called ‘synchronic interrelatedness’: the idea that boys and girls’ practices and attitudes are not disconnected from one another, from adults’ practices or from other dimensions of social life but they are parts of an overall ‘patterning’. They make sense as a whole, through their relation to other practices and attitudes.
Connell's idea of pattern as 'synchronic interrelatedness' also involves what Alvin W. Gouldner (1980: 91-96) identifies as one of the main dimensions of structural analysis and as the main meaning of 'patterning': \textit{de-randomisation}. By 'de-randomisation', Gouldner (1980: 95) refers to an important 'effect of any structure upon its environment':

> Given a structure, certain aspects of the environment hitherto randomly distributed are now differentiated in patterned ways: they are 'sorted out'. A physical structure, for example, a flour sifter, takes a hitherto unsorted batch of flour and de-randomises it.

Similarly, for Connell, boys and girls' attitudes and practices appear to be de-randomised. They are not arbitrarily or randomly constituted. They are 'sorted out' with respect to sex and become constitutive parts of a meaningful nexus. This is what makes them 'clear, predictable, and almost completely consistent' (Connell, 1974a: 283). Furthermore, the resulting 'sex-typed pattern' is seen as being 'robust' and 'formidably entrenched': '[e]ven so fundamental a social category as class cannot erase it, merely shifting the level at which it appears' (Connell, 1974a: 284). The only departure from the common pattern that Connell identifies is in Catholic schools, where both boys and girls are more conservative than the students of other schools (Connell, 1974a: 284).

Yet, consistent with the Piagetian idea of 'active construction' proposed in \textit{TCCP} and further developed in \textit{RCRC}, Connell does not see this 'patterning' (or de-randomisation of attitudes and practices with respect to sex) as the passively constituted effect of an external force, like a flour sifter\(^2\). 'Patterns' are not reified and ahistorical abstractions. Rather, as in his theory of class, Connell sees 'patterns' as being actively produced and reproduced and this is precisely what makes historical change possible. 'Sex-role patterns', as he put it, 'are re-created and used in the course of adolescent life, not simply carried into it like a dead weight'. This opens up
the possibility of moving towards more just gender arrangements in that 'what is constantly in process is capable of change' (Connell, 1974a: 285).

Connell’s first paper on gender anticipates some of the main themes (most notably the emphasis on ‘patterns’, active construction and historical change) that would come to occupy a central position in his theory of gender. It does not reflect the total complexity of the social theory of gender relations he develops during the 1980s and the 1990s, which will be examined in the next three parts of this thesis. For instance, it tends to over-emphasise the consistency of patterns and under-emphasise the multiplicity and diversity among boys and girls’ attitudes and practices. As a result, it tends to simplify conflict, power and contradiction, to contain them within the realm of relationships between boys and girls. Yet, the paper in question does introduce some of the starting points in the development of Connell’s theory of gender. Most notably, the focus on ‘patterns’ presupposes that boys and girls’ practices and attitudes do not constitute a shapeless set of data but a structure of social relations. As it will be shown in Part II, the idea of gender as a structure of social relations, along with the idea that structures are actively produced and historically specific, constitutes the cornerstone of Connell’s theorisation of gender.

Thus, the analysis of ‘You can’t tell them apart nowadays, can you?’ indicates the first link between Connell’s work on class and his theory of gender relations: Connell’s thinking about gender relations is developed, from the beginning, through the utilisation of concepts generated in his analysis of class. The idea of structure and the main concepts of structural analysis (pattern, active construction, historicity, constraint, possibility) introduced in the previous chapter are amongst the most important dimensions of this link. Yet, they are not the only ones. In Part III, for instance, I show how Connell expands his idea of a ‘categorical approach to class’ to develop a critique of ‘categorical theories of gender’.
In short, in his first paper on gender, Connell employs an important part of the conceptual vocabulary and theoretical orientation developed in his concurrent analysis of class structure. By the beginning of the 1980s, he becomes persuaded that gender can be understood as 'a social structure comparable, in scale and historical importance, with the structure of class relations' (Connell, 2001: 9). In turn, this recognition would open another field of theoretical and empirical investigation. It led Connell towards the systematic analysis of the relationship between these two structures of social relations. This is what constitutes the main focus of his work during the late 1970s and, especially, the early 1980s.

III. From Flinders to Macquarie: class/gender intersection and schooling

Two years after the publication of 'You can't tell them apart nowadays, can you?', Connell leaves Flinders University for a new chair at Macquarie University in Sydney, where he stayed until 1992 (Connell, 2002c: 199). While still working on social class in 1976, his advent at Macquarie University marks the beginning of a more systematic engagement in gender analysis. As head of the sociology department, Connell (2002c: 199) was 'pursuing a feminist agenda' from the beginning: he encouraged the development of gender research within the department (Game and Pringle, 1983: 13; Burton, 1985: viti), supervised research students that would later publish important works on gender (e.g.; Court, 1983; O'Donnell, 1984; Burton, 1985), and taught a course on 'feminist theories of patriarchy' (Connell, 2002c: 200). Meanwhile, this period was also very prolific in terms of publications. By the early 1980s, Connell publishes some important analyses of gender relations, which sketch the initial version of a complex approach to gender. Consistent with his critique of Althusserian 'theoreticism’, these analyses are both theoretically sophisticated and empirically rich. On a theoretical level, Connell (1982a; 1983d; 1983e) articulates an account of gender as a structure of social relations and examines its connection to the structure of class. On an empirical level, the abstract theoretical perspective he
develops in some of his papers published in the late 1970s and early 1980s is informed by (and at the same time given a concrete existence in) the contemporaneous, collaborative, empirical study that resulted in the publication of MD (Connell, Ashenden, Kessler and Dowsett, 1982). Unlike ‘You can’t tell them apart nowadays, can you?, Connell’s work on gender produced during his first six or seven years at Macquarie University, is merged with his analysis of class. His major emphasis is on the intersection or ‘articulation’ of structures and this constitutes the second link between his work on class and his developing theorisation of gender. In this section, I will examine this link focusing firstly on his theoretical analysis and then on the empirical work developed in MD and other writings.

Class and gender theory: intersection, joint dynamic and joint crisis
The idea of ‘gender structure’ implicit in Connell’s initial paper on ‘patterns of sex differences’ is explicitly articulated in two essays written between 1979 and 1980 and subsequently published in WWU (Connell, 1983d; 1983e). It is further developed in his contemporaneous analysis of Sartre’s theory of practice, some aspects of which were examined in the previous chapter (Connell, 1982a). In these writings, Connell argues that patriarchy is a structure of power relations that, like capitalism, is fully historical, actively formed and transformed and capable of being abolished. In arguing so, he outlines the main characteristics of the structure of gender relations and analyses its internal complexity. Yet, his primary emphasis is on the intersection of the structures of class and gender.

Following Mitchell’s (1971) idea that the structure of gender is ‘internally differentiated’, Connell begins by conceptualising gender in terms of four component ‘sub-structures’: labour; power; character and personality; and cathexis (Connell, 1983d: 39-45; 1983e: 57-59;). These sub-structures or ‘kinds of structuring’, as Connell (1983d: 39-40) notes following Giddens’ (1976) initial outline of his ‘theory of structuration’, embody ‘inter-connected sets of constraints and possibilities’ that
are 'both the conditions and the consequences' of social practice. They are the 'conditions' in that they constitute the 'situation' to which practice responds and they are the 'consequences' in that they are 'generated in history... established, enforced and sometimes overthrown by social struggle' (Connell, 1983d: 40).

The categories of gender are also analysed in terms of 'active construction'. Just as the overall structure of gender and its constituent 'sub-structures' do 'not fall from the sky' (Connell, 1983d: 40), so too masculinities and femininities do 'not fall from the heavens' (Connell, 1983e: 58-59). They are actively constructed, 'negotiable and not completely settled by anatomy', and this is what accounts for the diversity amongst women and men and for the emergence of Hegemonic and subordinate forms of femininity and masculinity (Connell, 1983d: 39-40). This understanding of gender identity is based on a conception of the body as both 'passively suffered' and 'actively implicated' in the social processes that construct gender identities and gender structures (Connell, 1983f; 1982a: 74-76).

In this way, in the papers in question Connell articulates his initial understanding of gender as a structure of power, his theory of gender identity formation and his conception of the body, all of which are examined in the three subsequent parts of the thesis. In fact, the understanding of gender schematically outlined in these papers is so complex as to constitute the initial version of the theory of gender proposed in G&P. Yet, Connell’s primary focus of analysis in 1979 and 1980 is not so much the structure of gender itself and its internal complexity (even though this becomes increasingly central) as the question that preoccupied socialist feminist scholarship throughout the 1970s: the relationship between capitalism and patriarchy or, in Connell’s (1983d: 34) words, ‘how we understand the relation between class exploitation and sexual oppression’. For Connell, this is not merely a theoretical question. It has important political implications in that it 'bears on strategic questions.
that will decide whether socialist and feminist movements are aligned or opposed...

(Connell, 1982a: 64).

According to Connell, socialist feminists in the 1970s provided a straightforward answer to this question. In writings like Heidi Hartmann's (1979) 'The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism' and Zillah Eisenstein's (1979) 'Developing a Theory of Capitalist Patriarchy' it was suggested that there are two structures, two sets of relations- capitalism and patriarchy, relations of production and relations of reproduction, class and gender- which are somehow articulated. In short, that there is some kind of hinge between two systems, which occupy conceptually different spaces, but which turn upon each other (Connell, 1982a: 64).

Thus, capitalism and patriarchy were conceived of as separate phenomena, as 'parallel' and 'equally complete' structures (Connell, 1983e: 54). In this way, even though he does not name it as such, Connell refers to what Iris Marion Young (1980: 95, 103) called 'dual-systems theory': a tendency, dominant within socialist feminism in the 1970s, to treat capitalism and patriarchy as two 'distinct and relatively autonomous systems' that are 'mutually influencing but nevertheless ultimately separate and irreducible'. As Young (1980: 103) stressed, this theoretical approach had an important political flaw in that it encouraged the idea that 'the struggle against patriarchy should be organizationally distinct from the struggle against capitalism'.

Connell argues that such an understanding of the relationship between class and gender is also inadequate from a theoretical point of view. Taking his cue from Hartmann's (1979: 1) now famous idea that in some Marxist-inspired feminist analyses 'Marxism and feminism are one and that one is Marxism', he argues that there is a tendency in socialist feminist literature to grant 'unchallenged logical primacy' to capitalist production relations and to treat these relations as the
framework within which women's subordination can be explained (Connell, 1983d: 35). This tendency, as Connell (1983d: 36; 1983e: 54-55; 1982a: 64-65) goes on to argue, is accompanied by an implicit 'functionalism' in that the emphasis is usually on the ways in which the one structure 'functions' in reproducing the other. 'Thus, in the domestic labour debate, it is argued that women's domestic oppression is functional for capital because it holds down the price of labour power' (Connell, 1983d: 36). In the final analysis, as Connell (1983d: 36-37) concludes, such arguments are based on ahistorical and 'categorical' understandings of class and gender. The focus on the ways in which the one structure reproduces the other reveals that capitalism and patriarchy are conceived of as abstract and a priori-defined structures of power relations that are independently constituted and then enter into a particular kind of relationship. Implicit in such an understanding of structure is also the idea that capitalism and patriarchy, usually treated as systems defining different 'categories into which people may be sorted, or inserted' (Connell, 1983d: 36), refer to 'two different kinds of practice or at least different spheres in the practical world' (Connell, 1982a: 77).

In order to do away with 'functionalism' and 'categoricalism', Connell shifts the emphasis from reified and ahistorical 'structures' and 'categories' to the social practices through which they are constituted. As he proposes in his usual activist language, borrowed mainly from Piaget, Sartre and Giddens, structures have to be re-conceptualised 'in terms of the practices that compose them' (Connell, 1982a: 64) and '[c]lass and gender categories have to be treated as emergent in social practices' (Connell, 1983d: 37). It is the understanding of social practice that underlies Connell's 'constructivism' that provides the basis for a different approach to the relationship between patriarchy and capitalism. For Connell (1982a: 77), social practice pertaining to capitalism and patriarchy does not refer to distinct types of practice or to 'separate spheres of practice', as in the approach proposed by some 'dual systems' theorists. Rather, capitalism and patriarchy should be understood as
forms of structuring’ or ‘patterns of determination’ that are simultaneously present in the same practices at the same time (Connell 1983d: 37). This is what he calls ‘joint determination’ of social practice (Connell, 1982a: 77). One could take into account more ‘forms of structuring’, such as age or race, and examine the determination of practice in a more complex way. Yet, in the final analysis, as Connell (1982a: 78) notes, the number of structures involved is an empirical question that ‘cannot be settled a priori’.

In line with the concept of ‘joint determination’ of practices, Connell (1983d: 45-49) goes on to develop the ideas of ‘joint dynamic’ and ‘joint crisis’. By ‘joint dynamic’, Connell (1983d: 46) refers to the ‘simultaneous effects of class and gender structuring within the historical process as a whole’. It is such a historical dynamic that accounts for the specificity of working class boys or middle class girls’ practices (1982a: 78). The idea of ‘joint crisis’ is part of the whole process of ‘joint dynamics’. The notion of ‘crisis’ is adapted from Habermas’ (1976) *Legitimation Crisis* and it ‘refers to developments in practice... that as a matter of fact alter the conditions of many particular practices by bringing alterations in the properties of the whole field’ (Connell, 1983d: 39). It refers to ‘structural mutations’ (Connell, 1982e: 61), such as those brought about by the practices of the gay liberation movement, that ‘call into question’ existing patterns of power relationships (Connell, 1983d: 44-45). ‘Joint crisis’ is thus a situation in which the structures of class and gender are simultaneously undermined and their transformation becomes a practical question. The possibility of ‘joint crisis’, according to Connell (1983d: 46), is presupposed by the very existence of political tendencies like ‘socialist feminism’ and ‘gay Marxism’ and it is exemplified by Hebert Marcuse’s (1972) *Essay on Liberation* where ‘there is a conception of transition which is simultaneously a breakdown of repressions and a supersession of capitalist production’.
In short, Connell’s theoretical analysis of the relationship between class and gender structure stresses their inseparability and joint dynamic. In fact, he goes as far as to argue that the two structures could be seen as constituent elements of an ‘overarching structure’, an overall structure of power produced by their ‘joint dynamic’ (Connell, 1982: 48-49). However, Connell’s conception of the relationship between capitalism and patriarchy remains abstract in the analysis developed in the papers in question. It is given ‘active and concrete existence’ (Connell, Ashenden, Kessler and Dowsett, 1983: 89) in the contemporaneous, collaborative work on class, gender and education to which I now turn.

Class/gender intersection and schooling

Connell’s theoretical approach to the question of the relationship between class and gender was accompanied, and made possible, by his contemporaneous involvement in empirical research. His advent at Macquarie University in 1976 coincided with the launching of the ‘School, Home, and Work’ project (Connell, 2001: 6). The project was largely the result of a convergence of research interest between Connell and Dean Ashenden, who at the time was working on Marxist analyses of class and education and shared Connell’s emphasis on practice and his discontent with theories of social reproduction and the political pessimism associated with them (Abbey and Ashenden, 1978; Ashenden, 1979). During the next five or six years, Connell and Ashenden, along with Sandra Kessler and Gary Dowsett, both of whom where school teachers at the time, designed and conducted an empirical study that consisted of 424 extended interviews with high school girls and boys, their parents and their teachers. The study focused on the interplay of class, gender, school and the family. In the early 1980s, they published their findings in a short booklet addressed to teachers, *Ockers and Disco-Maniacs*, in *MD* and in a series of interrelated articles (Kessler, Ashenden, Connell and Dowsett, 1982; Connell, Ashenden, Kessler and Dowsett, 1982; 1983; Connell, Dowsett, Kessler and Ashenden, 1981; Ashenden, Connell, Dowsett and
Kessler, 1980). The overall approach to the relationship between class, gender and education proposed in these writings is opposed to ‘reproduction theory’ and emphasises the reciprocal relationship between ‘practice’, ‘situation’ and ‘structure’ as well as the processes of ‘joint determination’ and ‘joint dynamic’.

According to Connell, Ashenden, Kessler and Dowsett (1982: 24-28), during the 1970s educational sociology was dominated by what they call ‘the Reproduction Approach’. This approach was initially developed in France in the context of ‘structuralist’ and ‘reproductionist’ analyses of class (Althusser, 1971; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977), which Connell (1980) criticised in an earlier paper (analysed in the previous chapter). It was later rearticulated and popularised by Samuel Bowels and Hebert Gintis (1976) in America, by Paul Wills (1977) in England and, with a particular focus on ‘gender reproduction’, by the Schools Commission (1975) report in Australia. The central argument or assumption that these otherwise diverse analyses shared was that the school system functions to reproduce structures of inequality, like class and gender. Thus, in contrast to the ‘Inequality Approach’ that had underlain stratificationist sociology of education in the 1950s and 1960s and focused on the unequal educational chances of individuals, the ‘reproduction paradigm’ shifted the focus of research ‘from the careers of individuals to the society as a whole’ (Connell, Ashenden, Kessler and Dowsett, 1982: 28).

For Connell, Dowsett, Kessler and Ashenden (1981: 103), the ‘reproduction approach’ to education constituted an advance over the ‘inequality approach’ mainly because it placed a stronger emphasis on power relations and emphasised the ‘sheer intractability of education systems’. Yet, like the structuralist theory of class from which it sprang (especially Althusser, 1971), it tended to privilege structure at the expense of agency and reproduction at the expense of ‘production’. As a result, it discouraged political projects centred on social change. Thus, Connell’s (1980) critique of the ‘reproduction theory of class’, examined in the previous chapter, was
extended to develop a corresponding critique of the ‘reproduction approach’ to education.

In contrast to the ‘reproduction approach’, and in line with Connell’s theory of class, the authors of MD propose an understanding of the relationship between schools and structures of inequality that centres on production as well as reproduction, on social change as well as stability. For Connell and his collaborators, schools are not to be understood as mechanical systems that reproduce class and gender inequalities in an automatic way. Schools, like families, are rather seen as historically produced and continuously changing ‘places’, ‘sites’ ‘settings’ or ‘arenas’ in which a complex politics of class and gender are worked out (Kessler, Ashenden, Connell and Dowsett, 1982: 1; 11). They are implicated in the production and reproduction of class and gender inequalities in that they embody historically specific ‘potentials’ and ‘constraints’ to which practice actively responds. Furthermore, if ‘reproduction’ does occur in a given situation, it is because it has been actively achieved, not because ‘it is guaranteed by some sociological law’ (Connell, Ashenden, Kessler and Dowsett, 1982: 72).

Schooling is implicated, or actively engaged, in the production of class and gender in two main ways, which correspond to the two interrelated meanings Connell and his collaborators attach to the concept of ‘the school’. As they put it,

There are, in a sense, two schools in every set of school buildings: the ‘informal’ school which is the world of the kids themselves, and the formal school, the official structure, often mistakenly taken to be the school... the one paid for by the government and controlled by the teachers, and the one that grows up in the crannies and corners of the first, controlled by the kids (Connell, Ashenden, Kessler and Dowsett, 1982: 81, 162).
The 'formal' or 'official' school's involvement in the production of class and gender is central and explicit: the uniform it prescribes puts girls in skirts and boys in suits; the sports it encourages put girls in netball teams and boys in football teams; and the kind of learning it usually promotes is based on what the authors of *MD* call 'hegemonic curriculum', a curriculum that reflects the interests of (or is 'organic' to) the ruling class in that it centres on hierarchically-organised bodies of academic knowledge and emphasises the competitive individual appropriation of that knowledge. The 'informal' or 'unofficial' school refers to peer-group life, both inside and outside the buildings of the school, as it is mediated by commercial youth culture. It is involved in the production of inequalities in that it embodies a complex network of ideas, images, emotions and categorizations related to class and gender, such as the language and practice of heterosexual romance, which are reworked by the pupils in concrete interactions in the playground. Albeit they are usually at odds with each other, the two dimensions of 'the school' are interwoven and inseparable while 'the school' as a whole is inextricably linked to other institutions, like the family or the workplace (Connell, Ashenden, Kessler and Dowsett, 1982: 120-126; 162-165).

The school's official and unofficial involvement in the making of class and gender constitutes the 'setting' in which a complex set of identities and relations are actively produced. Just as the primary school children studied by Connell in *TCCP* are actively involved in the production of 'structures of political beliefs', so too the high school students interviewed in *MD* do not reproduce the school's class and gender structures in a passive manner. Rather, as the rich and complex material presented in *MD* suggest, the school's 'involvement' or institutional 'agency' cannot be understood independently of the agency of the students themselves. For instance, at Rockwell High School in a working-class suburb, the authors of *MD* encounter not only students like Bill Poulos and Heather Arlott who construct their gender identities in opposition to the official school, but also a group of 'A' stream students, who opt for an attachment to the school's academic program. Bill displays an aggressive and
sexist masculinity, which is achieved in and through resistance to school authorities and by delinquencies like smoking and drinking. Heather also contests school authorities but her resistance undermines conventional forms of femininity. Mark Gray, on the other hand, is one of the ‘A’ stream students, the ‘school achievers’ who opt for a chance of promotion out of their class milieu via school success. In doing so, he distances himself from ‘hoods’ like Bill and he constructs a masculinity centred on competitive achievement (Connell, Ashenden, Kessler and Dowsett, 1982: 82-93).

For these students, the school is a ‘setting’, presenting them with a situation to which they actively respond. The outcome is a dynamic process in which different and conflicting forms of class and gender identities and relations are formed and transformed. The process is full of tensions and contradictions. It is more complex, tension-ridden and dynamic than the notions of ‘role learning’ or ‘reproduction’ would account for.

Yet, as Connell and his collaborators point out, there are some ‘patterns’ in the diversity of identities and relations that students actively produce. The situation of a working-class boy is systematically different from the situation of a ruling-class boy just as the situation of a working-class boy is systematically different from the situation of a working-class girl. Additionally, Connell and his collaborators identify patterns and differentiations within boys’ and within girls’ practices (that is, different masculinities and femininities), patterns produced in the context of the school that are not reducible to class relations. For instance, Rockwell High School, as already noted, provides the setting for the production of a curriculum-based distinction between the ‘hoods’ and the ‘A-stream boys’ while in other schools a similar distinction is produced with reference to sports, separating ‘the football heroes’ from ‘the Cyrils’ (non-violent, studious boys). (Connell, Ashenden, Kessler and Dowsett, 1982: 93-100).
These patterns do not represent simple differences. Rather, they refer to the production of class and gender hierarchies, to patterns of power relationships. 'They involve control of some people over others, and the ability of some groups to organize social life to their advantage' (Connell, Ashenden, Kessler and Dowsett, 1982: 180). For instance, the multiplicity of masculinities in schools does not represent alternative and equally desirable ways of being a boy. Rather, it reflects a struggle between forms of masculinity and the emergence of hierarchies amongst them. What would become Connell's most widely cited concept, the idea of 'hegemonic masculinity' (which is examined in detail in Part III), is introduced to refer to the form of masculinity that occupies the position of cultural dominance at a particular historical moment in a particular 'setting' (Kessler, Ashenden, Connell and Dowsett, 1982: 10-11). Thus, the notion of power proposed in MD is more complex than the one assumed in Connell's 'You can't tell them apart nowadays, can you?': it emphasises multiplicity and conflict not only between boys and girls but also amongst boys and amongst girls.

In this way, class and gender can be understood as patterns of power relationships that are actively produced in 'settings' like 'the school'. The patterns that can be found in different settings within the same society are 'synchronically interrelated' with each other and they form the structures of class and gender in a particular society. For instance, in the case of gender,

[i]t is not a question of one gender pattern in school, another in a family, and another in a workplace, all independent of each other. They are related: they mesh with each other to make an overall pattern, one of the most general and most powerful structures in our society (Connell, Ashenden, Kessler and Dowsett, 1982: 72).

Being actively produced, the structures of class and gender are subject to historical reconstruction. The patterns of relations they embody are enduring and extensive but they are 'never achieved once and for all, never settled' (Kessler, Ashenden, Connell and Dowsett, 1982: 10). As in Connell's theory of class, these patterns are ridden with
tensions and contradictions and this is precisely what makes the project of historical transformation possible.

In line with the idea of 'joint determination' of social practice that Connell proposes in *WWU*, the authors of *MD* see class and gender as interconnected 'structuring processes' that interact rigorously in the context of schooling. They occur jointly in the same situations and they can be found within the same practices. Thus, to understand the character of social practices in a particular situation, one has to focus on the 'combined influence' of class and gender. For instance, in the case of a working class boy, this means a 'relationship between processes':

> It means that the construction of his masculinity goes on in a context of economic insecurity... It means that his father's masculinity and authority is diminished by being at the bottom of the heap in his workplace... that his mother has to handle the tensions, and sometimes the violence that results. It means that his own entry into work and the class relations of production is conditioned by the gender relations that direct him to male jobs, and construct him as imagined future breadwinner for a new family... (Connell Ashenden, Kessler and Dowsett, 1982: 181).

Thus, when analysing social practice, the authors of *MD* focus on the different structures involved and to examine their 'joint dynamic': the ways in which they are combined to produce complex historical situations with specific constraints and possibilities.

'Joint dynamic', as Connell and his collaborators argue, involves more than 'intersection' and 'combined influence' of the two structures. The two processes may come into contradiction or abrade and complicate each other. For instance, the competitive 'hegemonic curriculum' was initially organised in terms of class interests '[b]ut once it was organised that way, it became available to women to improve their position vis-à-vis men' (Connell, Ashenden, Kessler and Dowsett, 1982: 182).

Women's upward class mobility via school success can potentially result in a
reorganisation of their place inside the family. Thus, class processes may erode and undermine patriarchal arrangements. Furthermore, ‘joint dynamics’, as Connell, Ashenden, Kessler and Dowsett (1982: 183) conclude, ‘don’t lend themselves to neat formulae or simple practical solutions’. They are complex and open-ended historical processes that need to be taken into account if an adequate theoretical understanding or effective practical politics of class and gender is to be developed.

In short, Connell’s theoretical and empirical work in the late 1970s and early 1980s articulates an understanding of class and gender as interconnected structures of social relations. In the papers published in *WWU*, Connell attempts to synthesise class and gender on a theoretical level and he produces concepts like ‘joint determination’, ‘joint dynamic’ and ‘joint crisis’. This abstract conceptual analysis was made possible, and at the same time extended, by the collaborative empirical work that focuses on the intersection of the two structures in the ‘setting’ of ‘the school’. The understanding of gender proposed in these analyses is deeply indebted to Connell’s earlier work on class theory while it also introduces new concepts that would later become essential parts of a more complex theory of gender relations. For instance, as it will be shown in Part II, his understanding of ‘the school’ as a ‘setting’ serves as the basis for the development of the idea of ‘gender regimes’.

More importantly, Connell’s emphasis on the intersection of class and gender during the late 1970s and early 1980s points to the second link between his theory of class and his work on gender relations: Connell’s understanding of gender was from the beginning based on the recognition that to analyse or change gender relations one has to grasp the way in which they intersect with class and other empirically identifiable structures of social relations. In this way, not only does Connell’s early work on class analysis provide a complex theoretical vocabulary that makes it possible to theorise gender as a structure of social relations, but it also paves the way for a more complex understanding of gender, for an understanding that does not ignore its intersection
with the structure of social class. This link is of major importance for understanding Connell's later work on gender. For instance, in the third part of this thesis, I will argue that for Connell the construction of masculinities cannot be understood independently of the class structuring of social practice.

IV. The problematic of synthesis: theory and politics

Albeit of major importance, Connell's emphasis on the intersection of class and gender is but a single dimension, or even a side effect, of a broader link between his early work on class analysis and his social theory of gender. In Chapter I, I argued that Connell's understanding of social class is developed through a synthesis of opposing, or even contradictory, theoretical and methodological approaches: the methodological opposition produced by empiricism and theoreticism, on the one hand, and the one-sided emphasis on structure or agency, on the other. It is precisely through a 'synthesis' of these one-sided perspectives that Connell attempts to transcend the methodological, theoretical and political problems involved. Moreover, it is not a mere coincidence that Connell's theory of gender is also produced through a 'synthesis' of existing partial perspectives. That is, Connell's engagement in class analysis produces not only a set of complex theoretical concepts, not merely a lasting awareness of the importance of the structure of class, but also a way of producing theory and conducting research. It establishes an approach to social analysis that poses and addresses theoretical and political problems and generates knowledge through reconciling and surpassing existing partial perspectives. This is what I mean by 'the problematique of synthesis' and this is what I regard as the main structuring principle lying behind the formation of Connell's theory of gender. In what follows I explain this concept in some detail, focusing firstly on the idea of 'synthesis' and then on the notion of 'problematique'. In doing so, I will address the third link between Connell's work on class analysis and his theory of gender and introduce the argument that the next three parts of the thesis set out to develop and substantiate.
‘Synthesis’: dialectic and transcendence of dualisms

In its most usual sense, the term ‘synthesis’ (deriving from the ancient Greek ‘συνθέσις’ and its derivative ‘συνθετικός’ which means ‘putting or placing together’15) refers to composition, combination or simply addition of different elements. When this mainstream understanding of ‘synthesis’ is employed in sociological literature, it usually points to multi-dimensionality, multi-sidedness and expansiveness. Thus, Janet Chafetz (1999: 19-20; 1990) argues that her ‘integrated theory of gender’ embodies what she calls a ‘theoretical synthesis’ precisely because it brings together a variety of partial understandings of gender, including Marxist-feminist theory, exchange theory, Freudian theory, interactionist theory and theories of gender socialisation. For Chafetz, then, ‘synthesis’ means theoretical expansion and multi-sidedness.

The idea of ‘synthesis’ as multi-sidedness is also implicit in Connell’s analysis of class. As I argue in Chapter I, Connell’s understanding of class is developed through a critical and selective combination of a variety of insights taken from different perspectives. The multi-dimensional focus of Connell’s understanding of class is made explicit in the introductory chapter of the second edition of CSAH. Therein, after showing that ‘class’ has been conceptualised in many different ways (‘as a category or group, as a structural location, as a kind of experience or symbolism, or as a type of action’), Connell and Irving (1992: 6) argue that one ‘should not be making a choice between these approaches’. Rather, what is needed is a framework that takes into account all these dimensions and studies their interconnections. As it will be shown in the next three parts of this thesis, this tendency towards expansiveness and multi-dimensionality is also central in the formation of Connell’s theory of gender. It is in this sense that Connell’s focus on the intersection of the structures of class and gender can be understood as an aspect of his tendency towards ‘synthesis’.
Yet, the idea of 'synthesis' that Connell implicitly articulates through his engagement in a series of theoretical, methodological and political debates pertaining to class analysis is more specific and more sophisticated than the notion of 'synthesis as expansiveness'. It encompasses the idea of 'expansiveness' and 'multi-sidedness' but it primarily embodies the Hegelian understanding of synthesis as 'unity' and 'transcendence' of opposites. In Hegel's understanding of the dialectic, it should be recalled, 'synthesis' is the 'Third Term' (Lefebvre, 1968: 31-32) or the 'Third Space' (Bhaba, 1990), born from the contradiction of a 'thesis' and its 'antithesis'. Thus, it refers to the dialectical reconciliation and at the same time supersession of contradictory tendencies. It does encompass the idea of 'expansiveness' but it places stronger emphasis on 'transcendence' in that the resulting 'Third' is neither the 'middle ground' nor simply a combination or addition of the two, but 'something new': a transcendence of the thesis-antithesis opposition that is irreducible to its constituent elements.

Stripped from its 'idealistic' connotations so prevalent in Hegel's analysis, this is precisely the notion of 'synthesis' to which Connell's class analysis subscribes. As Figure I in Chapter I illustrates, Connell's major objective is not simply to combine or add together different understandings of class but to reconcile them in such a way as to transcend the theoretical and methodological oppositions they jointly produced (structure/agency; empiricism/theoreticism). Thus, Connell's notion of class is not reducible to simple mathematical additions: class is not a structure of objective constraints (as in Althusser's work) 'plus' or 'in addition to' the subjective outcome of collective action (as in Thompson's account); or a theoretical abstraction (theoreticism) 'plus' an empirical fact derived from subjective experience and self-definitions (empiricism). In fact, it would be impossible to simply 'add' these opposing trends without collapsing into a series of contradictions. Rather, as with Sartre's (1976) 'theory of practice' from which he partly draws, Connell's notion of...
social class is a complex unity and at the same time 'transcendence' of these one-sided accounts: class is conceptualised in terms of actively produced patterns of relationships that specify the possibilities and constraints of open-ended 'generative processes' (the likelihood of transformation) and correspond to concrete and complex historical situations to which social practice creatively responds. Thus, Connell is in a position to see his notion of class as a 'Third Term' that reconciles these dualisms in a way that transcends the various problems involved. It stresses agency and 'possibility' without falling into 'voluntarism'; it appreciates 'constraint' and 'intractability' without collapsing into 'Cuvierian structuralism' or 'reproductionism'; and it grasps the complexity of empirical reality and the value of theoretical analysis without being committed to abstract theoreticism or empiricism.

Connell's commitment to a notion of synthesis as 'unity of opposites' or 'reconciliation and transcendence of contradictory tendencies' is not a matter of 'personal intellectual style' or an individual theoretical innovation. It reflects broader trends in social analysis, both inside and outside the tradition of Marxism. Even though he may not be explicitly interested in this aspect of their work, the Hegelian concept of 'synthesis' is central in the writings of Hegelian Marxists from which Connell draws to develop a concept of class. For instance, it occupies a central position in the work of George Lukacs whose idea of 'totality' was used by Connell and Irving (1980: 2) to express the notion of 'synchronic interrelatedness'. As Istvan Meszaros (1972: 61-91) has argued, Lukacs re-articulates the idea of 'synthesis' through the notion of 'mediation', which allows him to examine, and potentially supersede or 'mediate', complex 'interacting contradictions' or dualisms, like 'subject/object' or 'theory/politics'. The emphasis on 'synthesis' is even more evident in the work of Antonio Gramsci (1971) from whom Connell (1977: 205-222) has borrowed the ideas of 'hegemony' and 'situation' to theorise the link between 'constraint' and 'possibility'. As Maurice Finocchiarro (1988: 148; 180) has convincingly shown, it is an understanding of the dialectic as 'synthesis of the clash
between two extremes' and a subsequent attempt to transcend different dualisms (including masses/intellectuals, hegemony/dictatorship, civil/political society and war of position/manoeuvre) that 'constitutes... the deep structure of the Prison Notebooks'. Finally, the emphasis on 'synthesis' and the attempt to transcend 'dualisms' was also central in, or even constitutive of, the emerging tradition of 'theories of practice'. In Giddens' (1984) idea of 'structuration' and Bourdieu's (1977) understanding of 'practice' and 'habitus', for example, the emphasis is not simply on the supersession of the 'structure/agency dualism' but, on a more general level, on the transcendence of what Nicos Mouzelis (2000) has recently referred to as the 'subjectivist/objectivist divide'. It is therefore not a mere coincidence that Connell thinks of his work as part of the same intellectual tradition.

The emphasis on 'synthesis' that Connell shares with Hegelian Marxists and theorists of practice is not just an abstract, conceptual, stylistic, or philosophical dimension of his work, however 'abstract' it may appear at first sight. As with Lukacs, Gramsci, Giddens or Bourdieu, Connell's attempt to reconcile and transcend dualisms through synthesis is inextricably linked to questions of political strategy and to the identification and supersession of concrete political problems. To address this connection with politics, it is useful to turn to Althusser's notion of 'problematique'.

'Problematique': theory and politics

In Chapter I, I argued that Althusserians proposed a highly objectivist and scientist notion of 'class'. An essential part of this scientific interpretation of Marxism is Althusser's notion of 'problematique', which is usually translated in English as 'problematic'. In For Marx, Althusser (1969) argues that the works of the mature Karl Marx (1867-1893), most notably Capital, embody a 'problematique' (a set of interrelated concepts that constitute the unity of a theoretical formation and facilitate the posing of certain questions and problems) that is more open and more flexible, and hence more 'scientific', than the closed or 'ideological' problematics that
preceded it, like that of classical political economic tradition. For instance, in the
political economy of Adam Smith and David Ricardo, as Althusser and Balibar
(1970: 91-118) explain in Reading Capital, the question of ‘surplus-value’ and
therefore the issue of exploitation remains ‘invisible’ because their theoretical
problematic does not facilitate the posing of such a question. That is, the theoretical
structure and the conceptual vocabulary of the classical economic tradition, its
‘problematique’, forbids the posing of this question and the tackling of the problem of
exploitation. Marx, on the other hand, is capable of posing this question precisely
because, according to Althusser, his open-ended, ‘scientific problematique’ does not
exclude exploitation from the realm of visibility.

Althusser’s notion of ‘problematique’ can be used, in a rather ‘loose’ way, to point to
some important implications of Connell’s emphasis on ‘synthesis’. I stress ‘in a loose
way’ because to appreciate some important dimensions of this concept one does not
have to share Althusser’s ‘scientism’ and ‘structuralism’, or for that matter his
excessive emphasis on ‘symptomatic reading’. Thus, the notion of ‘problematique’ I
propose does not name a scientific theoretical structure hidden deeply beneath
Connell’s ‘manifest’ analysis’. Neither does it name a rigid theoretical apparatus that
accounts for the ‘absolute determination’ (Althusser and Balibar, 1970: 25) of
Connell’s each and every utterance, question, problem or solution. Rather, it refers to,
and in this I follow Althusser, the ‘unity of a particular theoretical structure’ that is
embedded in particular concepts and makes it possible to pose certain questions and
tackle certain problems, and to do so in a particular way (Althusser and Balibar,
1970: 25-26; 131, Althusser, 1969: 32; 67). The most dynamic element in this
definition is the political/practical dimension of a problematique. That is, this concept
appears to have escaped Althusser’s ‘theoreticist deviation’ and his subsequent
insistence on the ‘radical inwardness’ of theoretical practice (analysed in Chapter I) in
that the ‘problematique’ is here defined in terms of the capacity of a theoretical
formation to pose concrete questions and address real problems. In Althusser’s (1969:}
words, 'it is not the interiority of the problematic which constitutes its essence but its relation to real problems... posed to every thinker by the historical period in which he [or she] lives'. Hence, I will refer to the problematique as 'theoretico-political', not simply theoretical, to stress the interconnection of theory and politics. The weakest element in this definition is the idea of 'theoretical structure', which appears abstract and 'deterministic'. This can be replaced by the idea of 'dispositions' in order to stress the 'productivist' rather than 'deterministic' dimensions of a problematique.

In Bourdieu's (1990: 13) notion of 'habitus', 'dispositions' are historically formed and, as with Connell's 'generative logic', function as the 'generative basis' for practice, invention and improvisation. Thus, Althusser's emphasis on the theoretico-political dimensions of 'a problematique' (the idea that a problematique encourages the posing of particular questions, such as the notion of 'surplus-value' in Marx, and defines the way in which concrete problems are understood) can be retained without sharing his excessive emphasis on structural determination.

In this way, the problematique of synthesis' to which Connell subscribes can be defined as a set of 'theoretico-political generative dispositions' that are embedded in certain concepts of his theory (like 'structure' or 'situation') and encourage a way of posing questions and of identifying and addressing political problems that centres on the reconciliation and supersession of contradictory tendencies. It is precisely the formation of this problematique that I traced in Chapter I. Connell's notion of 'structure' exemplifies his commitment to this problematique in a lucid way. On the other hand, 'structure' is understood in terms of objective patterns and intractable constraints embedded in particular historical situations. Thus, it poses the problem of 'voluntarism'. In the early 1970s, this was explicitly directed against the Whitlam government. In Connell's words, his understanding of class 'represented a kind of left-wing critique of Labor triumphalism, the notion of 'structure' sounding a warning that the Whitlamites were not free to reshape Australia to their hearts' content'19. On the other hand, 'structure' is understood in terms of 'active construction' and in terms
of the possibilities embedded in particular historical situations. In this sense, it also poses the problem of ‘reproductionism’ and ‘political pessimism’, which Connell encounters in Althusser and in other theories of social reproduction. Thus, the ‘problematique of synthesis’ is not simply embedded in the concept of ‘structure’ itself but it defines the terms on which concrete political problems (voluntarism; pessimism) are posed as well as the kind of ‘alternative’ that can be developed. Yet, this does not mean that the ‘problematique of synthesis’ is simply an external logic, an instituting force that imposes itself on particular concepts and structures the way in which problems are understood and political alternatives are articulated. Rather, as it was shown in detail in Chapter I, the problematique was itself instituted through Connell’s active and elaborate engagement with concepts, theories and political problems pertaining to class analysis. This is precisely why the problematique should be seen not as a rigid ‘theoretical structure’ (in Althusser’s sense of the term) but as a set of theoretico-political ‘generative dispositions’ that are both structured and structuring or, to put it in the language Cornelius Castoriadis (1988) has developed to theorise the ‘imaginary’, both instituted and instituting.

It is precisely the development of the set of theoretico-political dispositions that I call ‘the problematique of synthesis’ that constitutes the third link between Connell’s early work on class analysis and his social theory of gender relations. In the next three parts of the thesis, I show that Connell’s understanding of gender can be conceptualised in terms of a systematic attempt to produce a synthesis that transcends a series of oppositions or dualisms embedded in existing theories of gender, or generated through their one sided focus. Figure II illustrates ‘the problematique of synthesis’ in Connell’s theory of gender relations on three different levels: his general definition of gender as a structure of social relations (structuration); his understanding of the formation of gender identity (subjectivation); and his theory of the body (embodiment). Connell’s understanding of gender on each of these three interrelated levels can be seen an extension of ‘the problematique of synthesis’ in that it is
articulated through a transcendence of the opposition between the subjectivist and objectivist dimensions of social life. Connell’s attempt to transcend/reconcile these oppositions, as it will be shown in detail in the next three chapters is centred on a concept of social practice, its effects, and its conditions: ‘Gender structuration’ represents an attempt to reconcile structure and agency; ‘Gender subjectivation’ refers to Connell’s systematic analysis of the link between ‘identities as objective structural places or categories’ and ‘identities as actively produced’; ‘Gender embodiment’ names Connell’s attempt to produce a theory of the body as both object of social practice and agent in social practice.
Figure II: Gender and the three levels of the 'problematique of synthesis': Structuration, Subjectivation and Embodiment.

The Subjective Dimension:
Situated and generative practice

Gender as practice  \( \xrightarrow{\text{STRUCTURATION}} \)  Gender as structure

Identity as actively produced  \( \xrightarrow{\text{SUBJECTIVATION}} \)  Identity as 'place' or 'category'

Body as agent  \( \xrightarrow{\text{EMBODIMENT}} \)  Body as object
The next three parts of the thesis constitute an attempt to explore the complex dimensions of the *problematique* of synthesis on these three conceptually distinct but substantially interrelated levels. In Part II I argue that, in his general definition of gender, Connell is at pains to escape both structuralism and voluntarism, to produce a 'practice-based theory of gender' that accounts for the complexity of structural determination without losing sight of practice, its effects and of the possibility of transformation. Furthermore, it is not a mere coincidence that Connell *poses* the problem in this particular way, that his major critiques of other theories are centred precisely on the structure/agency problem and its political implications (e.g. his critique of sex role theory), and that his most complex theoretical concepts (e.g. 'ontoformativity') represent ways of surpassing the oppositions involved. In theorising 'gender identity', as I will show in Part III, it is the same 'theoretical dispositions' that govern his critique of 'categorical theories of gender' and lead to the formation of a concept of identity that focuses on the intersection of objective 'places' and the practices through which people engage in them. In a similar way, in Part IV, I will emphasise that Connell's understanding of the body as well as his critique of other theories of the body (e.g. biological essentialism) cannot be understood independently of the *problematique* of synthesis, which this time manifests itself as the transcendence of a subject/object dualism. In this way, Connell's major theoretical concepts and his critiques of other approaches should be seen as integral parts of the *problematique* of synthesis and not abstracted from it and understood in isolation, as it usually happens with his most popular concepts, such as 'hegemonic masculinity' or 'gender regime'. To abstract these concepts from Connell's *problematique*, as it will be shown on many occasions, is to underplay their total theoretico-political complexity.

Yet, to reinforce and extent a point alluded to earlier, the *problematique* of synthesis is not an external structure that imposes itself on Connell's theory of gender and
‘solves’ or transcends each and every ‘problem’. Just as this *problematique* was initiated through an *engagement* in class analysis, it is continually re-instituted through Connell’s engagement in gender analysis, that is through the very process in which it turns into an instituting force. As Connell moves into the terrain of gender analysis and gender politics, and as he engages with new problems and theories, his practical understanding of how ‘contradiction’ is articulated, as well as the type of syntheses he proposes, and his intellectual ‘generative dispositions’ as a whole take new forms. In this sense, the next three parts of this thesis do not focus on the way in which Connell’s *problematique of synthesis* structures his understanding of gender but they show how this *problematique* is reworked and extended through Connell’s engagement in gender analysis. They also focus on disjunctions, inherent contradictions and implicit dualisms generated within Connell’s *problematique* and stress its inherently incomplete, ‘non-teleological’ and open-ended character. This is precisely what opens spaces for criticism, renewal and extension and makes it possible to ‘think with Connell against Connell’: to think with Connell within the context of the *problematique* of synthesis and at the same time think against Connell by focusing on disjunctions, oppositions and dualisms that his own work has generated and thus extend and renew the *problematique*. 
Connell and Marxism: adventures of a ‘diasporic intellectual’

Given that his ‘problematique of synthesis’ was initially instituted through an engagement in (primarily but not exclusively) Marxist class analysis, one should not take Connell’s (1979a: 100; 2002c: 203) explicit and repeated attempt to distance himself from Marxism at face value. Of course, a systematic critical involvement in Marxist class analysis and an appropriation/ transformation of a set of theoretical concepts generated within the Marxist tradition would not suffice to make one a ‘Marxist’. Moreover, the fact that there is no general agreement as to what the term ‘Marxism’ connotes, combined with the diversity of hitherto existing Marxisms (see Kolakowski, 1978b; 1978c; Jay, 1984), would make any effort to classify Connell as a ‘Marxist’ problematic. Hence, this is not how the question should be posed. Connell (1979a: 100; 2002b: 14; 2002d: 204) himself prefers the term ‘socialism’, which in Socialism and Labor (Connell, 1978:7-12) he associates with ideas like ‘social equality’, ‘direct democracy’ and ‘cooperation’. While this may be true in terms of abstract political commitments, it evades the question of Connell’s theoretical indebtedness to Marxism.

Thus, instead of placing Connell in pigeonholes, it is more useful to acknowledge Connell’s deep indebtedness to the Marxist tradition, particularly to certain currents within ‘critical Marxism’. This indebtedness is not, as I have already implied, simply a question of borrowing and reworking particular concepts or perspectives. It is a whole problématique that Connell institutes through an engagement with theoretico-political problems generated within Marxism, a problématique that, albeit constantly re-instituted, cannot be divorced from the intellectual context within which it was initially developed. The logic of ‘synthesis’ may not be a monopoly of critical Marxism but the theoretico-political problématique of synthesis largely is. For instance, the general theoretical problems subsumed under the umbrella of ‘individual-society dualism’ can be articulated in terms of a non-intrinsically political
'macro-micro opposition', as it is usually done in mainstream American sociological theory where the focus is mainly on 'different levels' of reality (Alexander et. al. 1997). Yet, it can also be posed, and this is how it is usually posed within Marxism and in certain theories of practice, in terms of a 'voluntarism-determinism opposition', which is intrinsically political in that it focuses on 'relations of determination' and on the likelihood of social transformation. Contrary to what Margaret Archer (1995: 7) assumes, the two different articulations of the problem are, therefore, incommensurable and cannot be treated as 'being fundamentally identical'. Thus, in his critique of the structural functionalist notion of 'sex roles', which I will examine later on in some detail, Connell approaches what is usually regarded as a 'macro-sociological perspective' (see, for instance, Layder, 1994) as an individualist and voluntaristic theory with particular political implications, that is he approaches the theory from the standpoint of the theoretico-political problématique of synthesis. In this way, what on a political level is a non-Marxist critique cannot be understood independently of Connell's indebtedness to Marxism: the language he employs in his attack on sex role theory (e.g. 'voluntarism'), as well as the whole theoretico-political problématique within which this critique is articulated, bears the stamp of his engagement in debates within Marxism. It is implicit here that by 'critical Marxism' I mean not a set of rigid political dogmas but a theoretico-political formation.

This emphasis on Connell's indebtedness to Marxism, which will govern my investigation of his theory of gender, should be seen not as an attempt to impose a rigid conceptual category on the author of G&P, or as an effort at reviving old political dogmas. Rather, it constitutes an antidote to the 'Marxophobia', that is to the tendency to erase any traces of Marxist influence through a kind of 'theoretical amnesia', that seems to dominate much recent critical sociology. Marxism, in its complex diversity, has transformed critical social analysis irreversibly and this cannot be ignored. It did so not by providing answers to new questions but by making available a complex theoretico-political apparatus that could be actively and creatively
utilised, reconstructed and extended in order to pose new questions and address new problems. This is nowhere more evident and less disputable than in the area of critical gender analysis. To slightly paraphrase Gayle Rubin, who in a recent interview attacks precisely what I have referred to as 'Marxophobia',

'[t]here is an immense Marxist legacy within feminism, and feminist thought is greatly indebted to Marxism. In a sense, Marxism [as a set theoretico-political generative dispositions] enabled people to pose a whole set of questions [and to pose them in particular ways] that Marxism [as a dogma] could not satisfactorily answer (Rubin and Butler, 1998: 37, emphasis added).

This 'immense Marxist legacy within feminism' is an aspect of a broader historical phenomenon. It is a dimension of the 'Marxist diaspora' that has intensified especially since the late 1960s, of the dispersion of concepts or whole problematiques to new intellectual/political territories, of a complex historical process that has generated not primarily phenomena like the so-called 'Marxist feminism', 'gay Marxism' or 'Marxist theories of race', but a series of hybrid theoretical formations that are not 'Marxist' in any dogmatic way, yet they cannot be adequately understood independently of their substantial indebtedness to specific philosophical, theoretical or political currents within Marxism. Of course, this would cover a broad range of critical studies as it is also a question of 'degree of indebtedness' but one could mention as a classic example the work of thinkers like Stuart Hall whose understanding of identity and ethnicity was formed through a systematic and complex critical and reconstructive relation to certain traditions within Marxism, most notably to the work of Gramsci and Althusser (see Rojek, 2001).

It is within the context of this 'diaspora' that Connell's relation to Marxism can be understood. I refer to this complex historical process as 'diaspora', and not as a kind of '[M]arxist theoretical imperialism' (Allen and Patton, 1983: 5), to stress that it is not a simple question of transportation of concepts or problematiques that can be
understood in terms of straightforward determinations. Just as diasporic ethnic identities are understood in terms of hybridised subjectivities articulated through the passage from one territory to another, as highly productive syntheses that transcend the sum of their constitutive elements (Bhabha, 1988; 1990; Hall, 1990), so too 'diasporic intellectuals' are to be understood as the creative producers of historically novel hybrid formations through their passage to new political fields. Thus, to name Connell a 'diasporic intellectual' is to place him in a very privileged position: it is to emphasise the positive dimension of his indebtedness to certain currents within Marxism while also not understanding this indebtedness in terms of a simple determination.
V. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined the link between Connell’s early work on class analysis and his social theory of gender. I have argued that this link can be understood in terms of three interrelated dimensions. Firstly, Connell’s early work on class theory provides the theoretical logic and conceptual vocabulary that serves as a starting point for the development of an understanding of gender as a structure of social relations. Secondly, it encourages an approach to gender relations that does not underplay the intersection of the structure of gender with the structure of class. And, thirdly, it institutes what I have called ‘the problematique of synthesis’: a set of intellectual ‘generative dispositions’ that make it possible to pose particular questions and address concrete political problems in terms of a synthesisisation of opposite or contradictory tendencies.
Notes

1. In some papers published after the early 1980s, Connell attempts to renew his theory of class but this has been a sporadic and secondary dimension of his work. In the second edition of CSAH, Connell and Irving (1992: 20) expand their understanding of class to incorporate ‘questions about the interaction of structures’ and, in doing so, they offer a brief and schematic account of the relationship between the structures of class and gender. More recently, in his keynote address in the Ruling Class, Ruling Culture conference (which was organised by Overland to mark the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the publication of Connell’s RCRC), Connell renewed his theory of class through a critique of neo-liberalism and the recent notion of ‘third way’ politics (Connell, 2002b). Yet, with the exception of these two writing, Connell has not published any systematic and exclusive analyses of class relations after the early 1980s.

2. In the context of his theory of class, Connell (1977a: 212-215) draws mainly on Hebert Marcuse’s (1964) work and provides a brief analysis of the ‘unconscious processes’ that account for the legitimation of capitalism. Connell’s more systematic use of psychoanalysis in his development of a theory of gender is analysed in Part III. His theory of the body is examined in Part IV.

3. Connell went to Flinders University to help develop a sociology program in 1973 and he stayed there until 1976, when he took up a new chair at Macquarie University (Letter from R. W. Connell, 31 December 2002; see also Connell, 2002c: 199).


5. Altman’s (1972) and Oakley’s (1972) books were released some months earlier in London and New York respectively but, albeit resisted in certain academic circles, they were both very influential and widely read in the 1970s in Australia. For the reception of Altman’s (1972) Homosexual: Oppression and Liberation, see Altman (1997: 64-68). For Oakley’s (1972) work, see Curthoys (2000: 25) and for the establishment of the first feminist journals, see Curthoys (1994: 18; 2000: 19-20).


7. The conference was convened by the Australian and New Zealand Association for the Advancement of Science (ANZAAS) and held in the University of New South Wales. Some of the papers, including Connell’s (1974a), were subsequently published in a special issue of ANZAAS Journal Search in July 1974. For a description of this conference, see Connell (2002: 197-198).

8. For a brief summary of the conference papers published in the special issue of Search, see Dawson (1974).

9. There is a strong ‘element of passivity’ in Gouldner’s account of ‘de-randomisation’. For instance, he notes that ‘[t]he real ‘genius’ of the capitalist system was that it produced a patterning (de-randomisation) of gratifications and costs without this having been necessarily intended by the advantaged or consented to (and even organised) by the disadvantaged’ (Gouldner, 1980: 91). However, it is important to note that Gouldner (1980: 90) develops this concept in his analysis of the idea of structure proposed by scientific Marxism, which is committed to what he calls ‘structural necessitarianism’ (as in Althusser’s work analysed in the previous chapter). Thus, this ‘element of passivity’ is part of his exposition of scientific Marxism, of a version of Marxism that Gouldner himself criticises.
10. The emphasis on power relationships both between and within genders is a central part of Connell’s theoretical perspective and the basis of his critique of ‘sex role theory’, which will be examined in Part III. On this aspect of Connell’s work, see also Demetriou (2001: 337-343).

11. Giddens’ (1984) theory of structuration was subsequently clearly articulated in The Constitution of Society. In the early 1980s, Connell draws mainly on Giddens idea of the ‘duality of structure’, according to which ‘structure’ is both the medium and outcome of practice. However, as it will be shown in Part II, Connell’s later work (1987: 94-95) parts company with some aspects of Gidden’s theory of structuration, most notably with the idea that structures are ‘virtual’ and with the implicit reproductionism of the theory. Connell’s analysis of the structure of gender in terms of component substructures is also examined in detail in Part II.

12. In the essays in question, which were written before the publication of Young’s (1980) analysis, Connell does not use the term ‘dual-systems theory’. However, in G&P, written in 1984, he explicitly refers to this body of literature as ‘dual-systems theory’ and he cites Hartmann’s (1979) and Eisenstein’s (1979) work as the prime examples of this theoretical orientation (Connell, 1987: 46).

13. Hartmann’s (1979) critique was explicitly directed against feminist like Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James (1972) who explained the oppression of working class women in terms of their relationship to the means of production.

14. To refer to the fact that the ‘hegemonic curriculum’ reflects the interests of the ruling class, Connell and his collaborators state that it is ‘organic’ to that class. Similarly, the principals of private school are seen as the ‘organic intellectuals’ of the ruling class in that their ‘work gives identity and form to the social group they are embedded in’ (Connell, Ashenden, Kessler and Dowsett, 1982: 155; 202). By ‘organic’ they mean, following the understanding of the relationship between intellectual knowledge and social classes proposed by Gramsci (1971) in the Prison Notebooks, that knowledge is never neutral but it reflects the historically specific interests of the social class within which it is produced. This idea and its epistemological and political dimensions are more clearly articulated in Connell’s (1993: 30-42) Schools and Social Justice.


16. As formalised by Friedrich Engels (1954) in his in Dialectics of Nature, this understanding of ‘synthesis’ is part of a dialectical method that encompasses three different ‘laws’: the law of the Negation of the Negation, the law of the Interpenetration of Opposites and the law of the Transformation of Quantity into Quality and Vice Versa. They are all concerned, in different ways, with ‘contradictions’, ‘reconciliations’ and ‘transformations’ but the meaning I attach to the concept of synthesis is most clearly embodied in the first ‘law’: Negation of the Negation, or ‘the law of the triad’. This ‘law’ states, in a nutshell, that change occurs through a ‘thesis-antithesis-synthesis’ process, in which every antithesis, as the negation of an existing thesis, is itself negated by a new synthesis which includes all the valid elements of the thesis and the antithesis and thus transcends both of them. The new synthesis, in its turn, generates its own negation (that is, it becomes a thesis itself) and so on. Yet, albeit similar to Engel’s ‘synthesis’ in the ‘law of the triad’ (which is directly taken from Hegel), the ‘synthesis’ embodied in the concept of ‘the problematic of synthesis’ is not understood as an objective, naturalistic ‘law’ as in the Dialectics of Nature. This will be evident later on when the notion of ‘problematique’ is introduced.
17. Adam Smith and David Ricardo are outstanding representatives of classical political economy, which Marx (1867-1893) takes as the starting point in developing the ‘theory of value’ in *Capital*. On this, see Kolakowski (1981a: 268-275).

18. The idea that, since ‘a *problematique*’ is centred on the *absence* as well as presence of problems and concepts, it can only be identified by a reading modelled on the Freudian analyst’s reading of a patient’s utterances. On this, see the translator’s glossary in Althusser and Balibar (1970: 316).


20. I am only drawing on Castoriadis’ language here, which makes it possible to talk about creativity as well as determination. Thus, I do not suggest that the ‘*problematique*’ is analogous to the ‘imaginary’. For Castoriadis (1988), every new social creation (the product of the ‘radical imaginary’ or ‘*instituting society*’) is gradually transformed into an external, alienating force with determining effects (‘*instituted society*’).
CHAPTER THREE
CHAPTER III
Structure, practice and 'onto-formativity'

I. Introduction

One of the most central dimensions of Connell’s understanding of gender is to be found in his attempt to formulate a complex and sophisticated concept of 'gender practice' and a multidimensional notion of 'gender structure' and to examine the relationship between the two. This is one of the main ways in which his 'problematique of synthesis' manifests itself and is further developed. Yet, for Connell, the issue of the relationship between structure and practice is not just one among many, nor is it specific to the study of gender. Rather, this is 'the problem where social theory logically begins' (Connell, 1987: 50, emphasis added). Thus, it is not a mere coincidence or a stylistic matter that the opening chapters of G&P and Gender are structured in the same way as the introductory chapter of RCRC: Connell (1977a: 1-7; 1987: 1-18; 2002a: 1-10) begins by describing a series of diverse facts or contemporary events (some political, economic and industrial dimensions of a strike in RCRC, some statistics about wages, education and violence in G&P and a series of diverse facts about politics, mass killings, childhood and youth in Gender) and then goes on to state that those facts or events must be treated not as a 'shapeless heap' of separate and disconnected data but as interrelated parts of a social structure, of a structure that relates to people’s practices in a complex constitutive way. Moreover, Connell (1995: x) sees his work on gender as a 'project [that] tries to link social structure and personal life systematically'.

Yet, one should not see the relationship between 'structure' and 'practice' or 'personal life' as an abstract, definite and coherent problem, or as 'the problem' posed to the social analyst by some transcendental and ahistorical theoretical law. If this were the case it
would be difficult to account for the diversified manner in which a variety of problems subsumed under the so-called 'subjectivism/objectivism' or 'individual/society' debate are articulated and explored - including the understandings centred on 'agency/structure' (Giddens, 1984; Abrams, 1982), 'voluntarism/determinism' (Anderson, 1980), 'action/system' (Dawe, 1970), lifeworld/system (Habermas, 1987) and 'micro/macra' (Alexander et. al. 1987). Furthermore, even if it is assumed that the issues raised by these debates are 'fundamentally identical' (Archer, 1995: 7), or even if the various oppositions involved are placed on an ascending order of complexity (Layder, 1994: 1-7), there is still an important implication that cannot be bypassed: there is not a definite, unified and hyper-coherent 'problem' behind this body of literature, not an essentialist problem that precedes articulation, but a series of interrelated questions generated as one poses 'the' problem.

The inadequacy of an essentialist understanding of 'the problem' can be shown by considering a recent critique of Gidden's (1984) theory of structuration. As it is well known, Giddens attempts to reconcile structure and agency by redefining the former in term of 'rules' and 'resources' that individuals draw upon as they produce and reproduce society in their activities. Derek Layder (1994: 140-141), for whom 'structure' means 'institutional context', is thus in a position to criticise Giddens for evading 'the problem'. As he put it,

If structure no longer means what it usually means, the notion of a 'duality of structure' is confusing and misleading in that it appears to tackle the traditional problem of action and structure (as institutional context)... However, Giddens does not so much solve the old problem as move it to one side by focusing on an entirely new problem and its solution... In this sense, the 'old' problem is never tackled because it is no longer defined as the important issue (Layder, 1994: 141).
Yet, Layder's understanding of 'structure' as 'institutional context' is only one of the possible ways of conceptualising 'structure' (see Lopez and Scott, 2000) and so is his definition of 'the old problem'. Thus, his attack on Giddens' theory of structuration should be seen not as a valid criticism grounded on a more authentic understanding of 'the problem' but as part of a theoretical dispute in which 'the problem' itself is constantly defined and redefined in the context of specific 'problematiques'.

The critique of an essentialist understanding of 'the problem' is central in Althusser's definition of 'the problem' and it constitutes the general principle that will govern the investigation of Connell's attempt to synthesise structure and agency. Thus, this chapter does not begin by asking: 'How does Connell attempt to reconcile structure and agency?'. Rather, the point of departure will be an examination of the multiple ways in which 'the problem' is posed and explored in contemporary theorisations of gender. Having set up the general context in which 'the question' is usually understood, I will then proceed to analyse the manner in which Connell articulates the problem and the way in which he develops his alternative. This involves a systematic analytical exploration of his understanding of 'structure', 'practice' and of the idea of 'onto-formativity'. The next chapter builds on the analysis developed in this chapter and articulates a constructive critique of Connell's theorisation of the link between structure and agency within the framework of his own definition of the problem.

II. The 'synthetic turn' in gender analysis

In the 'Sociology' entry of the Encyclopaedia of Feminist Theories, Judith Lorber (2000: 457) reviews a series of sociological understandings of gender and, in the concluding paragraph, she notes: '[t]heoretical gaps in feminist sociology that need to be addressed now are... [amongst other things] creating a unified theory of gender that encompasses
social structure and individual agency'. Far from identifying 'a theoretical gap', Lorber's statement reinforces an already existing and widespread interdisciplinary tendency towards a more 'complete' (Molm, 1993: 301), 'integrated' (Chafetz, 1990) or 'synthetic' (Alway, 1995: 221) understanding of gender, a tendency to which Lorber's (1994) own work has contributed. Although there have been scattered calls for such an approach to gender since the early 1980s (Connell, 1983d; Haug et al., 1983: 33-72; Ortner, 1984: 145), it is not until the early 1990s that an emphasis on the intersection of structure and agency becomes increasingly central in interdisciplinary gender analysis. To an important extent, this new trend was made possible by the increase in popularity of Giddens' (1984) theory of structuration and other 'theories of practice' and, more generally, by the broader intellectual movement towards 'theoretical synthesis' (Ritzer, 1990) which coincided with an era of increased 'theoretical consumption'. As Parker (2000: 5) noted with reference to structuration theory, it 'offered a kind of safe bet in a period when consumers were being required to take intellectual risks'.

Yet, this new trend was not simply an effect of 'theory consumption'. In the sociology of gender, for instance, it was largely the cumulative outcome of a series of critiques of one-sided theoretical perspectives: the systematic attack on a reductionist notion of 'patriarchy', such as the one proposed by Mitchell (1971), highlighting its Althusserian origins and its inability to deal with the active and historical dimensions of social life (Pollert, 1996); the even more vehement critique of Parsonian sex role theory (Parsons and Bales, 1956), highlighting its functionalist roots and its subsequent inability to theorise agency, power and social change (Stacey and Thorne, 1985; Connell, 1987); and the equally influential critical reconstruction of Goffman's (1976) microsociological notion of 'gender display', which served as a warning against 'voluntarism' in that it placed a stronger emphasis on the interactional contexts and institutional and structural arrangements within which acts of gender display are embedded (West and Zimmerman,
1987; Thorne, 2001). Out of these and other criticisms, and drawing mainly but not exclusively on Gidden's theory of structuration, sociologists have posed 'the problem of structure and agency' in a variety of different ways. I will examine the most influential of them shortly but, before doing so, it should be emphasised that the tendency towards the integration of structure and agency, or the broader trend towards a 'synthetic' analysis of gender, is not restricted to the field of sociology, however broad one's understanding of 'sociology' may be.

**Feminist anthropology, economics and historiography**

Chronologically, it was within the context of feminist anthropology that 'the question' was initially *explicitly* raised. In 1982, an already established feminist anthropologist, Sherry Ortner (1984), submitted a long article to the journal of *Comparative Studies in Society and History* in which she critically outlined the historical emergence of a new, interdisciplinary theoretical orientation that she called, following Bourdieu (1977), 'practice theory'. This is the theoretical orientation that also attracted Connell's (1983a) attention in the early 1980s but Ortner's conception of this orientation was broader while her primary focus was neither on class nor on gender *per se*. For Ortner, this new theoretical trend was associated not only with Giddens (1979) and Bourdieu (1977) but also with Raymond Williams' (1977) analysis of the link between literature and practice, and most importantly with Marshal Sahlins' (1981) 'practice analysis' of structural reproduction and change in eighteenth-century Hawaii. Moreover, she saw this body of literature as a very powerful and comprehensive framework of social analysis that recognises the fact that practice is structurally produced and constrained while at the same time insists that structures are themselves produced and transformed through practice. Thus, taken together, these studies made it possible, according to Ortner, to transcend a number of dichotomies (objectivism/subjectivism, idealism/materialism, and action/structure) generated by a variety of partial theoretical frameworks that dominated
anthropology during the 1960s and the early 1970s (particularly, symbolic anthropology, cultural ecology and structural Marxism). Finally, even though Ortner did not examine the relationship between 'practice theory' and gender in the article in question, she introduced the topic in a dynamic footnote but without much explanation. As she put it, 'feminist anthropology is one of the primary contexts in which a practice approach has been developing' (Ortner, 1984: 145).

Some years later, Jane Collier and Sylvia Yanagisago (1989) took Ortner's footnote as the starting point and they went on to outline the main elements of a feminist anthropology of practice. Particularly, following Ortner's analysis, they argued that the emphasis should be on 'real people doing real things', on systems of oppression and constraint and on the possibility of social change. Ortner (1996) has recently revisited these problems in her book *Making Gender*, whose 'E. P. Thompsian' title reflects her attempt to avoid falling into two familiar traps: 'too much construction (textual, discursive, etc.) on the one hand, too much making (decontextualised 'resistance') on the other' (Ortner, 1996: 5). Ortner's avoidance of these traps is grounded on a notion of gender as a 'serious game'. Thus, gender, like any other game, is culturally organised (in terms of defining categories of actors, rules and goals of the game) but at the same time actors play with skill, intention, wit, knowledge and intelligence. Yet, unlike most other games, gender is not 'light' or simply 'playful'. It is a serious game in that it is entrenched in relations of inequality and power (Ortner, 1996: 12). Ortner (1996: 139-172) exemplifies this understanding of gender in an essay entitled 'gender hegemonies', where she examines how Hawaiian women were constructed by the culture and history and how they in turn transformed their culture and history. The emphasis is on structural disjunctions, instabilities and changes rather than on continuity and reproduction. Thus, 'structure' is portrayed not as a 'total hypercoherent object' (Ortner, 1996: 18), but as a historically emergent, nontotalistic game in which Hawaiian women are 'agents,' skilled
and intense strategisers who constantly stretch 'the game' even as they enact it' (Ortner, 1996: 20). In this way, Ortner's 'game-players', like Giddens' (1984: 3-10, 41-44) agents, are competent and knowledgeable actors that are capable of 'reflexively monitoring their activity'.

A similar emphasis on the link between structure and agency is also present in feminist economics. The most representative scholar in this field is Nancy Folbre (1993; 1994) whose notion of 'structures of constraint' constitutes an attempt to transcend the dichotomy between 'free choice' or 'individual rationality', on the one hand, and 'structural determinism', on the other, a dichotomy that was produced in the conflict between the neoclassical economic tradition and the Marxist tradition. Folbre attempts to move beyond these one-sided perspectives by focusing on the way in which choices are structurally constrained while also acknowledging that 'structures of constraint' are themselves open to active modification. By 'structures of constraint', Folbre (1994: 15-50) means a set of assets, rules, preferences and norms that collectively define the context in which groups of individuals form their wants and the way in which they try to realize them. Furthermore, unlike Ortner (1996), whose 'practice theory' is focused on skilful game-players and on the capacity of practice to make 'structures', Folbre's attempt to synthesise constraint and choice consists largely of a complex definition of the internal composition of the idea of structure itself. Thus, by defining 'the problem' in terms of 'choice'/'constraint' rather than 'structure'/'agency', Folbre evades the question of historicity in that one can show that structures place constraints on actors who still retain a degree of choice without specifying the manner in which structures are themselves transformed through those free/constraint practices. This is not a simple question of terminology. It is a different way of articulating 'the problem' in that, as both Connell (1987: 94) and Ortner (1996: 17) have argued, Giddens (1984) speaks of 'structure' and
"agency" but his emphasis on the constraining and enabling dimensions of structures is also grounded on social reproduction rather than change.

In feminist historiography, there have been similar debates going on, which are also sometimes articulated in terms of the 'structure'/"agency" dichotomy (Shoemaker and Vincent, 1998: 8-14). Yet, due to the subject matter of the field, the debates are now largely centred on the question of 'change'. As Seyla Benhabib (1995: 112-114) has argued, the debate between two eminent feminist historians (Linda Gordon and Joan Scott) that was developed in the pages of Signs in 1990, represents a clash between the 'social history from below' paradigm used by Gordon and the Foucault-inspired 'discursive control from the top' paradigm used by Scott. In the former, 'change' is the product of collective agency and resistance while in the latter 'change' is understood in terms of competing discursive structures. Similarly, in their review of a group of studies on historical family sociology, Laslett and Brenner (1989: 400) have argued that historical change is understood in one-sided ways: '... [as] the aggregate of individual decisions (as in the families' strategies literature), the result of system imperatives (as in the modernization literature), or the logic of capitalism (as in the Marxist literature'). Laslett and Brenner (1989) attempt to reconcile the structure/agency opposition that they found in existing interpretations by drawing on Philip Abrams' (1982) Historical Sociology. Following Abrams, they treat history as a 'process of structuring' in which individual and collective family strategies are developed under circumstances constraint by both class and gender relations. In this way, as in the debate between Gordon and Scott, Laslett and Brenner's major emphasis is on the process through which change is generated rather than on the internal composition of structure (Folbre) or on the complexity of social practice (Ortner).
Thus, as posed in the context of feminist history, the question of ‘structure and agency’ deals primarily with problems of social change, in the context of feminist economics it deals with problems of choice and constraint in a rather static way, and in the context of feminist anthropology it becomes primarily a question of reflexivity. These ways of posing the problem are not necessarily contradictory or mutually exclusive. Yet, they highlight the lack of a single and unified question behind the theoretical discourse on ‘structure and agency’. For instance, ‘social change’ is almost not a question at all in Folbre’s analysis but it becomes the primary problem in the discourse on structure and agency in contemporary feminist historiography. Within the context of gender analysis, the point becomes even clearer if one takes into account the differential manner in which the relationship between structure and agency is explicitly articulated as a ‘problem’ in fields as diverse as feminist human geography (Chouinard, 1997), feminist linguistics (McElhinny, 1998; Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 1992; 1999), feminist theories of the welfare state (Misra and Akins, 1998), feminist theories of migration (Wright, 1995), feminist literary theory (Felski, 1989), feminist theories of institutions (Gatens, 1998), feminist theories of education (Eisenhart and Finkel, 1998) and gender criminology (Messerschmidt, 1993: 61-86). Yet, to identify some of the conflicting issues involved, and thus pave the way for an analysis of some of the distinctive features of Connell’s understanding of ‘the problem’, one needs not look further than the field of ‘sociology of gender’ itself.

**British and American sociology of gender**

Following broader trends in theoretical sociology, discussion in British and more generally European literature on gender has usually focused on the relationship between voluntarism and determinism, while in the United States the main focus has been the micro-macro link. There are some exceptions that tend to destabilise this distinction but the differences between these two bodies of scholarship cannot be ignored. The former
has been influenced by European 'theories of practice', most notably by Bourdieu (1977) and Giddens (1984) and by the Thompson-Althusser debate, while the latter has been an extension of what in the United States was called 'the problem of scope' (Wagner, 1964), which has more recently been re-articulated as the 'macro-micro problem' (Alexander et. al. 1987). As in general sociological theory literature (e.g. Archer, 1995: 7), these two bodies of scholarship, which are themselves internally differentiated, are sometimes seen as different ways of dealing with the same problem. For instance, as it will be shown later in detail, American sociologist Janet Chafetz’s (1990: 19) major focus is on the relationship between macro and micro perspectives but she tends to equate this distinction with what she calls the 'coercive-voluntaristic dichotomy'. Yet, there are some important differences between the micro/macro and the voluntarism/determinism oppositions. An analysis of them will serve as the basis for examining the specificity of Connell’s definition of the problem in the next section of this chapter.

In British and more generally European sociological literature on gender, ‘the question’ is usually posed with reference to Giddens’ (1984) theory of structuration. For instance, in the Netherlands, sociologists of gender have produced a largely uncritical but highly productive analysis of gender structures and practices within the framework of the theory of structuration (Davis, 1988; 1991; Wolffensperger, 1991). Their analysis has generated concepts like ‘gendered rules’ and ‘gendered resources’ and, like Giddens’ theory of structuration, it has made it possible to theorise the enabling dimensions of structures as well as questions of power. Yet, more recently, especially in British literature on gender, there has been an attempt to move beyond an uncritical application of Giddens’ theory by incorporating some insights from the post-structurationist critique of structuration theory. The work of post-structurationists, most notably Nicos Mouzelis’ (1991) ‘restructuring of structuration theory’ and Margaret Archer’s (1995) ‘morphogenetic approach’, has been developed in opposition to Giddens’ grasping of...
‘structure’ as ‘virtual’ and to his subsequent tendency to privilege ‘duality’ at the expense of ‘dualism’. Thus, Mouzelis (1991; 1995) has convincingly shown that Giddens’ inability to see ‘structure’ as being not only internal (duality) but also external (dualism) to action has led to a systematic neglect of macro agency and the possibilities of collective transformation. Following the post-structurationist critique, Sasha Roseneil’s (1995) *Disarming Patriarchy*, Rosemary Crompton’s (1999) work on gender and employment and Terri Apter and Elizabeth Garnsey’s (1994) ‘enactment theory of gender’ propose, each in their own way, an understanding of gender that focuses not on routine practices that tend to reproduce structures (as in Giddens’ and Wolffensperger’s analysis) but on the capacity of gender actors to distance themselves from gender structures and to bring about social change.

Albeit central, the theoretical literature on ‘structuration’ and ‘post-structuration’ has not been the only influence on British and European work on the relationship between structure, agency and gender. In fact, one of the earliest explicit analyses of the relationship between structure and agency, namely the ‘memory work’ approach developed by members of the Socialist Women’s Association in Germany (Haug’s et. al., 1983), was the outcome of a critique of Foucauldian structuralism rather than an application of a general social theory. Similarly, in England ‘the question’ has been raised, in slightly different ways, through critiques and reconstructions of the concept of ‘patriarchy’. This can be shown by focusing on a series of interrelated debates that took place in the pages of the journal of the British Sociological Association (*Sociology*). A brief review of these debates can illuminate the range of issues that British sociologists of gender have usually addressed using the language of ‘structure and agency’.

From 1979 to 1991, *Sociology* published twelve articles that deal with different aspects of gender analysis (Finch, 1993). Some of the authors, most notably Walby (1989), Waters
(1989), Acker (1989) and Maynard (1990), focus on the notion of ‘patriarchy’ and examine a series of problems pertaining to the use of this concept. Furthermore, whereas the initial debate between Walby and Waters focused on the ahistoricism and universalism implicit in certain understandings of ‘patriarchy’, Maynard’s contribution raised the question of the neglect of agency. The focus on patriarchy as a system of domination, according to Maynard (1990: 273-274), has the effect of portraying women as passive victims of a deterministic overarching system of domination. This one-sided focus on social structures can be (and sometimes is) avoided, as Maynard (1990: 274) notes, by reinstating ‘agency’ in the understanding of domination and thus stressing the possibility of ‘struggle, resistance and active defiance’.

Following Maynard’s logic, subsequent analyses and reconstructions of the concept of ‘patriarchy’ in British gender sociology have been characterised by a systematic attempt to avoid structural determinism. For instance, in her later work, Sylvia Walby (1990; 1992; 1997) retains the concept of ‘patriarchy’ but she is at pains to stress its activist dimensions. Thus, she defines ‘patriarchy’ not as a deterministic structure but as ‘a system of structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women’ (Walby, 1997: 5, emphasis added). Walby (1992: 36) claims to have solved the problem of structural determinism not by denying causality but ‘by theorising more than one causal base’. ‘Patriarchy’ is now seen as being composed of six structures (paid work, housework, sexuality, culture, violence and the state) that are ‘constantly recreated and changed by the social actions of which they are composed, even though they may appear to any historical individual as rigid institutional forces’ (Walby, 1997: 7).

Walby’s redefinition of the concept of ‘patriarchy’ has been very influential but it has not brought the debate to an end. More recently, Sociology has published two other important papers (Pollert, 1996; Gottfried, 1998), which have not simply extended and
reinvigorated the initial debate but they have effectively transformed the terms on which ‘the question’ of the relationship between structural determinism and agency are understood. In a paper that bears the Thompsian (1978) title ‘The poverty of patriarchy’, Anna Pollert (1996) has seen the debate about patriarchy, structure and agency as a re-enactment of the theoretical conflict that grasped Connell’s attention during the 1970s, namely the Thompson-Althusser debate. Within this context, Pollert (1996: 640-646) argues that Walby’s use of ‘patriarchy’ is committed to abstract Althusserian structuralism. According to Pollert (1996: 646), by positing analytically independent patriarchal structures, Walby’s analysis is static, reductionist and arbitrary. It tends to reify patriarchal structures and to underplay the motivations and the interests of the subjects and, as a result, the complexity of the historical process through which these structures come into being. Thus, ‘the question’ is no longer whether one ‘gives some space for human agency’, as Finch (1993: 241) thought when reviewing debate in the 1980s, but whether one appreciates the full complexity of practice: its connection to interests, motivations, consciousness and experience and its capacity to produce what Walby posits as ‘patriarchal structures’. Yet, as with Thompson’s critique of Althusserian structuralism, Pollert’s attack on Walby’s undertheorisation of agency runs the risk of collapsing into voluntarism. As Heidi Gottfried (1998: 455) has pointed out in her own contribution to the debate in Sociology, ‘if we follow Pollert’s own advice... we may well end upon one side of the divide’. That is, an emphasis on the complexity of practice and historical processes could generate a myriad of disconnected micro-level studies and forsake analysis of larger structures.

‘Voluntarism’ has also been defined as a ‘problem’ by a prominent American sociologist of gender, Janet Chafetz (1990: 19), but within the context of a different problématique. Chafetz’s (1990; 1997; 1999) extensive analysis of a series of theories of gender produced since the 1970s concludes that there have been developed two very different
kinds of theoretical approaches, two partial and opposing frameworks of gender thinking that reflect a fundamental dichotomy within general (American) social theory. Chafetz refers to this dichotomy in terms of a coercive/voluntaristic or macro/micro opposition rather than in terms of structure/agency dualism. Yet, she consistently equates voluntaristic theories, like rational choice approaches and feminist symbolic interactionism, with ‘choice’, ‘individual agency’ and ‘micro-level analysis’ and coercive theories, like Marxist feminist notions of patriarchy, with ‘societal-level structures’, ‘passivity’, and ‘macro-level analysis’ (Chafetz, 1999: 8; 16). Thus, Chafetz’s theoretical vocabulary gives the impression that she is interested in a range of theoretical issues similar to the ones that dominated debates in British sociology of gender. Yet, for Chafetz, voluntaristic and coercive, or micro and macro analyses do not constitute contradictory and irreconcilable perspectives that need to be surpassed but partial frameworks that can be integrated into a broader, more encompassing approach to gender.

In this way, Chafetz attempts to solve ‘the problem’ not through a systematic critique of macro and micro perspectives but through the development of an ‘integrated theory of gender’ that focuses simultaneously on both micro and macro levels of analysis. Not surprisingly, then, Chafetz’s ‘integrated approach to gender’ solves the problem of macro/micro one-sidedness but not ‘the problem of structural determinism’, as this is understood in British sociology of gender. That is, she links macro-structural changes to women’s collective practices through a focus on a process of macro to micro determinations:

Macro structural changes, primarily in economic, technological, and demographic variables, are shown to trigger a change in the gender division of labour, by which women increase their access to resource-generating work roles. In turn, this change leads to the emergence and growth of women’s collective movements. Such movements,
together with the unintended effects of changes in women’s work roles, set in motion a series of other changes in the gender system, which reduce the level of gender inequality: changes in gender social definitions, engenderment, micro power relations, and so on. (Chafetz, 1990: 41)

This understanding of change in gender relations is reminiscent of Karl Marx’s (1859) materialist theory of history as formulated in the famous ‘Preface’ to *The Critique of Political Economy*, according to which changes in the material productive forces of society bring them into conflict with the existing relations of production and this conflict generates working class consciousness and a social revolution. Thus, the analysis is not ‘partial’, in Chafetz’s sense of the term, in that it accounts simultaneously for both macro and micro changes but it is still highly deterministic. It solves Chafetz’s problem but not the problems explored by British sociologists of gender.

Chafetz’s deterministic integration of macro and micro gender approaches would not win much support from contemporary gender researchers and theorists in the United States but her underlying understanding of ‘the problem’ is widely shared. That is, Chafetz’s ‘integrated theory of gender’ reflects a broader interest in integrating different levels of analysis. As Joan Alway (1995: 220-221) has argued in a review of American sociology of gender, this focus on ‘the interrelationships between multiple levels of reality’ has been a dimension of a more general ‘synthetic turn’ in American sociological theory. It is precisely within this context that some sociologists in the United States theorise the link between structure and agency. Thus, structure and agency or ‘(inter)action’ become two distinct but interrelated levels of analysis and they are lumped together with other ‘levels’, like ‘discourse’, ‘symbolism’, ‘psychology’ or ‘identity’, to produce a multiple level understanding of gender. For instance, a recently published collection of readings in gender sociology, entitled *Revisioning Gender*, is structured in such a way as to emphasise ‘the continuum from macro to micro levels of analysis’ (Ferree, Lorber and
Hess, 1999: xix). In Evelyn Glenn’s (1999: 9-11) contribution to this book, gender is seen in terms of three different dimensions (representation, micro-interaction, and social structure) that, according to the editors, correspond to the meso, micro and macro levels of analysis respectively (Ferree, Lorber and Hess, 1999: xxi). In this way, ‘structure’ and ‘interaction’ are understood not primarily in terms of a theoretical contradiction that generates problems like ‘voluntarism’ and ‘determinism’ but as two levels among many, as partial perspectives on gender that need to be integrated into a more encompassing approach. This is precisely why Lorber (2000: 457, emphasis added) aspires to a theory ‘that encompasses social structure and individual agency’. Yet, to ‘encompass’ structure and agency is not the same as to reconcile the dichotomy or transcend the opposition of structure and agency. ‘Encompass’ embodies a more spatial meaning that focuses primarily on a difference in level or scale of analysis, in what has traditionally been defined as ‘the problem of scope’ (Wagner, 1964).

In this way, there seems to be a substantial difference between the articulation of ‘the problem’ in contemporary British sociology of gender and the manner in which the problem is posed by Janet Chafetz and the editors of Revisioning Gender in the United States. To borrow a term that Althusser (1971: 129-130) employs in his analysis of the relationship between economic infrastructure and ideological superstructure, British sociologists have primarily focused, each on their own way, on ‘indices of effectivity’: that is, on ‘relations of determination’, on the way in which ‘structure’ produces or determines ‘agency’ and vice versa and on problems (most notably voluntarism and determinism) that result from explanations based on one way determinations. Chafetz and the editors of Revisioning Gender, on the other hand, have focused on ‘the problem of scope’: that is, on a difference in level or scale of analysis, on problems of macro-micro extremism and on the development of an integrated perspective that encompasses different levels of social analysis. Furthermore, whereas British sociologists of gender
have derived their conceptual vocabulary from European 'theories of practice' and from the Thompson-Althusser debate, Chafetz and the editors of *Revisioning Gender* have developed their analyses within the framework of the American interest in the issue of the micro-macro linkage.

This distinction should not be regarded as representative of a national or continental difference in that, while the debates in *Sociology* may point to an overall European trend, *Revisioning Gender* and Chafetz's work do not reflect the total complexity of the manner in which 'the problem' is posed in the United States. For instance, the recent debate between Benhabib and Butler (et. al. 1995) on subjectivity is, in some important respects, also a dispute about voluntarism and determinism (see Stern, 2000; Webster, 2000) but it owes nothing to the sociological discourse of micro-macro linkage. The same is also true for many other poststructuralist gender analyses, especially for those that approach the question of 'structure and agency' within the broader context of anti-dualistic thinking (Alway, 1995: 222-225). Yet, this should not obscure the fact that the sociological discourse on the 'macro-micro' link has had a noticeable impact on American literature on gender. Thus, when questions of structure and agency do come up in American sociology of gender, it is more likely to find them lumped together with discussions of the relationship between macro and micro levels of analysis. This is precisely why for some American sociologists 'the problem' of structure and agency becomes another dimension of 'the problem of scope'. Thus, Barrie Thorne (2001), albeit being more aware of problems like 'voluntarism' and 'determinism', theorises what she interchangeably calls 'the micro/macro divide', the 'dichotomy between individual and society', 'agency and constraint' or 'interaction and structure' as dualisms produced by one-sided understandings of gender and can be surpassed by 'widening the conceptual scope'. As with Chafetz's analysis, Thorne's (2001: 8, 14) solution to 'the problem' consists not so much of a systematic critique of voluntarism and determinism but of a
'broadening strategy' that brings together four different levels of analysis: discourse, social structure, identity and interaction. It is therefore not a mere coincide that Thorne’s analysis, like Lorber’s (2000) formulation of the ‘problem’, relies on spatial metaphors (to widen, to broaden, to encompass).

To summarise so far, following broader trends in theoretical sociology, gender analysis has taken a ‘synthetic turn’ during the 1990s. An important part of this ‘turn’ has been an increased interest in the relationship between structure and agency. Yet, there is not a unified and coherent ‘problem’ behind the diverse and interdisciplinary body of literature on gender that deals explicitly with the relationship between structure and agency. In Ortner’s (1996) anthropology of gender, the discourse on structure and agency is drawn upon in order to deal with questions of ‘reflexivity’ and to stress the capacity of actors to produce new structures. In Folbre’s (1994) feminist economics, the discourse on structure and agency is employed not in order to elucidate the complexity of practice and the possibility of social change but in order to address problems of choice and constraint and the internal composition of ‘structure’ itself within a rather static structural framework. While almost not a question at all in Folbre’s analysis, ‘social change’ becomes the primary problem in analyses of structure and agency developed by some contemporary feminist historians. The range of problems addressed with reference to the question of the relationship between structure and agency is even more diverse within sociological analyses of gender. In British sociology of gender, analyses of the relationship between structure and agency have usually been developed out of critiques and reconstructions of the concept of ‘patriarchy’ and they have primarily focused, each in their own way, on ‘relations of determination’. In some American sociological analyses of gender, on the other hand, the relationship between structure and agency is understood not in terms of problems of determination but in terms of integrating different ‘levels of analysis’.
It is within the context of a non-essentialist understanding of 'the problem' that Connell's attempt to reconcile structure and practice should be understood. Connell (1985; 1999a), who has contributed papers both to the debates in Sociology and to Revisioning Gender, is interested, in one way or another, in most of the issues dealt with in the preceding review of the literature. Like Ortner (1996), he examines the complexity of practice as well as questions of reflexivity and he is at pains to show that people are active producers of gender structures. As with Folbre's (1994) and Walby's (1990) analysis, he focuses on the internal composition of 'structure' itself and he produces the concepts of 'labour', 'power', 'cathexis' and 'symbolism'. In doing so, he systematically emphasises the possibility of historical change, as in the analysis of structure and agency developed by some feminist historians. Finally, Connell's analysis addresses both 'questions of determination' and 'the problem of scope': his systematic critique of voluntarism and determinism is, like the debates in Sociology, centred on 'indices of effectivity' while his distinction between 'gender order' and 'gender regime' deals with a difference in level or scale of analysis.

Yet, to say that Connell deals with most of the issues that dominated debates in feminist anthropology, economics and historiography and in British and American sociology of gender is not to suggest that his understanding of 'the problem' of structure and agency is broader or more encompassing. Rather, Connell deals with most of these issues in defining the central concepts involved or in paving the ground for the transcendence of this antinomy rather than in defining 'the problem' itself. Thus, as it will be shown below, his distinction between 'gender regime' and 'gender order' links different levels of analysis but it is a distinction that Connell draws in order to clarify the concept of 'structure' itself, not in order to reduce 'the problem' of structure and practice to 'the problem of scope'. In this sense, Connell's understanding of 'the problem' is closer (though as it will be shown not identical) to the treatment of structure and agency in the
debates in Sociology, especially in the debate between Pollert (1996) and Gottfried (1998).

To be more precise, Connell articulates 'the problem' of the relationship between structure and agency within the context of the theorectico-political *problematique* of synthesis. The relationship between 'structure' and 'practice' and the political problems associated with it (determinism; voluntarism) are treated as elements of a Hegelian contradiction that needs to be transcended. Following and further developing the theoretical orientation developed in his analysis of social class, Connell's transcendence of this dichotomy is grounded on an 'anti-cuvierian' concept of 'gender structure' that stresses its internal differentiation, intractability and historicity and on a 'generative' understanding of 'practice' that stresses its complexity and transformative capacity. Yet, Connell's work on gender structure has produced a series of new concepts of structural analysis (notions like 'gender order', 'gender regime', 'gender projects', 'structural models' and 'structural inventories') that, albeit originating from his initial approach to the study of social structures, cannot be reduced to the concepts encountered in his analysis of social class. One of these new concepts, namely the idea of 'onto-formativity', which he borrows from the Czech philosopher Karel Kosik (1976), can be thought of as Connell's 'Third Term' in that it embodies his primary strategy for transcending the theoretico-political conflict of the relationship between structure and practice. In what follows, I offer an exposition of Connell's attempt to synthesise structure and practice that centres on this 'Third Term'.

**III. Onto-formativity: conditions and consequences of practice**

In the context of gender analysis, Connell comes to conceptualise the relationship between structure and agency as a specific theorectico-political problem through a...
criticism of voluntaristic and deterministic understandings of gender. His critique of ‘sex role theory’ is largely centred on the problem of voluntarism while his attack on what he calls ‘categoricalism’ deals with problems of deterministic gender thinking. These criticisms are implicit in Connell’s early work on gender and education, reviewed in the preceding chapter, but they are more clearly and systematically articulated in G&P. Taken together, they set the context within which Connell articulates ‘the problem’ while they also pave the way for the development of his concepts of ‘gender structure’, ‘gender practice’ and of the idea of ‘onto-formativity’.

Defining the problem I: sex role theory and voluntarism

In the 1940s and 1950s, the dominant framework for understanding gender was provided by Parsonian structural functionalism. Talcott Parsons conceptualised the family as a ‘small-scale social system’ whose integration was achieved through a socially functional division of labour based on sex (see Parsons and Bales, 1956; Parsons, 1942; 1945). Furthermore, he distinguished between a male (‘instrumental’) and a female (‘expressive’) role and he argued that these two roles, which are seen as complementary and interdependent, consist of definitions of those things that men and women are expected to do (‘role expectations’). Moreover, his primary emphasis was on the process through which these normative expectations are internalised (‘role socialisation’) and the behaviour they prescribe is performed (‘role enactment’). Parson’s sex role theory had a wide appeal in the 1950s and 1960s mainly because the notion of ‘sex role socialisation’ did not explicitly rely on biological reductionist accounts of gender. So influential was the sex role framework that, ‘when studies of gender started’, as Lorber (1994: 1) notes in retrospect, ‘the field was called ‘sex roles’.
By the mid-1980s, however, a substantial number of mutually reinforcing and very convincing critiques of Parsonian structural functionalism in general (Gouldner, 1979; Giddens, 1979) and sex role theory in particular (Franzway and Lowe, 1979; Stacey and Thorne, 1985) had been accumulated. Particularly, 'Parsonianism' was criticised for its emphasis on consensus, stability and continuity and for its under-theorisation, or even concealment, of questions of power and conflict. Connell himself explored these problems in a very systematic way. In an early paper, written at a time when Connell (1979b: 204-206) was still working on class analysis, he goes as far as to argue that role theory is a 'theoretical ideology' that had been developed in the 1950s in order to cope with the crisis of legitimation of Western capitalism. Role theory performed this ideological function, in Connell's view, by leaving the questions of 'power' and 'change' untheorised. I will examine these dimensions of Connell's critique of role theory in Chapter V, when dealing with his understanding of power. At this juncture, as a way of introducing his understanding of the problem of structure and agency, I will focus on a different, interrelated but conceptually distinct, dimension of his critique of sex role theory: his claim that sex role theory collapses into 'voluntarism'. Given that structural functionalism is usually criticised for its one-sided over-reliance on structures and for its subsequent neglect of agency, this is a radical and much more original criticism. Giddens (1984: 2), for instance, has argued that structural functionalism is grounded upon 'an imperialism of the social object' while Layder (1994: 13-33) treats the theory as a deterministic approach to social reality akin to Althusserian Marxism.

Connell does not dispute the fact that the structural functionalist concept of 'role' is a deterministic one but he argues that the ultimate determinism in role theory is an individual, not a social one (Connell, 1979b: 205). Thus, far from relying on 'an imperialism of the social object', structural functionalism collapses into a complex form of 'voluntarism'. The problem begins, according to Connell (1979b: 205-207; 1987: 47-
54), with what many see as the greatest strength of the theory: its emphasis on 'the social' via the concept of 'expectations', an emphasis that allows a shift away from explicit biological reductionism. Thus, sex role theorists argue that the differences in women's and men's behaviours are the product of different social expectations and are therefore irreducible to biological differences. In this respect, social constraint comes from the occupants of counter-positions who hold stereotyped role expectations and reward or punish depending on the conformity of the role enactment. 'But why', Connell (1985: 263) goes on to ask, 'do the second parties apply the sanctions?'. This quickly comes down, according to Connell, to a question of individual will and thus role theory's 'social structure' dissolves into agency. In the final analysis, as Connell (1979b: 205) concludes, the theory 'rests on a contradiction, that between the recognition of social constraints, and an individualist mode of theorising them- a mode that reads social processes as inter-individual transactions, and grounds them in individual wills'. It is thus not a social theory at all.

In this way, Connell's critique of sex role theory resounds some aspects of his attack on empiricist understandings of social class in the 1970s. Just as in RCRC Connell critiques empiricist understandings of class for their failure to develop a notion of 'structure', he now argues that role theory relies on a non-social conception of 'structure'. Yet, sex role theory is more complex in that, as Connell (1987: 50) argues, the missing element of 'structure' is covertly supplied by the biological category of sex and this non-explicitly biological theory collapses into an abstract account of sex differences. This makes it possible to circumvent the problem of 'arbitrariness', which was central in 'structureless' notions of class (see Chapter I), in that the 'male role' and the 'female role' are understood in terms of clear-cut, distinct and complementary expectations attached to biological status (Connell, 1995: 25). Yet, this implicit reliance on a biological dichotomy and the notion of the 'complementarity of roles' that accompanies it tend to
reinforce the other two problems Connell identified in ‘structureless’ concepts of class, namely the problems of ‘power-blindness’ and ‘ahistoricity’: the definition of structure in terms of complementary biological expectations tends to legitimate social inequality and power (the ‘male role’ and the ‘female role’ are simply equal and ‘complementary’), to conceal and pathologise resistance to power (departures from the normative sex role are but the products of ‘imperfect socialisation’, instances of ‘deviance’) and, by implication, to underplay structural contradiction and historical dynamics (see Demetriou, 2001: 337-339). Thus, for Connell, the inability of role theory to deal with issues of power and social change is a direct outcome of its reliance on a non-social and ultimately biological concept of ‘structure’.

It may be the case that Connell simplifies the notion of ‘determination’ proposed by sex role theorists. For instance, Nigel Edley and Margaret Wetherell (1995: 87-88) have argued that Connell underplays the fact that, in theories of sex role assimilation as well as in Parsonian functionalism, ‘constraint’ comes ‘as much from within the individual [e.g. fear of castration for men] as it is imposed from outside [through interpersonal expectations]’. Yet, even if the theory is grounded on a dialectic between external (interactional) and internal (psychological) determination, this does not undermine Connell’s (1979b: 207) central criticism: that the theory lacks a social conception of structure, a conception that ‘obey[s] a fully historical logic’, that deals with issues of institutional constraint, with the social formation of gender groupings, and with questions of power and oppression.

**Defining the problem II: categoricalism and structuralism**

In contrast to the voluntarist and apolitical character of sex role theory, the feminist literature on gender that emerged after the early 1970s centred precisely on questions of social constraint and power. According to Connell (1987: 61), Marxist, socialist and
radical perspectives on women's oppression, as well as academic analyses of 'sexual stratification', constitute an advance over role theory precisely because they treat the relationships between men and women in terms of a structure of power and oppression. Yet, for Connell (1985: 264-266; 1987: 54-61), the notion of 'structure' upon which this diverse feminist scholarship relies is as problematic as the voluntarist idea of 'structure' proposed by sex role theorists. In escaping the problems of 'voluntarism' and 'power blindedness', feminist analyses of power relationships have often collapsed into an abstract structuralist, 'categorical' and ultimately equally ahistorical understanding of 'gender structure'.

The least promising structural perspectives on women's oppression have been developed by what Connell (1987: 41-47) calls 'extrinsic' theories of gender. By extrinsic theories, Connell (1987: 35, emphasis added) refers to perspectives that treat 'the power of men and the subordination of women as effects of imperatives outside the direct relationship between the two'. In other words, extrinsic approaches to women's subordination focus on external structural forces, like the functional needs of society or the imperatives of the reproduction of class relationships. The simplest extrinsic approach is to be found in orthodox Marxist analyses, like Tony Cliff's (1984) *Class Struggle and Women's Liberation*, that grant absolute theoretical primacy to the structure of economic relations and tend to see women's subordination as a side effect of class struggle. A somewhat more complex extrinsic analysis can be found in 'social reproduction theories of gender'. Influenced by various versions of structuralism (especially Althusserian Marxism), reproduction theorists like Juliet Mitchell (1971) treat sexual and gender relations not as mere epiphenomena of class struggle but as 'the site of the reproduction of relations of production' (Connell, 1983e: 55; 1987: 43). Thus, the focus of analysis now shifts towards a new set of social relations and processes - centred on the family, domestic life and child socialisation - that collectively make up 'patriarchy' and account for the
reproduction of capitalism. In this way, while the orthodox Marxist approach to women’s oppression relies exclusively on a concept of structure borrowed from class analysis and on an absolute class determinism, social reproduction theory proposes a concept of patriarchy as a ‘truncated structure’. That is, by relegating patriarchy to the realm of ‘reproduction’, reproduction theorists tend to assume that gender relations are not part of the sphere of production (Connell, 1983e: 55). This truncated notion of patriarchy, as Connell reasons, tends to reproduce all the problems of ‘reproductionist thinking’ identified in his work on education (see Chapter II): it collapses into functionalism insofar as patriarchy is constantly seen as being ‘functional’ for capitalism; it is ahistorical in that the idea of reproduction ‘makes sense only if an invariant structure [the object of reproduction] is postulated at the start’; and it is politically indefensible in that reproduction appears as a postulate, an inevitability, not as ‘an object of strategy’ (Connell, 1987: 44).

To circumvent the theoretical and political problems generated by the reproductionist understanding of patriarchy as a ‘truncated structure’ one needs to move beyond an extrinsic theory of gender. One needs to do away with the logic ‘that sees patriarchy as the kitchen where particular kinds of effects, required by a social system, are cooked up’ (Connell, 1983e: 56). This requires an ‘intrinsic’ and more autonomous concept of gender ‘structure’, a concept that does not ‘derive its logic from a source outside itself’ (Connell, 1987: 91). Yet, the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic understandings of gender is not meant to draw a line of demarcation between what is ‘inside’ and what is ‘outside’ the structure of gender relations. On the contrary, it is meant to offer an antidote to the ‘truncated’ concept of gender structure proposed by social reproduction theories, to the tendency to relegate gender to the realm of reproduction. ‘Gender’, as Connell (1987: 45) put it, ‘is part of the relations of production, and has been from the start; it is not just mixed up in their reproduction’. In this sense, there is nothing outside gender. Thus,
although certain aspects of Connell’s analysis, as Mike Donaldson (1993: 643, 653) has rightly observed, tend to give the impression that social relations can be divided between those internal to gender and those external to gender, his concept of an ‘intrinsic gender structure’ is directed precisely against an external/internal dualism. Thus, when Connell (1987: 53; 1985: 263) attacks role theorists for explaining changes in gender relations in terms of external forces (coming ‘from outside’ gender), like economic and technological developments, he does not mean to suggest that technology or the economy are independent of gender relations and therefore not gendered. Rather, his target is economic and technological reductionism.

The first step towards an intrinsic concept of gender structure, according to Connell (1987: 46), was made by socialist feminist ‘dual systems theory’ (Hartmann, 1979; Eisenstein, 1979). Instead of relegating gender relations to the realm of reproduction, dual systems theorists proposed that capitalism and patriarchy are distinct and equally comprehensive systems of social relations and that an understanding of the latter requires ‘an intrinsic theory logically independent from the theory of class’ (Connell, 1987: 46).

Yet, as I have argued in Chapter II when examining his early work on the ‘intersection’ of class and gender, Connell identifies some important theoretical problems in this approach, particularly a tendency towards functionalism, abstract structuralism and categoricalism. The last of these problems, as Connell (1987: 54-61) argues in G&P, is also shared by more complete intrinsic understandings of gender. Radical feminist examinations of power relationships and academic analyses of ‘sexual stratification’ take the power of men over women to be a fundamental structure of social relations which can be studied through an examination of the direct relationships between men and women, not through an analysis of the effects of class structure. Yet, in these intrinsic analyses, ‘structure’ is still treated in categorical way in that the categories of men and women are taken for granted, they are presumed to be ‘given’ ‘coherent’ and ‘universal’. As with
categorical understandings of class (see Chapter I), the ‘static logic of categories’ directs attention away from the process through which categories are constituted.

Thus, by categorical gender thinking, Connell refers to what could be called a ‘football match conception of gender’⁴: the idea that men and women constitute two internally undifferentiated blocks that first exists as logical categories and then enter into a particular kind of power relationship (Connell, 1983e: 55, 57). In radical feminist analyses, according to Connell (1987: 61), this categorical conception of structure offers women ‘a metaphysical solidarity (‘all women’)’ and ‘an omnipresent enemy (‘all men’), as in Brownmiller’s (1975) understanding of rape in terms of ‘a conscious process of intimidation by which all men keep all women in a state of fear’. Some more complex categorical analyses of power tend to incorporate other dimensions of inequality (like ‘class’ or ‘race’) and, through a logic of cross-classification, they produce multi-dimensional grids on which people can be located, making it possible to talk about the specificity of ‘working class men’ or ‘middle class Anglo women’. Yet, as Connell (1987: 59) notes expanding his critique of ‘the dimensional logic’ of stratification theory examined in Chapter 1 (see Connell, 1977b), ‘the more sophisticated the cross-classification becomes, the more firmly is the analysis embedded in a static logic of categories’. Thus, as with other categorical concepts of structure, cross-classification categoricalism addresses power in a direct way and provides a sound basis for mobilising political action but is does so in a very abstract and schematised way. It tends to collapse into ‘Cuvierian structuralism’, to reify categories and underplay the historical process through which they are actively produced (Connell, 1987: 56).

In this way, whereas sex role theory is grounded on a non-social concept of structure and ultimately collapses into voluntarism, the various analyses of power developed by feminists since the early 1970s have proposed a concept of structure that relies on a static
categorical logic and underplays agency and the possibility of active transformation. In Connell's (1987: 54) words, '[i]f sex role theory tends to dissolve into individualism, categoricalism resolutely stays with the big picture and paints it with a broad brush'. To these opposing theoretical orientations, correspond two entirely different conceptions of gender politics. Sex role theory, on the one hand, leads to a form of politics associated with liberal feminism, particularly to a politics of reform. 'The project of feminism', as Connell (1985: 264) put it, 'becomes a program of role reform, of loosening social conventions, not of contesting power and overthrowing injustice'. Categorical theories of gender power, on the other hand, lead to a more radical form of politics grounded on a universal male/female antagonism. '[L]ike the big bang theory of revolution implicit in Marxist structuralism', they tend to treat the possibility of change as an all-or-nothing issue and they are very pessimistic about the prospects for immediate or partial reforms (Connell, 1987: 60-61; 1985: 270). None of these theories, Connell (1985: 270) concludes, allows for more complex forms of gender and sexual politics, such as the possibility of strategic alliances between women and gays or the question of politics among different groups of men.

Thus, the voluntarism implicit in sex role theory as well as the abstract structuralism that pervades categorical understandings of gender structure represent, not abstract theoretical flaws, but complex theoretico-political problems. Moreover, not only is 'the problematic of synthesis' central in Connell's critique of sex role theory and categoricalism but it also provides the basis for his attempt to transcend the structuralism/voluntarism antinomy. Connell himself is not silent about the influence that the problematic of synthesis has had on the development of his theory of gender. As he put it in G&P,

[Understanding gender] requires a form of social theory that gives some grip on the interweaving of personal life and social structure without collapsing towards
voluntarism and pluralism on one side, or categoricalism and biological determinism on the other… In very general terms, we know how to build this kind of understanding into social theory, since parallel problems have arisen in other fields. In class analysis they arose in a debate between ‘structure’ a la Althusser and ‘history’ a la Thompson... (Connell, 1987: 61-62)

This may sound like an attempt to solve a pre-existing ‘parallel problem’ but it should not obscure the fact that the problematique of synthesis is implicated in the constitution of ‘the problem’ itself. To slightly paraphrase Althusser and Balibar (1970: 25), Connell’s problematique provides the context within which ‘the problem’ enters the field of visibility. As the passage just quoted reveals, it also provides the basis for the solution to be offered. As in his understanding of class, Connell’s attempt to transcend this dualism is grounded on a ‘generative’ or ‘productivist’ understanding of practice and on an activist notion of structure linked to one another in a complex constitutive way. In what follows, I focus firstly on his concept of ‘gender structure’ and then on his understanding of ‘gender practice’, paying particular attention to the idea of ‘onto-formativity’, a concept that embodies Connell’s understanding of the relationship between the two.

**Gender structure: structural models and structural inventories**

Having outlined the problems with sex role theory and categorical understandings of gender, Connell (1987: 91-64) goes on, in the second part of G&P, to develop a concept of gender as a structure of social relations. In doing so, he draws on the conceptual vocabulary developed in his early work and he produces a series of new concepts of structural analysis. Figure III lists these concepts as well as their origins and charts some forms of relationships among them. The starting point is the concepts of ‘pattern’ and ‘tradition’, developed initially in TCCP and further elaborated in RCRC and later writings. ‘Patterns’ and ‘traditions’, as I have argued in Chapter I, embody the synchronic and the diachronic dimensions of structural analysis respectively. These two concepts
provide the basis for the development of a distinction between ‘structural models’ and ‘structural inventories’ in G&P. ‘Models’ and ‘inventories’ are complementary and internally differentiated (see third column) ways of looking at the same structural facts and processes. Taken together, these concepts make up Connell’s understanding of gender as a social structure and they constitute the first step towards a theory that aspires to avoid both voluntarism and structuralism.

The notion of a ‘structural model’ originates from Connell’s understanding of structure as ‘pattern’ and from what I have previously called the principle of ‘interconnection’ and the idea of ‘de-randomisation’. As used by Connell (1987: 99), the concept refers to a way of looking at the social world that centres on the patterning, systematicity and de-randomised nature of events, facts and practices (see also Connell, 2001: 3). For example, to argue that acts of multiple killings are not randomly distributed or gender neutral phenomena but they are much more likely to be perpetrated by men (Connell, 2002a: 1-2)
is to make a first step in talking about these phenomena in the language of structural
modelling. Further, to argue that acts of mass killings are inseparable from, and cannot be
understood independently of, a series of distinct and apparently unrelated phenomena
(such as men's general economic and political superiority, which may be connected to
their capacity to access and own guns, or men's over-representation in jobs that require
the use of force, including the police and the military, which establishes and naturalises a
link between masculinity and violence) is to make a more decisive step and start
interpreting these acts in terms of their relations to other elements of a larger social
structure (Connell, 2002a: 10).

As well as stressing the de-randomisation and interdependence of social phenomena,
Connell's definition of a structural model, like Folbre's (1994) definition of 'structure'
reviewed earlier, places a strong emphasis on the element of 'constraint'. The
interrelations and de-randomisations identified through structural modelling are said to
constitute 'patterns of constraint on practice' (Connell, 1987: 99; 107) in that they reflect
particular limits to action, particular ways in which practices are ordered. The emphasis
on constraint is implicit in the idea of de-randomisation itself in that practices are ordered
in particular ways (de-randomised) because of the existence of an underlying structure of
social relations. To return to the previous example, acts of mass killing are de­
randomised precisely to the extent that an overall structure of violence sets limits to, or
constrains, people's practices. As a result, women are less likely to perpetrate acts of
mass killings because, for instance, dominant definitions of femininity emphasise
sensitivity and weakness rather than aggressiveness and capacity for violence. In this
way, Connell (1987: 97) defines a structural model as a way of specifying 'patterns of
constraint on practice inherent in a set of social relations'.
The method of structural modelling is not Connell’s own invention. It is central, as Connell (1987: 98) notes in *G&P*, in the work of Levi-Strauss (1969), in Piaget’s (1949) theory of intelligence and in Chomsky’s (1957) theory of syntax. As it was argued in Chapter I, it is precisely through a critical engagement with this body of literature that Connell (1971; 1977a, b) developed his initial approach to the study of social structures. In *G&P*, where Connell (1987: 91) focuses primarily on the structure of gender rather than class relations, he makes a more innovative step and goes on to break down the concept of a single structure into ‘component substructures’. In doing so, he distinguishes between the substructures of ‘labour’, ‘power’ and ‘cathexis’. In *TMTB*, Connell (2000) renews his approach to structural differentiation by adding a forth substructure, which he names ‘symbolism’. Taken together, these four substructures constitute analytically distinct but substantially interrelated patterns of constraint on social practice. They are empirically identifiable examples of structural models.

Connell’s analysis of structural differentiation is inspired by Mitchell’s (1971) four-fold division of gender structure (production, reproduction, socialisation, sexuality). It is also similar to the six-fold model of patriarchy (paid work, housework, sexuality, culture, violence and the state) proposed recently by Walby (1990) as well as to the four-fold division (kinship, the labour market, education and the polity) formulated by the feminist historian Joan W. Scott (1986: 43) in her reconstruction of Gayle’s Rubin’s (1975) undifferentiated idea of a ‘sex-gender system’. Yet, Connell’s understanding of structural differentiation differs from these other three perspectives in some important respects. It differs from Mitchell’s model in that the latter distinguishes different types of practice while Connell’s analysis of structural differentiation centres on ‘patterns of constraint’. Thus, ‘socialisation’ is not a structure (in Connell’s sense of the term) but a series of practices structured by several patterns of constraints (Connell, 1987: 96). Similarly, Scott’s perspective identifies different ‘domains of social life’, what Connell
would call 'sites of social practice', rather than patterns of constraint inherent in practices. Finally, Walby's model of structural differentiation is closer to Connell's understanding of structure. With the exception of 'the state', which may be considered as an 'institution' (on this see below) rather than a structure *per se*, Walby's perspective places a stronger emphasis on the constraining effects of structures, or what she calls 'causal bases' (Walby, 1992: 36). Yet, Walby's analysis is still tied to an inherently 'unequal' theorisation of gender. Her commitment to the concept of patriarchy implies that inequality is inevitable in this structure of social relations. As Connell argues, reiterating a critique of the idea of patriarchy developed by Gayle Rubin (1975: 168) in the 1970s, 'if we want to include in the picture of gender patterns that are not inherently unequal, we need a different formulation' (Connell, 2002a: 57).

The first substructure of gender relations is what Connell calls 'labour' (Connell, 1987: 99-106) or 'production relations' (Connell, 1995: 74; 2000b: 25). This is not the same as Scott's (1986) 'labour market' in that it refers not to the institution of labour *per se* or to the workplace as a site of practice but to patterns of constraint inherent in work practices. Connell (1987: 99) cites as an example the sexual division of labour, which constitutes a social rule allocating particular types of work to particular categories of people. In de-randomising the allocation of work, the sexual division of labour places constraints on further practice. Thus, '[a]n employee entering a firm is given job X if a woman, job Y if a man' (Connell, 1987: 99). It is a similar de-randomisation of work practices that underlies the distinction between household production and paid employment and their connection to femininity and masculinity respectively. Furthermore, housework and paid work must be treated not as two distinct structures, as in Walby's (1990) model, but as elements of a distinction produced in a single structure of production relations (Connell, 2000: 24). Finally, the substructure of labour encompasses not only the allocation of labour but also the sexual de-randomisation of job preferences, tasks, skills and training...
As well as the nature of consumption. It also accounts for the gendered character of capital accumulation. As Connell (2000b: 25) put it, 'it is not a statistical accident... that men and not women control the major corporations and the great private fortunes'.

Connell’s (1987: 107-111; 2000b: 24-25) second substructure of gender is what he calls ‘power’ or ‘power relations’. In WWU, where he first introduces this substructure of gender, Connell offers a Weberian definition of power: ‘the direct and indirect ways in which people are controlled by, or in the interests of, others’ (Connell, 1983d: 40; see also Weber, 1958). In his later writings, Connell does not define ‘power’ in a concrete way but he seems to subscribe to a narrower and more ‘negative’ definition, to a definition that is consistent with his claim that power ‘is always the opposite of democracy’⁶. Thus, he identifies ‘power’ with a series of interconnected, de-randomised practices and relations (including authority, violence, force, control, coercion and cultural hegemony) that account for the overall subordination of women and the dominance of men (Connell, 1987: 96; 107). As in C. W. Mills’ (1956: 10-11) *The Power Elite*, ‘power’ is not conceived of as a property of charismatic individuals. It is rather something that groups of men derive from concrete institutional bases, like the military, the police, the prison system, the bureaucratic apparatus of the state and the hierarchy and labour force of the heavy and high-technology industry (Connell, 1987: 109). In this way, power in the state and power expressed as ‘male violence’ are not two distinct phenomena, as in Walby’s (1990) analysis of structural differentiation. They are aspects of the same structure (Connell, 2000: 24; 1992: 83). There is a patriarchal structure in all these relations of power in that, although women may have more or equal power in particular local settings (e.g. woman-headed households), contemporary Western societies are characterised by a systematic dominance of men.
The third substructure, which Connell (1987:111-116; 2000b: 25-26) names ‘cathexis’ or ‘emotional relations’, encompasses the patterning of what the British group Red Collective (1978) calls ‘sexual social relationships’: ‘relationships organised around one person’s emotional attachment to another’ (Connell, 1987: 111-112) or ‘who and what you get stuck on’ (Connell, 1983d: 40). The Freudian concept of ‘cathexis’ is here generalised to refer not simply to the psychic charge that people attach to mental objects but to the social construction of emotionally charged social relations in a broader sense. This encompasses not only the social organization of sexual desire and practice (like the patterning of object-choice and prohibitions or the production of sexual categories and identities), not merely the personal experience and daily conduct of emotional relationships (including the emotional relationships involved in rearing children and in forming families, like trust, distrust, jealousy, solidarity and competition) but even emotional links that extend beyond face-to-face interaction (an in nationalism where attachment to the nation is partly achieved via the use of traditional gender imagery, like ‘motherland’). As with the substructures of ‘labour’ and ‘power’, there are definite patterns in the relations and practices that make up the substructure of cathexis. For instance, in contemporary Western societies sexual desire and sexual practice is usually organised in terms of a heterosexual/homosexual dichotomy, even though queer theorists (e.g. Butler, 1990) have recently challenged this binary opposition.

Finally, in his most recent work, Connell (2000b; 2002a) adds a forth substructure to his original three-fold model: the substructure of ‘symbolism’ or ‘symbolic relations’. This addition represents an attempt to renew his account of structural differentiation in the light of recent post-structuralist analyses of gender, which emphasise the importance of language and communication and the centrality of discursive and symbolic structures. Thus, the substructure of symbolism refers to patterns of constraint inherent in linguistic and other communication practices, including not only the gendering of written and oral...
language but also patterns of gender symbolism in dress, makeup, gesture, body culture, photography, film and architecture (Connell, 2002a: 65-68). Gender symbolism relies on a dichotomous structuring of cultural objects and signs where the masculine is usually associated with the positive and valued side of the opposition. Thus, in education there is a systematic association of masculinity with science and femininity with the arts and humanities.

Taken together, labour, power, cathexis and symbolism make up Connell's general understanding of gender in terms of structural modelling. However, as mentioned earlier, these substructures are not distinct or separate. 'They are constantly intermingled and interacting in practice' (Connell, 2002a: 68). In illustrating their interconnectedness, Connell (2002a: 67-68) refers to the case of a male-to-female transsexual whose experience of gender power (in the form of male violence) is closely linked to men's economic capacity to hire her as a stripper (production relations), to the symbolic construction of 'the transsexual' and the overall organisation of cathexis that accompanies it (co-existence of desire and hatred). Furthermore, Connell (1987: 97) is at pains to stress that these substructures are not theoretical postulates but empirically identifiable patterns of constraint on social practice, which may co-exist in a given situation. It follows that they are neither necessary structures nor exhaustive of the field. Rather, Connell's (1987: 97) model of structural differentiation 'rests on the more gentler, more pragmatic but perhaps more demonstrable claim that with a framework like this we can come to a serviceable understanding of current history'.

Yet, structural models do not provide a complete understanding of structural processes. Rather, structural modelling, on its own, tends to produce a partial and static version of structural analysis, focusing on synchronic interrelations and de-randomisations. As with Piaget's (1949) one-sided focus on 'patterns', which Connell (1971) criticised in his early
work, an exclusive focus on structural models draws attention away from the historical dimensions of structural analysis. As shown in Chapter I, in developing a theory of social class, Connell (1971; 1977a) deals with this problem through an emphasis on ‘traditions’ and through a focus on the concept of ‘situation’ and the method of ‘generative thinking’. In a similar way, Connell’s approach to gender addresses the historical dimensions of structural processes through the idea of a ‘structural inventory’. This concept is developed with reference to Lucien Goldmann’s (1977) ‘genetic structuralism’ which, according to Connell’s (1987: 98; 2001: 12) interpretation, makes it possible to study the transformations of complex structures over real time as opposed to the ‘virtual’ time of static or ‘Cuvierian’ structuralism. Thus, whereas structural models push towards a static, at best comparative, analysis of synchronic interrelations (for instance, comparing the Chinese and the Australian structures of cathexis), structural inventories push towards a more complete exploration of a given situation, addressing its historical formation, the current state of play and the possibility of transformation (for instance, reviewing the background to a particular historical event, examining the balance of forces at a particular historical moment or attempting to grasp the current moment in sexual politics involves compiling a structural inventory). Furthermore, an analysis of the systematic economic, social or political oppression of homosexual men would rely primarily on structural modelling while a historical study of the emergence of the category of homosexuality or an analysis of its place in the gender system of a particular society would most likely involve the compilation of a structural inventory.

In developing the concept of a structural inventory, Connell introduces another set of concepts of structural differentiation, distinguishing different levels of inventory analysis (see Figure III). On a micro or institutional level, Connell uses the concept of a ‘gender regime’ to refer to the state of play in gender and sexual politics within a particular institution, like the school or the family. On a mezzo or societal level, he employs the
concept of a ‘gender order’, which refers to the structural inventory of an entire society, while on a macro or global level he speaks of a ‘world gender order’ (Connell, 1987: 98-99, 117-141; 2000b: 40-43). Yet, the distinction between structural models and structural inventories and the formulation of two sets of concepts of structural differentiation is not meant to suggest that there are two distinct structures or two separate sets of issues or topics. Rather, according to Connell (1987: 99), models and inventories ‘are in principle complementary ways of looking at the same facts. In practice they are constantly done together, with shifting emphases’. Thus, an analysis of the structural inventory of a particular institution or an entire society involves identifying the substructures of labour, power, cathexis and symbolism within it. Similarly, a comprehensive examination of a particular substructure must cut across different levels of analysis. In this way, inventory analysis makes it possible to examine the specificity of concrete historical situations, to ascertain the possibilities of social transformation and to analyse the interweaving of particular structural models in those situations. Additionally, the combined use of these two structural techniques enables the researcher to specify the focus of analysis in a more concrete way (see Maharaj, 1995: 58-61). Thus, using Connell’s vocabulary of structural analysis, one can now speak of the intersection of power and cathexis in the gender regime of a particular school or compile a structural inventory of contemporary suburban family formations, focusing on the changing nature of the division of labour during the past fifty years. In Chapter IV, I will argue that Connell and most of the researchers that employ his concepts of structural analysis have not been able to take full advantage of the analytical value of such a theoretical framework, especially as regards historical analysis.

Before turning to Connell’s understanding of social practice, a brief exposition of the three concepts of inventory analysis is necessary. Beginning from micro level analysis, Connell’s idea of ‘gender regime’, as noted above, refers to the state of play in gender relations in a particular institutional setting. Although the concept was initially introduced
to describe the structural inventory of a given school (Kessler, Ashenden, Connell and Dowsett, 1982b), in G&P Connell (1987: 119-142) generalises it to refer to the current state of gender politics in all types of institutions, including the family, the workplace, corporations, the state, the army or even 'the street'. By 'institution', Connell (1987: 140-141) means 'cyclical practice', that is practice that tends to reproduce the initial situation and create the conditions that make further cyclical practice probable. In a subsequent paper, Connell (1990) exemplifies micro level inventory analysis through an examination of the gender regime of the modern liberal state, focusing on the historically produced state of play in gender relations within that institution and identifying its patterned gender arrangements in terms of labour, power and catheysis.

The gender regime of a particular institution cannot be understood in isolation. Rather, it exists in the context of other institutions and an adequate structural analysis must deal with this broader context. Furthermore, one has to move beyond the study of isolated gender regimes and examine the relationships among them, which may be additive, complementary, harmonious, conflicting or even contradictory (Connell, 1987: 134-136). This involves a societal level inventory analysis that focuses on the historical process through which different gender regimes are constructed and reconstructed, complement each other and come into conflict. The outcome of this historical process is not a logical unity but an 'empirical unification', a complex 'historical composition' that produces the gender order of a society. As Connell (1987: 116) put it,

'It is a unity- always imperfect and under construction- of historical composition. I mean 'composition' as in music: a tangible, active and often difficult process of bringing elements into connection with each other and thrashing out their relationships.'
Thus, it is not accidental that, in describing this complex unification of gender regimes, Connell employs a concept produced by a feminist social historian. When Jill Julius Matthews (1984: 3-29) talks of a 'gender order' in her study of the construction of femininity in twentieth-century Australia it is precisely such a complex historical formation that she has in mind. At this juncture, it is worth noting that the concept of gender order is broader and more inclusive than the notion of 'patriarchy' in that the latter, as Connell (2002a: 57) argued in his critique of Walby's model of structural differentiation examined earlier, implies an ahistorical state of male oppression over women and ignores varying forms of male domination and female resistance and power. Thus, it is central in Matthews' (1984: 14) and Connell's analysis that a gender order can be matriarchal or patriarchal or egalitarian, just as an economic order can be feudal or capitalist or communist (see Demetriou, 2004).

The same applies to the idea of a 'world gender order', which Connell (2000b: 40-43) has recently introduced to refer to the historical unification of institutional gender regimes and societal gender orders on a world scale. Thus, in TMTB Connell (2000b: 41) defines the world gender order as 'the structure of relationships that connects the gender regimes of institutions, and the gender orders of local society, on a world scale'. Yet, local gender orders do not 'mix on equal terms to produce a United Colors of Benetton gender order' (Connell, 2000: 43). Rather, as in the constitution of societal gender orders, the process is a highly complex form of 'historical composition' that involves not only conflict and hegemonic struggles among existing gender orders but also the creation of new arenas of gender relations that extent beyond individual countries and regions, like transnational and multinational corporations, the European Union or United Nations agencies (Connell, 2002a: 109-114; 2003: 257).
In short, Connell’s concept of gender as a structure of social relations relies mainly on the ideas of structural models and structural inventories and the concepts of internal differentiation associated with them. Models and inventories, as I have noted in the beginning of this section, are associated with synchronic and diachronic structural analysis respectively. Thus, model analysis focuses on synchronic interrelations and de-randomisations while inventory analysis focuses on the current state of play in gender politics and on the historical composition of a given situation. Yet, this is not meant to suggest that gender regimes and gender orders are historical while the substructures of labour, power, cathexis and symbolism are immune to historical change or historical analysis. The method of structural modelling, as a way of looking at the social world, does privilege synchronic over diachronic analysis but this does not make the substructures that can be identified via this method less historical. In fact, for Connell (2002a: 68), serious gender analysis begins with the recognition that ‘everything about gender is historical’ and this includes not only gender regimes, gender orders and gender substructures but also the categories of gender and the body. Connell’s account of the historicity of gender structure, which is critically examined in the next chapter, is inextricably linked to his understanding of ‘gender practice’ and particularly to his account of the relationship between practice and structure. Furthermore, an adequate understanding of Connell’s notion of structure, of its historicity and active construction, will be achieved after considering his notion of practice.

Gender practice: onto-formativity

As with the concept of ‘structure’, the notion of ‘practice’ is central in Connell’s understanding of gender. Connell deals with practice in three different but interrelated contexts, which correspond to the three levels of ‘the problematique of synthesis’ identified in Figure II (see end of Chapter II), namely ‘subjectivation’, ‘embodiment’ and
'structuration’. On the level of ‘subjectivation’, which is examined in Chapter V, Connell’s deals with gender practice as it relates to the formation of gender identities or, to employ Judith Butler’s (1988) language, he deals with the *performative dimensions of practice*. On the level of ‘embodiment’, as I will explain in Chapter VII, he concentrates on the relationship between ‘the body’ and gender practice, that is on the *body-reflexive dimensions practice*. Similarly, on the level which I have called ‘structuration’, he examines practice vis-à-vis structure, concentrating mainly on what he terms ‘*onto-formative* dimensions of practice’. This threefold distinction, shown in Figure IV, specifies not three different kinds of practice but three interrelated ways of looking at social practices, at their conditions and consequences. Thus, any concrete empirical instance of ‘practice’ is simultaneously and inextricably performative, onto-formative and body-reflexive, even though a particular dimension may predominate in a given case. Furthermore, in what follows, I focus not on Connell’s ‘general theory of practice’ but on his account of the relationship between gender regimes, orders and substructures, on the one hand, and people’s individual and collective onto-formative practices, on the other.

**Figure IV: Gender practice and the three levels of the problematic of synthesis.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of synthesis</th>
<th>Focus of analysis</th>
<th>Dimension of practice</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>structuration</td>
<td>gender structure</td>
<td>onto-formative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>subjectivation</td>
<td>gender identity</td>
<td>performative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>embodiment</td>
<td>the body</td>
<td>body-reflexive</td>
</tr>
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In naming the first level of the *problematique* of synthesis ‘structuration’, I do not mean to equate Connell’s understanding of practice *vis-à-vis* structure with that of Anthony Giddens (1984). It is true that, in English speaking social science, the notion of structuration has been popularised by Giddens (1976) and it is almost exclusively...
associated with his ‘theory of structuration’. Yet, the term ‘structuration’ precedes Giddens’ and it is also sometimes used in a broader sense to refer not specifically to Giddens ‘duality of structure and agency’ but to any theory that grasps structure and action as inseparable. For the purpose of this study, ‘structuration’ refers to a level of ‘the problematique of synthesis’, not to a particular way of thinking of the relationship between structure and action. Thus, when practice is analysed in relation to structure, I talk about the ‘level of structuration’ just as I talk about ‘the level of subjectivation’ when practice is examined in relation to the subject.

Having clarified this terminological issue, it is now important to say that, contrary to Giddens’ (1989; 1991) belief, Connell’s analysis of the relationship between practice and structure is irreducible to Giddens’ account of ‘the duality of structure and agency’. In defending his theory against the charges of ‘gender-blindedness’ (Murgatroyd, 1989) and ‘lack of empirical relevance’ (Thrift, 1985; Gregson, 1989), Giddens has repeatedly resorted to Connell’s G&P, an analysis of gender relations that Giddens (1991: 213) ‘particularly endorse[s]’. For Giddens, G&P is consistent with his own ‘theory of structuration’ and it shows not only that the theory can serve as a foundation for concrete empirical research (Giddens, 1991: 215-216) but also that it is relevant to the study of gender relations (Giddens, 1989: 285). What Giddens fails to mention, however, is that G&P embodies a systematic and often explicit criticism of his ‘theory of structuration’. As this criticism is centred on the nature of social practice and its relation to social structure, in what follows I offer an exposition of Connell’s understanding of practice vis-à-vis structure through an examination of his critique of Giddens’ work. I begin with a schematic review of Giddens’ ‘theory of structuration’ and then turn to Connell’s alternative understanding of practice.
Giddens' (1971; 1977) early work on classical sociological theory led to an important conclusion that serves as the foundation upon which he constructs his theory of structuration some years later. Particularly, Giddens concludes that most theories of social reality have contributed towards the production and reproduction of a dualism of structure and action. For instance, this dualism, as Giddens (1982: 28-39) explains, manifested itself in the debate between functionalism and structuralism, on the one hand, and various interpretative schools of thought (symbolic interactionism, ethnomethodology, phenomenology), on the other. Interpretative sociology, in Giddens view, takes the individual as the counterpoint of analysis and it emphasises that subjective experiences and meanings are the most important things in the social world. It is characterised by the theorem: 'Strong on action, weak on institutions' (Giddens, 1982: 29). 'This theorem', as Giddens (1982: 29) goes on to note, 'becomes reversed when we look at the other side of the dualism', namely at structuralism and functionalism, in that these two theories give priority to the concept of 'structure' which is said to 'constrain' or 'determine' action and they assume that social phenomena are independent of individuals. Thus, unlike the definition of the problem in Connell's theoretico-political problematique of synthesis, the dichotomy of structure and action is not inherently political in Giddens' account. This apolitical articulation of 'the problem', as it will become obvious later on, has important implications for his attempt to transcend the dualism in question.

Giddens' (1976; 1982; 1984) work on structuration represents an attempt to do away with this problem by replacing the dualism of structure and action with a 'duality'. For the purposes of this analysis, Giddens' idea of the 'duality of structure and action' can be disaggregated into three interrelated theses: 'the thesis of ontological inseparability', 'the thesis of iteration' and 'the thesis of unintended consequences'.
The first thesis constitutes the cornerstone of Giddens' theory of structuration. It states, in a nutshell, that action and structure are not two independently given sets of phenomena but two sides of the same coin that stand in a 'relation of logical entailment' (Giddens, 1981: 171; 1984: 25; Craib, 1992: 3-4). Giddens' 'thesis of ontological inseparability' is articulated through a redefinition of the concept of structure. In classical social analysis, structure refers to the institutional features of society, as opposed to the micro features of face-to-face interaction. Most social analysts, as Giddens (1982: 33) put it, 'have in mind some kind of connotation of structure as 'visible pattern' of social relations, as something akin to the girders of a building or the anatomy of a body'. Structure is thus said to have a continuous and tangible existence. Yet, such an understanding of structure, according to Giddens (1981: 169) leads to an 'equation of structure with constraint' and implies that practices are external to, and clearly differentiated from, structures. To avoid these problems, Giddens (1984: 19) defines structure as 'rules' and 'resources' that individuals draw upon as they produce and reproduce society in their activities. Taken together, rules and resources (that is, structure) are the 'medium' of action in that they enable people to do things, to make a difference in the world. But, at the same time, the unintended consequences of social action contribute towards the reproduction of rules and resources in so far as people endorse their value by using them. In this sense, structure is not only the medium, but it is also the outcome of action (Giddens, 1984: 297-304). Such an account of the ontology of structure leads to what Archer (1995: 101-105; 1998: 80) calls 'central conflation' (another name for 'ontological inseparability'): the two elements are compacted together in a vicious circle and deprived of their distinctive features. Thus, it becomes impossible to examine their interplay.

What I call 'the thesis of iteration' is a logical outcome of 'the thesis of ontological inseparability'. If structure exists only 'at the moment of instantiations in action' and if action (as the selective reactivation of rules and resources) is itself ontologically
inseparable from structure, then, for Giddens, action is primarily ‘iterational’: it is the selective reactivation, the creative reiteration of past patterns of action. This is precisely why concepts like ‘routinization’ (the backbone of ‘ontological security’) and ‘repetitiveness’ are central in Giddens’ work (see, Gregory, 1989). Yet, if one follows Emirbayer and Mische’s (1998) idea of a ‘chordal triad of agency’, which distinguishes three temporal dimensions of action (oriented towards the past, the future and the present), it becomes obvious that Giddens’ idea of iteration reduces agency to its ‘past’ orientation. Indeed, Emirbayer and Mische (1998: 983) argue that Giddens’ exclusive emphasis on the habitual and repetitive dimensions of action has the effect of underestimating the present (‘practical-evaluative agency’) and, most importantly, the future (‘projective agency’) dimensions of action.

Giddens’ emphasis on the iterational dimensions of practice appears to foreclose the possibility of social change in that, insofar as actors merely repeat past routines and lack a capacity for ‘projective agency’, social reproduction becomes inevitable, a necessary outcome of the logical structure of the theory. Thus, in his example of the production of an utterance, the passage from iterational practice to reproduction is almost mechanical:

When I utter a sentence I draw upon various syntactical rules... These structural features of the language are the medium whereby I generate the utterance. But in producing a syntactically correct utterance I simultaneously contribute to the reproduction of the language as a whole (Giddens, 1982: 37).

Yet, Giddens (1981:171) is at pains to stress that reproduction is a contingent phenomenon that cannot be explained in terms of ‘the needs’ of social systems (as in functionalism). Rather, for Giddens (1981: 172), ‘reproduction’ (or the possibility of change which is inherent in this contingent process) is simply an unintended consequence of iterational practice and it does not have ‘magical explanatory properties’.
In this way, Giddens' 'thesis of unintended consequences' results in an ironic inconsistency which, as Ortner (1984) points out, pervades most theories of practice: although actors' intentions, motivations, rationality, knowledgeability and reflexivity are accorded a central place in Giddens' framework, structural reproduction and/or change does not come about as an intended consequence of action, however rational action may have been. This ironic inconsistency is inseparable from Giddens' first two theses: it is a direct outcome of his tendency to restrict agency to its habitual, iterational dimension and of his subsequent failure to theorise the projective or strategic dimensions of practice, that is the capacity of actors to 'distance themselves from structures' in order to change them, to treat them as external (and thus ontologically distinct) forms of constraint (Mouzelis, 1995: 118-121).

Connell’s understanding of practice vis-à-vis structure is inspired and, to an extent, influenced by Giddens’ theory of structuration. Hence, their intellectual affiliation must not be underestimated: not only do they develop similar critiques of functionalism, voluntarism and Marxist structuralism but they are also both committed to the centrality of social practice. It is for this reason that Connell (1985) treats Giddens’ theory of structuration and his own approach to gender as parts of the same intellectual tradition ('theory of practice'). Yet, despite this intellectual affiliation, Connell (1987: 94-95; 140-141; 2001) has been explicitly critical of some dimensions of Giddens’ approach (see Maharaj, 1995). What is more, there is also an even more forceful implicit critique in Connell’s writings. In what follows I will try to bring this critique to the surface via an analysis of his break with Giddens’ three theses. I argue that the distinctiveness of Connell’s approach can be largely attributed to his more political articulation of ‘the problem’, which results in a stronger emphasis on collective agency and historicity and brings him closer to the work of feminist social historians and Ortner’s (1996) anthropology of gender reviewed earlier in this chapter.
Connell’s complex account of structural differentiation is accompanied by an understanding of gender in terms of practice. Gender regimes, orders and substructures relate to gender practices in a complex constitutive way. On one level, Connell (1983d: 40), like Giddens, focuses on the iterative dimensions of practice and argues that structures ‘are both the conditions and the consequences of the continuing ordinary activities of life’. In illustrating the iterative dimensions of social practice, Connell (1987: 1-18) examines the gender practices of a female teenager called Delia. Delia’s actions, as Connell notes, are based on a set of clear-cut definitions of what men and women do. Her ‘sex-typed interest in animals’, her expectation to ‘get married fairly young and have children quite soon’ (Connell, 1987: 3), her (hetero)sexual awakening and her wish to become a nurse (Connell, 1985: 5) correspond to traditional versions of femininity. Moreover, ‘the large scale structures of gender relations are constituted by practices such as [those] Delia...(is) engaged in’ (Connell, 1987: 17). That is, in performing a particular configuration of gender practice, Delia contributes to the production and reproduction of a set of ‘norms’ or ‘conventions’ (Connell, 1995: 35) about the family, sexuality, women’s interests, and gender relations in general in that she is endorsing their value in practice. The reproduction of these norms through ‘cyclical practices’, through practices that ‘reproduce the initial situation’ (Connell, 1987:141), extends the impact of practice beyond the individuals involved and forms a structure of gender relations. That is, the ‘norms’ produced and reproduced through cyclical gender practices get deeply embedded in the gender regimes of such institutions as the state (Connell, 1990) and the educational system (Connell, 1989) and they form the unacknowledged conditions of practice in a feedback fashion. In this sense, Delia’s practice does not ‘occur in a vacuum’ (Connell, 1995: 65). It responds to, and is conditioned by, the structure which practices like hers constitute.
In this sense, for Connell, structure and practice are closely intertwined. Yet, they are not ‘ontologically inseparable’, in Giddens’ sense of the term. This is so because for Connell the consequences or effects of practice are not ‘virtual’ rules and resources that exist only in their instantiations in subsequent practice. Rather, having been actively constituted, ‘structures’ turn into something more than ‘the medium’ for subsequent practice. They acquire an objectivity, an objective ontological existence that is external to practice. This is precisely what Connell wants to stress through the idea of ‘onto-formativity’, which he borrows from the Czech philosopher Karel Kosik (1976): ‘fluid human agency crystallizes into material forms—bricks and mortar, institutions, distributions of wealth—which become the grounds of future human life’ (Connell, 2001: 11). Thus, to say that gender practices are onto-formative (literally: formative of reality/‘onto’) is to stress that they have the effect of producing an intractable and inescapable reality. In this sense, Connell’s idea of structure is ‘philosophically realist’ while Giddens’ is ‘philosophically idealist’ (Connell, 2001: 11-12). This brings Connell closer not only to the ‘post-structurationists’ (Mouzelis, 1995; Archer, 1995), who stress that structure is ontologically distinct from practice, but also to the tradition of critical realism (Bhaskar, 1998), according to which structure precedes practice.

Having done away with the thesis of ‘ontological inseparability’, it now becomes possible to examine the temporal organisation of practice in a more complete way. If social structure is external to practice, then it ‘can be deliberately the object of practice’ (Connell, 1987: 95). That is, practices are not restricted to the iterational dimension but they can be directed towards the creation of a different future. In other words, practice can be ‘cyclical’ or ‘divergent’—i.e. reproducing and undermining the structural conditions respectively (Connell, 1987: 141). The rationale based on which ‘cyclical’ and ‘divergent’ practices are performed is provided by the fact that the structure of gender relations is ‘a structure of power, inequality and oppression’ (Connell, 1985: 260).
'The central fact about this structure', as Carrigan, Connell and Lee (1985: 177) note, 'is the subordination of women'. Each one of the four substructures explicited in the preceding section generates a particular form of gender oppression and it is a social structure to the extent that becomes a conditions on further practice. As regards labour relations, men’s position in patriarchal societies yields a series of material advantages, such as higher incomes or easier access to education, something that Connell calls 'patriarchal dividend'. In terms of power relations, men control the means of institutionalised power, such as the state or the army, while the substructure of cathexis is characterised by male superiority and violence rather than reciprocity and intimacy. Finally, in the substructure of symbolism ‘gender subordination... [is] reproduced through... linguistic practices, such as addressing women by titles that define them through their marital relationships to men’ (Connell, 2000: 26).

Granted the existing power relations, it follows that particular gender groupings have interests in transformative social practice. A ‘gender order where men dominate women cannot avoid constituting men as an interest group concerned with defence and women as an interest group concerned with change’ (Connell, 1995: 82). But it is not only women that are interested in ‘divergent’ practice. Particular masculinities, such as those associated with effeminate and gay men, are also subordinated in contemporary structures of gender relations and, as the emergence of the gay liberation movement testifies, such groups of men are also involved in ‘divergent practices’ (Carrigan, Connell and Lee, 1985: 170-176). Consequently, for Connell (1987: 94), social change is not the product of the unintended consequences of action. It is rather the outcome of the intentional divergent practices of collective agents.

Not only does the emphasis on collective projective agency provide a more complete account of the temporal orientation of practice but it also paves the way for an ‘opening
towards history' (Connell, 1987: 95). The possibility of historical change, which is undertheorised in Giddens’ analysis of habitual practices, is now granted a central place. The clash of interests in gender regimes and gender orders creates the conditions for making ‘divergent practices’ possible. Structures, in other words, embody ‘internal contradictions’ (Connell, 1987: 96) produced by the power relationships that exist both between and ‘within’ genders (e.g. between different masculinities). These contradictions lead to what Connell (1987: 158-163; 1983: 33-49) calls ‘crisis tendencies.’ ‘The notion of the crisis’, as defined by Connell (1983: 39) ‘refers to developments in practice ...that as a matter of fact alter the conditions of many particular practices by bringing about alterations in the properties of the whole field’. Far from being a side-effect of habitual practice, change is now associated with the idea of historicity, which reflects Connell’s earlier emphasis on ‘active construction’. The concept of ‘historicity’, as Connell (1987: 143-144) notes:

is stronger than the concept of ‘social change’, which may be mechanical and external, something that happens to people like a comet, a fire or a plague. The idea of historicity is about change produced by human practice, about people being inside the process.

As in the work of the feminist historians inspired by Abrams’ (1981) *Historical Sociology*, the question of the relationship between structure and practice becomes an inseparable aspect of historical development. Indeed, as in his earlier work on class analysis, Connell (1987: 149) argues that an examination of change, as it is produced in the interplay of structure and practice, requires concrete historical analysis. Yet, in Chapter IV, I argue that Connell has largely neglected concrete historical analysis while a
small fragment of his work that does address concrete historical development is substantially inconsistent with his theoretical analysis of practice vis-à-vis structure.
Notes

1. In fact, relevant debates were arguably implicit in feminist literature even before the early 1980s but they were not articulated in the language of structure/agency, macro/micro or any other opposition subsumed under the subjectivism/objectivism debate. They are articulated in this language only in retrospect, as in Amy Wharton's (1991: 375-380) analysis of early socialist feminist literature. As my main focus is on the ways in which the structure/agency dichotomy is articulated as a 'problem', the analysis deals with studies that talk about the structure/agency opposition in an explicit way rather than with theories that may implicitly address similar issues.

2. Not all of these articles were authored by British sociologists - for instance, one of them was authored by Connell (1985) himself - but the fact that they were published as part of ongoing debates hosted by a major British journal does imply that the debates involved and the questions raised tend to be more dominant in British sociology.

3. As this is a debate about gender and sexual identity, I will examine some aspects of it in Chapter V, which deals with similar dualisms in the context of the theorisation of gender identity.

4. The expression is borrowed from Althusser (1975: 50).

5. The distinction, as it was mentioned in Chapter II, was initially introduced (in a slightly different form) in WWU (Connell, 1983d: 49) but it is only in G&P that it becomes central to Connell’s understanding of gender as a structure of social relations.

6. There is no concrete definition of 'power' in G&P or in later writings on gender relations. However, in a recent interview Connell has defined power as ‘the capacity to achieve one’s purposes’ and as ‘the opposite of democracy’ (Interview with R. W. Connell, 24 October 2001). Connell’s general understanding of power, not simply his notion of ‘power’ as a structural model, is critical examined in Chapter VI.


8. For instance, in his recent book entitled Structuration, Parker (2000) calls ‘structuration’ any perspective that grasps structure and agency in terms of duality (rather than dualism). Thus, for Parker, Bourdieu is also a structurationist.

9. These three theses do not address each and every dimension of Giddens’ theory of structuration. For instance, they do not cover his notion of ‘the system’ or his analysis of power in a direct way. Rather, the exposition offered here is structured in such a way as to introduce the distinctive features of Connell’s understanding of practice, not to provide a complete or exhaustive analysis of Giddens’ work.

10. Social rules, on the one hand, refer to typified schemes (formulæ) employed by social actors in the course of their daily activities, such as rules of language or ways of organizing turn-taking in interactions. These rules, as Giddens (1984: 22) notes following Wittgenstein, are ‘practical rather than theoretical in character’. That is, they enable us to ‘go on’ in social situations even if we cannot explicitly state what the formulæ are in any detail. Resources, on the other hand, refer to material (allocative resources) and non-material (authoritative resources) factors, such as technology and hierarchical position, which enable people to exercise domination over nature and over other human beings (Giddens, 1979: 65-69; 88-94).

11. Archer’s (1995: 33-64) idea of ‘central conflations’ follows from her distinction between ‘upwards’ and ‘downwards’ conflations. While ‘upwards conflations’ (individualism) neglects the element of structure and ‘downwards conflations’ (collectivism) neglects the element of agency, ‘central conflations involve an elision of both elements.
CHAPTER FOUR
CHAPTER IV
The space of history

I. Introduction

In the preceding chapter, I analysed Connell’s approach to gender on 'the level of structuration' arguing that the idea of ‘historicity’ plays a vital role in his attempt to synthesise structure and practice. In this chapter, I underline two ironic inconsistencies pertaining to Connell’s emphasis on ‘ historicity’. Firstly, I argue that despite Connell’s persistent and systematic theoretical stress on the historicity of gender and on the category of ‘history’, his empirical analysis of gender relations has largely (and unexpectedly) underplayed and neglected concrete historical processes and transformations. This inconsistency has given rise to what I call a tendency towards a 'theoreticist understanding of history'. Secondly, while the co-author of Class Structure in Australian History has, from the early 1980s onwards, predominantly ‘retreated into the present’ (to use Norbert Elias’ [1987] expression), the small fraction of his work on gender that does address concrete historical processes is substantially incompatible with his theoretical understanding of 'history'. This second inconsistency has generated, amongst other problems, what I see as a tendency towards structural ‘reification’. These two inconsistencies, and the tendencies towards ‘theoreticist history’ and ‘reification’ associated with them, are examined in detail in the first two sections of this chapter. Therein, I stress that these problems reflect gaps and contradictions within Connell’s problematique of synthesis itself.
II. Connell's latent Althusserianism: Theoretical history and concrete history

As with the ideas of 'practice' and 'structure', the terms 'history', 'historicity' and 'historical change' occupy a central place in Connell's theoretical lexicon. In his early work, as I have shown in Chapter I, Connell's emphasis on the historical dimensions of social analysis is central in his critique of other theoretical perspectives (e.g. Piaget's 'axiom of inversion', categorical approaches to class and Althusserian structuralism) while it is also deeply embedded in his major theoretical concepts (e.g. tradition, situation, and hence structure but also hegemony and generative thinking). What is more, this stress on 'history' and 'historicity' is also of vital importance in, or even constitutive of, Connell's 'problematic of synthesis' itself in that it is largely through a systematic historicisation of class analysis that Connell attempts to move beyond the theoretico-political pitfalls of empiricism and voluntarism, on the one hand, and theoreticism and structuralism, on the other. Hence, in *RCRC*, Connell's major theoretical definition of 'class' accords a privileged place to 'history' and 'historicity': 'Class is a kind of event occurring in history; a class structure is created, and changes through historical time' (1977a: 183).

In the context of class analysis, Connell's theoretical emphasis on history and historicity is accompanied by an equally consistent and systematic stress on the *concrete empirical-historical dimensions of class analysis*. As I have shown in Chapter I, it is precisely the centrality of concrete historical analysis that Connell finds instructive in E. P. Thompson's (1968) work. Similarly, it is the neglect of concrete historical analysis that structures his critique of Althusserian theoreticism and other static approaches to social class. Furthermore, at the time of its initial formation, Connell's 'problematic of synthesis' is centred not simply on a complex theoretical understanding of history but also on the importance of 'concrete history'. In the introductory chapter of *CSAH*,

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Connell and Irving (1980) make it clear that '[t]he antinomy in class analysis between set and structure can only be resolved by a historical analysis, which shows how both are produced at one and the same time' (1980: 7, emphasis added). This is precisely what they attempt to do in the subsequent chapters of the book, which focus on some complex transformations from the late eighteenth century to the 1970s. *RCRC* is also a concrete-historical work even though therein Connell’s (1977a: 39-134) focus of analysis is narrower, covering some specific conflicts and transformations occurring in the course of the 1970s. In developing this concrete historical analysis, Connell (1977a: 78) makes use of a suitable methodology, a rudimentary version of ‘game theory’ or what he calls ‘game analogy’. Taking his cue from the American sociologist N. E. Long (1958), Connell argues that the ‘game analogy’ makes it possible to study class in a concrete historical manner, to approach historical conflicts within the ruling class as ‘power games’. As he put it,

The ‘game’ analogy is useful at precisely the point where static class analysis breaks down. It draws attention to the continuing activity of power holders; to the fluctuations of their fortunes; to the rationality, within limits, of their behaviour; to the constraints upon them and the opposition they meet. Above all, it stresses their continuing need to decide strategies, to choose tactics, and to enact them (Connell, 1977a: 78).

In this way, Connell’s emphasis on concrete historical analysis and his argument about the historical-methodological value of the ‘game analogy’ are indicative of the fact that his early work on class analysis embodies a systematic attempt to balance and reconcile ‘theoretical’ and ‘concrete’ history.

‘Theoretical history’ has continued to occupy a privileged place in Connell’s work on gender produced since the early 1980s but this has not been accompanied by a systematic analysis of ‘concrete history’. As I have argued in the preceding chapter, the fact that
Connell’s approach to gender relies heavily on theoretical concepts like ‘history’ and ‘historicity’ cannot be disputed. Not only does the idea of ‘ historicity’ structure his understanding of ‘practice’, ‘structure’ and the relationship between the two but it is also central in his notion of ‘onto-formativity’ and in his critique of Giddens’ work. Thus, in line with Archer (1995: 65-92), Connell suggests that the problem of structure and practice is intrinsically historical and it cannot be satisfactorily resolved without taking into account the radical historicity of social life. Furthermore, after such a radical (theoretical) historicisation of gender structuration, one would justifiably expect that the co-author of CSAH will embark on a concrete historical analysis, not necessarily extensive but sophisticated enough to ground and exemplify these theoretical points. However, she or he would be disappointed because what characterises Connell’s G&P and his subsequent work on gender is not an attempt to unite ‘theoretical’ and ‘concrete’ history but a refusal to take advantage of the concrete-historical implications of his own theoretical work.

At first sight, it appears that Connell does intend to unite ‘theoretical’ and ‘concrete’ history. At the outset of the chapter on ‘historical dynamics’, Connell states explicitly that historicity ‘is not a completely abstract concept’:

The idea of historicity implies a concrete history some of whose features are now clear. Its subject matter is a structure of social relations and the form of life constituted in them... The concrete focus of this history (as distinct from the abstract definition of its subject-matter and scope) is the composition of the gender order of a given time and place, and the collective projects that compose it. To make sense of these projects requires a history of the formation of groups and categories... (Connell, 1987: 149-150).

However, the brief historical section that follows this statement does not constitute a concrete historical analysis of gender that shows the interweaving of structure and
practice over time. Neither does it deal with what Connell sees as social and historical ‘gender dynamics’. Rather, Connell (1987: 150-154) begins by listing some archaeological and literary evidence about gender from the upper Palaeolithic era to the invention of writing and the creation of the first states and armies in Sumer and Egypt in around 5000 years ago. He then proceeds, in three consecutive paragraphs, to sketch the formation of the modern Western gender order during the last 500 years, focusing on changes in the substructures of labour, power and cathexis (1987: 155-157). He closes the section on ‘historical dynamics’ with a brief analysis of the global spread of the Western gender order (1987: 157-158) and an examination of crisis tendencies within it (1987: 158-163). This is a large-sweep historical overview (both spatially and temporally) that says little, if anything, about Connell’s major theoretical preoccupations: the centrality of practice, its conditions and its effects, the active formation of gender groupings and the construction of hierarchical relationships amongst them. With the partial exception of his comments on ‘crisis tendencies’, this section also appears to underplay power and struggle for social change.

To take a specific example that illustrates Connell’s systematic neglect of concrete historical analysis, I will focus on his treatment of the substructure of gender relations that he calls ‘cathexis’. In the section on ‘historical dynamics’, Connell claims that, over the last 500 years, Western societies have witnessed the emergence of ‘a new structure of cathexis centring on what might be called hegemonic heterosexuality’ (1987: 156). As he explains,

Heterosexual relationships had been predominant in the previous European agricultural/commercial civilisation, but were not exactly hegemonic, given the importance of asceticism in the Christian tradition before Protestantism. The married heterosexual couple now came to be defined as a cultural ideal, and this involved a splitting-off of kinds of sexuality that came to be seen as deviant. More, they come to
be identified with types of people: the homosexual, the pederast, the whore-master, the Don Juan, appear as social types (1987: 156-157).

In this rough sketch of a historical shift in the social relations of cathexis, Connell outlines a specific historical change but he does not attempt to explain it. The change in question (i.e. the historical emergence of hegemonic heterosexuality and the construction of new sexual categories) is well documented in the literature that has generated what came to be known as the social or historical constructionist approach to homosexuality and heterosexuality (e.g. Weeks, 1977; Bray, 1982; Katz, 1995 and Trumbach, 1998). Yet, although the change itself is almost undisputed, constructionists have not reached a consensus about the combination of historical forces or the nature of historical processes that account for this change. In fact, as Mohr (1992) and Loftrom (1997) suggest in two critical reviews of the literature, the historical constructionist explanations are diverse and often conflicting. I will analyse some of the constructionist literature in Chapter V, in the context of theories of subject formation. For the moment, I want to emphasise that, although Connell is aware of the internal complexity of the constructionist scholarship and of the debates about historical explanation, he does not enter into these debates. He is explicitly critical of Foucault's (1976) one-sided over-reliance on discourse (see, Connell, 1987: 148-149) but he has no alternative historical explanation to offer. Rather than trying to analyse and explain this historical change, Connell takes it for granted and summarises it in a single paragraph. He is not interested in the onto-formative practices that have generated the transformation of the substructure in question (their inescapable conditions and their irreversible effects) or in the process through which this substructure was turned into an object of practice (the formation of collective resistance and the resulting crisis tendencies). After all, how much can one achieve in a single paragraph? Rather, his 'came-to-be' metaphor (e.g. the homosexual couple 'came to be defined'; alternative sexualities 'came to be seen') functions as a linguistic bridge for the
avoidance of concrete historical explanation in that it reduces complex historical processes to simple temporal shifts from one form to another. In this sense, although Connell’s argument that modern Western societies witnessed a shift in the social relations of cathexis is in line with the findings of historical research on the subject, it is not accompanied by any form of historical explanation, which is precisely what ‘historical constructionists’ have struggled about. Hence, the ‘game analogy’, which played a central role in Connell’s attempt to explain historical changes in class structure, becomes irrelevant in his treatment of shifts in the substructure of cathexis.

Connell’s gradual distance from ‘concrete history’ and historical explanation may appear to be simply a change in his focus of analysis, with no important impact on his overall understanding of gender and historicity. Indeed, the co-author of CSAH appears to have experienced his gradual ‘retreat into the present’ as a simple change of profession. Thus, in commenting on some approaches to social change published in a special issue of Theory and Society in 1998, Connell describes himself as a ‘renegade historian’ and he treats ‘history’ as ‘his former profession’ (1998c: 597). Needless to say that this is a simplistic way of circumventing a very complex question not simply because history and sociology/social theory are arguably inseparable (see Abrams, 1982: 1-17; Mills, 1959: 159-182) but also because Connell’s own theoretical understanding of gender relies heavily on the categories of history and historicity. What is more, Connell’s major criticisms of other theoretical perspectives are also centred on the question of history. For instance, Connell argues that sex role theory is inadequate not because ‘it cannot recognise social change’ but because it ‘cannot grasp it as history, as transformation generated in the interplay of social practice and social structure’ (Connell, 1987: 53; Carrigan, Connell and Lee, 1985: 166). While this is a valid theoretical criticism of the sex role perspective, Connell’s own empirical treatment of historical change in gender relations suffers from precisely the same problem. His brief notes on the transformation
of cathexis, as I have argued above, do not show how the historical change in question can be conceived of as an effect of onto-formative social practice.

In short, the co-author of CSAH collapses into a 'theoreticist' understanding of history comparable to one that he encountered in Althusserian understandings of class in the 1970s and he consistently and vehemently attacked (see Chapter I, Section IV). Connell's one-sided emphasis on 'theoretical history' reduces history to a simple theoretical category whose centrality is guaranteed in advance independently of concrete historical analysis. Just as Althusser and Balibar (1970: 106) argue that 'the knowledge of history is no more historical [i.e. concrete-empirical] than the knowledge of sugar is sweet', so too Connell claims to possess theoretical knowledge of 'history' without any substantial engagement with the world of concrete-empirical history. Hence, despite Connell's avowed distance from Althusserianism and from abstract theory in general, there is a latent Althusserian tendency in G&P, a tendency to privilege abstract theorising about history at the expense of concrete historical analysis.

III. Three modes of 'concrete history': the neglect of practice, reification and elitism

The Althusserian understanding of history that pervades G&P is also evident in Connell's subsequent work on gender. In the writings produced after the publication of G&P, Connell displays a slightly more extensive and more diversified engagement with 'concrete history'. Particularly, in Masculinities, in TMTB and later in Gender, he engages with three different modes of historical inquiry, focusing on a general history of the formation of modern masculinities, on a series of life-history analyses and on the history of modern theories of gender (Connell, 1995a; 2000; 2002a). Far from compensating for the marginalisation of concrete historical analysis in G&P, this diversification of historical inquiry represents the culmination of Connell's latent
Althusserianism. It reveals not only his failure to integrate 'concrete' and 'theoretical' history but also his subsequent tendency to underplay the transformative capacities of social practice, to reify social structures and to collapse into an elitist understanding of history.

History of masculinities: underplaying practice

The brief history of the formation of the modern Western gender order outlined in G&P is revised and slightly refined in the early 1990s as part of Connell’s new work on masculinities. In an article entitled ‘The big picture: masculinities in recent world history’, which was later reprinted in Masculinities (in a slightly different form), Connell sets out to analyse the historical emergence of the forms of masculinity that are now globally dominant (Connell, 1993b; 1995a: 185-203). As with G&P, Connell’s analysis of historical transformations is overly general and sketchy, encompassing hundreds of years in a few paragraphs or pages. Particularly, he argues that the origins of the masculinity that is now globally dominant can be traced to four main historical changes that date from about 1450 to about 1650: the emergence of renaissance secular culture with its emphasis on marital heterosexuality and individualism; the creation of gendered overseas empires; the growth of commercial capitalism and the urbanization, individualism and calculative rationality that accompanied it; and, finally, the onset of large scale European civil war that involved the emergence of a strong centralized state and an increased emphasis on military prowess and performance. These four historical developments were constitutive of an emphatic, militaristic, individualist and violent configuration of practice, of the masculinity of the gentry (Connell, 1993b: 607-608; 1995a: 186-190). In the last two hundred years, however, gentry masculinity has been displaced “by more calculative, rational and regulated masculinities” (Connell, 1993b: 609-612; 1995a: 191-199) while these new hegemonic forms have more recently been

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Connell’s historical narrative is now slightly more extensive and more focused in that it deals with specific historical changes that contributed to the formation of contemporary masculinities. However, as some commentators have explicitly argued (see Miller, 1998: 433; 2001: 49) or implicitly suggested (Tosh, 1999: 219), it is a schematic, large-sweep historical overview that lacks depth and explanation. In the words of the Dutch sociologist Kathy Davis (1997), ‘Connell tends to paint a picture of masculinity with a broad brush. He covers a lot of ground without stopping to explore anything in detail...his history of masculinity begins in 1450 and extends to the present in just a few pages’ (1997: 563). As a result, Connell does not spend enough time to explore all the concrete theoretico-political questions raised in his abstract analysis of gender. Most importantly, it seems to me that his broad-brush historical narrative tends to underplay the importance of social practice. His systematic theoretical emphasis on active construction and intentionality and his focus on the effects of onto-formative social practice are here replaced by a historical overview that presents changes in gender relations as affects of four general historical transformations. While Connell would not dispute that practice is central in these historical processes, he does not explain how people creatively responded to those transformations, how they negotiated the resulting situations in the life-world and how they actively produced the contemporary gender order. His historical narrative would be more consistent with his theoretical understanding of structure and practice if it paid close attention to the effects of practice and to the motivations and the interests of the subjects involved. With the partial exception of his comments on gentry practice and women’s resistance (see Connell, 1995a: 190, 191), Connell tends to miss these dimensions of the historical processes. He focuses almost exclusively on what he sees as the ‘gender consequences’ (Connell,
1995a: 188) of the historical changes in question and he appears to deduce from these changes some transformations in the gender order. Furthermore, as with the general historical overview developed in G&P, Connell’s history of masculinities seems to be at least uninformed by, and in certain cases incompatible with, his abstract theorisation of gender. It is an informed and entertaining history but it is not exactly what one would expect from a fervent critic of Giddens (1984) and from the exponent of a practice-based approach to gender.

To take a concrete example, Connell’s analysis of some aspects of the third historical transformation (the growth of commercial capitalism and urbanisation), and particularly his understanding of the growth of modern cities, tends to underplay the importance of social practice. Connell (1995a) is interested in ‘the growth of the cities that were the centres of commercial capitalism, notably Antwerp, London and Amsterdam, creating a new setting for everyday life’. ‘The main gender consequences of this change’, he argues, included making ‘a more thoroughgoing individualism possible’ and institutionalising a form of masculinity based on the ‘calculative rationality [that] began to permeate urban culture’ (1995a: 188). Hence, the emergence of the city, like the other historical transformations sketched by Connell, is portrayed as being largely an external development that is constituted independently of gender practices and then impacts on, or facilitates, them. Thus, Connell suggests that the emerging ‘commercial cities became the milieu (by the early eighteenth century) for the first sexual subcultures, such as the ‘Molly houses’ of London...’ (1993b: 607-608). In such an account of urban development, ‘the city’ seems to precede and simply accommodate the practices of sexual sub-cultures. This tends to underplay the fact that the practices in question were also active in the formation of the city itself. To expand on Connell’s own example, ‘the mollies’ in the eighteenth century did not simply produce a distinctive sexual culture of manners and symbols by which they were able to identify each other (e.g. extravagant...
effeminacy, a specialised jargon and mocking wedding rituals) but, in doing so, they also
began to create concrete topographical divisions within the city of London itself, altering
its geography irreversibly. In so far as ‘the mollies’ did not meet in random areas but
tended to congregate in specific locations of the city (in particular streets, parks, clubs
and deserted houses) they produced some rudimentary forms of sexual topographical
divisions, which offered them a higher degree of visibility and a stronger sense of unity
and security (McIntosh, 1968: 37; Trumbach, 1977: 15-24; see also Bray, 1982). Hence,
the city was not merely the setting or ‘the milieu’ within which the practices of sexual
subcultures were situated. It was also the outcome of those practices.

One could therefore see Connell’s treatment of historical transformations in the same way
that Connell saw Bourdieu’s (1977) theory of practice: ‘history does happen in [his]
world, but it is not produced’ (Connell, 1987: 94). As a result, in neglecting the concrete
topo-formative effects of practice (i.e. the capacity of practice to produce/transform
space), Connell’s brief account of the emergence of the modern city is not only at odds
with an emergent body of geographical literature on gender that embodies a more
complex, more dynamic and more dialectical account of the interplay of space and
practice (e.g. Bell and Valentine, 1995; Valentine, 1996; Mort, 1998; McDonald, 1999).
It is also inconsistent with his realist theory of gender practice which, as I have argued in
the preceding chapter, has the advantage of grasping the capacity of practice to produce
material reality. More importantly, Connell’s tendency to marginalise the historical
effects of gender practice is indicative of his more general failure to deal with concrete
historical analysis in a systematic and theoretically informed manner. Implicit in his
practice-less understanding of these historical processes is also a tendency towards
‘reification’, a tendency that becomes more evident in his contemporaneous analysis of
masculinities in a series of life-history case studies.
Life-history: reification

The brief history of masculinities is not the only context in which Connell attempts to deal with history in a concrete empirical way. The question of ‘history’ is also introduced in Connell’s case studies on masculinities, where he deals with the construction of groups and relationships in particular social settings (see, Connell, 1995a: 89-181; 2000: 69-147). In these studies, Connell relies primarily on life-history interviews and, possibly in a deliberate attempt to compensate for his relative neglect of concrete historical processes, he argues that the research method of ‘life-history’ makes it possible to deal with ‘history’ in the concrete sense of the term. Furthermore, whereas in G&P, as Candace West (1989) rightly argues in her review of the book, Connell’s ‘conceptualisation of the historicity of gender relations appears to treat ‘history’ as the distant past’ (1989: 1489), in Masculinities he introduces a broader concept of ‘history’:

[t]he project that is documented in a life-history story is itself the relation between the social conditions that determine practice and the future social world that practice brings into being… [it] concerns the making of social life through time. It is literally history (Connell, 1995a: 89).

Indeed, even though it has not been immune to criticism (e.g. Blauner, 1996), Connell’s life-history analysis is more satisfactory than his schematic and practice-less treatment of historical transformations examined in the previous section. As I will show in detail in the next chapter, it provides rich evidence about ‘the performative dimensions of practice’: the active construction of groups and relationships in particular social settings. In doing so, Connell is more attentive to men’s responses to changing situations, to the resulting crisis tendencies and to the possibilities for social change.

Despite these advantages, Connell’s life-history analysis does not offer an adequate historicisation of all dimensions of gender. It is not ‘literally history’ in the way that he
tends to think of it. To begin with, Connell's life-history analysis draws on a set of theoretical categories and distinctions introduced in his abstract theorisation of gender. For instance, it relies heavily on the concepts of the three-fold model of structural differentiation explicated in the previous chapter, namely on the sub-structures of 'labour', 'power' and 'cathexis'. As Connell (1995a) notes, the interviews are examined from the standpoint of 'structural analysis, using a grid provided by the three structures of gender relations' (1995a: 91). In Connell's life-history analysis, there is no discussion of the active construction of these sub-structures and of the negotiation and reconstruction of their boundaries. Rather, like Althusser's 'classes', Connell's 'substructures' precede concrete empirical analysis. 'Labour', 'power' and 'cathexis' are reduced to three transhistorical theoretical categories that can be applied to any concrete situation in order to make sense of particular events and practices. These substructures are no longer the products of 'historical compositions' and 'empirical unifications' (see Connell, 1987: 116). They are now treated as fixed and immutable logical distinctions whose boundaries and internal unities are settled in advance by theoretical analysis. Thus, while Connell is at pains to avoid the categoricalism of the subject, he effectively collapses into a reifying form of structural analysis, into the 'categoricalism of the structure'.

In the final analysis, Connell's concepts of structural differentiation are nothing but abstract and immutable theoretical categories that are not shown to emerge from concrete empirical investigation. Lynne Segal (1990) has also pointed to the existence of this problem. She argues that Connell's threefold distinction, when seen in terms of three distinct types of structures, 'would take us back to the Althusserian framework of the economic, political and ideological, which Connell wants to move beyond' (1990: 102). For Segal, the solution to this problem is 'to avoid any tripartite structural divisions for a more flexible naming of the central dynamics of gender hierarchy' (1990: 102). On a theoretical level, Connell would not disagree with Segal for, as I have argued in the
preceding chapter, he is at pains to stress that the substructures in question are not necessary, universal or exhaustive of the field (Connell, 1987: 97). On an empirical/concrete historical level, however, Connell’s understanding of structural differentiation is at odds with Segal’s statement in that he constantly tends to treat the threefold or fourfold model as a universally applicable grid for structural analysis. His life-history analyses reveal this tendency towards reification in a lucid way in that they constitute one of the instances in which Connell turns his complex theoretical concepts into abstract, universally applicable and immutable categories. Needless to say that some of the secondary literature that draws on these concepts tends to reinforce the reificationism that pervades Connell’s life-history interviews: the categories are firstly described as objective structures and then particular events, practices or relationships are forced into them (e.g. Wingood and DiClemente, 2000).

This tendency towards reification and ahistorical analysis is a more general problem with theories of structural differentiation. In the Sociology debate about structure and practice (reviewed in the previous chapter), Pollert points out that Walby’s (1989; 1990; 1997) six-fold model of structural differentiation faces similar problems: in positing analytically independent structures and in failing to show how those structures are actively produced in specific situations, Walby’s realist structuralism tends to impose a priori categories on a potentially more nuanced reality, to miss social and historical complexity and to lapse into abstract Althusserian explanation (Pollert, 1996: 644-645). Joan Scott’s (1986) account of structural differentiation is somewhat more satisfactory as regards the question of historicity. In outlining her fourfold model of structural differentiation, Scott stresses that ‘[a] question for historical research is, in fact, what the relationships among the four aspects are’ (1996: 169). Yet, even in this case, it is only the relationships among them and not ‘the four aspects’ themselves that are historicised. Rather, what is needed is a form of empirical/historical analysis that shows what kind of structural differentiations
emerge from the complexity of given situations. An important step towards such an analysis has been made by Robert Padgug (1990) whose classic article on sexuality historicises not only sexual acts and identities but the category of ‘sexuality’ itself:

What we consider ‘sexuality’ was, in the pre-bourgeois world, a group of acts and institutions not necessarily linked to one another... It was only with the development of capitalist societies that ‘sexuality’ and ‘the economy’ became separable from other spheres of society and could be counterposed to one another as realities of different sorts (Padgug, 1990: 62-63)

**History of ideas: elitism**

Connell’s tendency to underplay the centrality of social practice and his subsequent lapse into ‘reificationism’ reveal that his concrete empirical/historical analysis of gender structuration (*unlike* his theoretical understanding of it) is riddled with some Althusserian elements. What is more, as in the Althusserian approach to class, the marginalisation of social practice and the reification of social structures is accompanied by a third tendency: ‘elitism’. Whereas Althusserian elitism takes the form of an explicit defence of the vanguard party (see Chapter 1), in Connell’s engagement with history elitism manifests itself in the form of what Cornelius Castoriadis (1997) calls intellectual ‘self-confinement’: ‘writers write about writers for other writers... Actual history is replaced... with the history of ideas’ (1997: 34-35). Thus, Connell’s third mode of historical investigation is centred on intellectual ideas about gender and- in so far as this history is more extensive and more elaborate than his brief history of masculinities- it reveals his tendency to privilege the history of ideas about gender at the expense of the history of gender practice. This dimension of Connell’s diversification of historical inquiry includes a history of psychoanalytic approaches to gender (Connell, 1987: 196-217; 1994b; 1995a: 8-21), a general historical overview of intellectual theories of gender from the 1860s to the early 2000s (Connell, 2002: 115-135) and it is coexistent and
mutually reinforcing with his work on intellectuals (Connell and Wood, 2002) and with his analysis of the history of sociology (Connell, 1997b).

Connell’s history of intellectual ideas about gender is highly politicised and socialised. As in his early work on social class, Connell (2002a) is at pains to stress that ‘[t]heories do not appear out of thin air’: they are responses to specific historical situations that are articulated by people who occupy different places in the gender order and reflect particular political interests (2002a: 115). For instance, in his analysis of the emergence of a psychoanalytic approach to gender at the turn of the twentieth century, Connell explores not only the internal complexity of the theory but also its origins in medical practice and in efforts at normalisation and social control. He also points to the connection between Freud’s understanding of the bourgeois family and his marginal position as a Jewish professional man in a world of growing anti-Semitism (Connell, 1995a: 8; 2002a: 121; see also 1977c; 1994b). Hence, unlike his brief history of the emergence of masculinities, Connell’s history of the emergence of intellectual ideas about gender pays sufficient attention to the producers of those ideas, to their historical situations and their active responses to them.

Connell’s analysis of the history of intellectual ideas in terms of situated responses to changing historical circumstances appears to be in line with his aspiration to produce a ‘practice-based’ approach to gender. However, when this analysis is seen in the context of his overall engagement with concrete historical reality, it generates more problems than it solves: given the fact that his history of masculinity tends to marginalise social practice while his history of intellectual ideas is cast in terms of ‘active responses to situations’, Connell’s overall historical exploration of gender tends to restrict practice to a small minority of specialised intellectuals. Cora Baldock (1994: 598) has argued that this tendency to overestimate the role of intellectuals was also evident in Connell’s early
work on social class and it had the effect of underestimating the revolutionary potential of
the working class. However, in the context of class analysis (*CSAH, RCRC*) as well as in
his later work on education (*RCRC, SSJ*), Connell theorises intellectual practice within
the context of Gramsci's (1971) notion of 'organic intellectuals', which points not simply
to the situated character of intellectual activity but to the capacity of intellectual practice
to articulate a set of views and interests that are implicit (in rudimentary forms) in the
everyday practices of particular social groups. It is precisely this crucial link between the
practices of a small minority of specialised intellectuals and the practices of larger gender
groupings that Connell’s historical narrative of intellectual practice tends to underplay.
Hence, Freud is not seen as the 'organic' intellectual of a particular gender grouping and
it is not clear, in Connell’s analysis, whose practical conception of the world Freud
articulates in a complex theoretical language.

At this point, it is not difficult to see how Connell's lapse into elitism is inextricably
connected to the other two Althusserian dimensions of his engagement with concrete
history, namely his tendency to underplay social practice and to reify social structures.
For reasons that will become obvious shortly, I will take as an example, once again,
Connell's treatment of 'cathexis'. As I argued above, Connell's analysis of the historical
emergence of masculinities does not show how this sub-structure can be considered as an
effect of onto-formative social practice. It deals with historical transformations and crises
in the relations of cathexis but it gives no grip on their active construction, on the
interests and the motivations involved. Similarly, his life-history analysis tends to reify
the sub-structures of gender, reducing cathexis to an *a priori* theoretical concept that can
be applied to any situation. As a result, in order to explain the nature, unity and internal
composition of this sub-structure, Connell is constantly forced to resort to a history of
*ideas* about cathexis. Indeed, it is in his third mode of historical investigation, and
particularly in his discussion of the rise of psychoanalysis, that an extensive and general
exploration of cathexis can be found. For Connell (2002a), it is Freud (and the next generation of psychoanalysts) who explored the conflict-ridden process of identity formation, the internal contradictions of masculinity and the complexity of feelings and emotions) that has 'opened up for investigation the structure of emotional relations [i.e. 'cathexis']' (2002a: 62, 121). Further, most of the patterns that are said to compose this structure, such as the tendency of heterosexual emotional commitments to be 'both loving and hostile at once' or the expectation (in contemporary Western societies) that households are 'formed at the basis of romantic love' (Connell, 2002a: 63), are discussed with reference to Freud or other intellectuals, most notably gay and feminist theorists (see Connell, 1987: 111-116). Hence, Connell formulates the idea of 'cathexis' and he conceives of it as a conceptually distinct sub-structure not through concrete historical analysis of gender practice and its effects but (primarily) through his engagement with the writings of Freud.

To summarise, Connell's work on gender tends to privilege 'theoretical history' at the expense of concrete historical investigation. Three aspects of his work that do engage with some kind of concrete historical analysis are substantially inconsistent with his activist theorisation of gender structuration: his brief history of masculinities marginalises social practice and its effects, his life history analyses reify the categories of structural differentiation and his history of intellectual ideas about gender reveal the existence of an underlying tendency towards elitism. Ironically, the problems generated in the course of Connell's engagement with 'concrete history' are precisely the theoretico-political traps that Connell's complex theoretical understanding of gender structuration shows how one can circumvent.
IV. Conclusion

I have argued that Connell's approach to gender on 'the level of structuration' tends to privilege 'theoretical history' at the expense of concrete historical analysis. This latent Althusserian understanding of history has given rise to three interrelated problems: a practice-less analysis of historical transformations, a reified empirical understanding of structural differentiation and a tendency to privilege the history of ideas at the expense of a history of social practice.

The critique of Connell's approach to history brings the second part of the thesis to an end. However, in so far as it focuses on the capacity of collective practice to turn structure into its object, his analysis of gender on 'the level of structuration' is inseparable from the process of subject and group formation. This is the focus of Connell's analysis of gender on 'the level of subjectivation' to which I now turn.
Notes

1. In pointing to this direction, Connell (1987: 289-291) has also employed the 'game analogy' in G&P but in an entirely different context and not in conjunction with historical analysis..

2. My distinction between 'theoretical' and 'concrete' history is inspired by Althusser and Balibar's (1970: 105-118) distinction between 'the theory of history' and 'empirical history'. However, as I have argued in Chapter I, Althusser and Balibar tend to privilege the former at the expense of the latter, a problem that, as I will argue below, tends to pervade Connell's work on gender as well.

3. I do not mean to suggest that the 'social and historical constructionist' approach to heterosexuality and homosexuality, a tradition to which Connell also belongs, has been unchallengeable or universally accepted. In fact, Boswell (1980; 1989), Weinrich (1990) and Norton (1997) have developed some interesting and well-articulated critiques of this approach. In claiming that the categories of homosexuality and heterosexuality are 'universal', these authors have disputed the historical change in question. However, when situated in the context of the concrete-historical and theoretical literature on the historical construction of heterosexuality and homosexuality, these turn out to be isolated arguments that do little to challenge the cumulative result of contemporary research on the subject. For a review of the large of body of the constructionist literature, see Trumbach (1987) and Lofstrom (1997). I will analyse a large part of this scholarship in the next chapter, when dealing with theories of subject formation.

4. In the early 1980s, Connell and his colleagues were amongst the first social analysts to stress the importance of the emerging historical constructionist literature on homosexuality, or what they called the 'new gay history', focusing mainly on the work of Jeffrey Weeks (1977) and Alan Bray (1982) (Carrigan, Connell and Lee, 1985: 170-178). While Carrigan, Connell and Lee tended to see the work of 'gay historians' as an undifferentiated whole, in his later work Connell has identified different trends within the constructionist scholarship (see Connell and Dowsett, 1992; Connell, 1995b: 386-387; Connell, 1997: 64-65).

5. I say that these historical developments are 'portrayed' (and not 'conceived of' or 'understood') as being external to gender practice to stress that this is an effect of Connell's historical narrative and it is not a position that Connell would theoretically defend. This is so because in Connell's 'intrinsic' understanding of gender, as I have noted in the preceding chapter, 'there is nothing outside gender'. In fact, in the historical narrative in question, Connell (1993b: 607) states explicitly that the third transformation (the creation of overseas empires) 'was a gendered enterprise from the start' but in his analysis of the other transformations he does not explain how they can be seen as an effect of gender practice. This inconsistency (between Connell's theoretical position on the subject and the way it is portrayed in his historical narrative) is clarified below in the main text.

6. Topos is a Greek word meaning space, place or area, as in toponymy (the study of place names). (See Oxford English Dictionary, second edition). Thus, 'topo-formative practice' refers to the capacity of practice to construct space (cf. Lefebvre, 1974). Connell have not used this term or anything equivalent to it but the idea of the active construction of space is implicit in his more general and more encompassing concept of 'onto-formative practice', which refers to the construction of reality in general (see Chapter III). For an overview of sociological theories on practice and built environment, including Giddens' (1984) and Bourdieu's approaches (1977), see Gieryn (2002: 36-41).

7. Some critics have argued that Connell's treatment of empirical reality in the case studies in question tends to be overly schematic or even sketchy, reducing complex empirical
phenomena to 'neat ideal types' (Miller, 2001: 49), 'to the status of illustration for a theory which is already securely in place' (Davis, 1997: 563) or even to a mere 'grist for his theoretical mill' (Blauner, 1996: 167). There may be some truth in these claims but the problems with Connell's analysis, as I will argue below in the main text, lie much deeper.

8. For Connell's engagement with the idea of 'organic intellectuals' in the context of class analysis, see Connell (1977a: 218-222; 1977c; 1984). In the context of Connell's research on schools and education, see Connell, Ashenden, Kessler and Dowsett (1982: 155, 202), Yates (2002: 331-335) and also note 14 and the corresponding text in Chapter II. For Gramsci's understanding of intellectual practice, see Gramsci (1971: 5-23, 323-343) and for its relevance to the study of gender and sexuality, see Sinfield (1993).
PART III
CHAPTER FIVE
CHAPTER Five
Category, identity and gender hegemony

I. Introduction

In the preceding part of this thesis, I explored Connell’s analysis of gender on ‘the level of structuration’, focusing on his attempt to theorise the relationship between structure and practice. In Chapter III, I argued that Connell’s articulation of (and approach to) ‘the problem’ of structuration centres on the importance of historicity and power relations. I addressed some problems pertaining to Connell’s engagement with (and understanding of) ‘history’ in Chapter IV. Therein, questions of power were also central but Connell’s understanding of power relations was not the main focus of analysis. A more systematic and detailed analysis of Connell’s theorisation of power relations and social struggles can be achieved through an exploration of his work that centres on the second level of the problematique of synthesis: ‘subjectification’. This is the main focus of this part of the thesis, which deals with Connell’s understanding of subject and group formation and, by implication, with his analysis of gender hierarchies, power and resistance. Hence, the passage from Part II to Part III, from ‘structuration’ to ‘subjectification’, is simultaneously a passage from the first level of the problematique of synthesis to the second and a deepening into Connell’s understanding of the process of structuration itself. It is a deepening into the first level of the problematique of synthesis in that, as I have argued in Chapter III, Connell’s conception of the relationship between structure and practice is grounded upon his theorisation of the processes of interest articulation, group formation and hierarchical struggle, which account for the orientation of practice vis-à-vis structure.
The first chapter of this part, like the first chapter of Part II, aims at exposition and contextualisation. It interprets, rearticulates and contextualises Connell’s approach to ‘subjectification’ and, through a focus on his analysis of hegemonic processes, it introduces the concept of ‘power’. The analysis is divided into three sections. In the first section, I review some relevant literature, focusing on a series of studies that deal with the processes of subject and group formation. Taking as an example the case of ‘the making of the modern homosexual’ (see, Plummer, 1981a), I argue that analyses of the historical emergence of ‘gender groupings’ have contributed to the production of two relatively distinct paradigms of ‘subjectification’: on the one hand, some studies tend to analyse the formation of social groupings in terms of structural forces, like medical and legal discourses, and they treat social collectives and identities as effects of social categorisations; on the other hand, a different body of literature stresses primarily the active construction of identities in social interactions, shifting attention from the constraining effects of categories to the productive effects of individual and collective identity-formative (or ‘performative’) practice. Albeit one-sided, both approaches are useful and, in the second section of this chapter, I examine an emerging body of literature that attempts to synthesise and reconcile category-centred and identity-centred approaches to subject formation. Finally, in the third section, I argue that it is in the context of this ‘synthetic turn’ in theories of subject formation that Connell’s analysis of gender can be understood. Furthermore, I stress that Connell’s understanding of, and approach to, ‘the problem’ of subjectification has led to an analysis of the processes of group formation that stresses the objectivity of categories and their inseparability from the active construction of identities in the context of power and hegemonic struggles. The concept of power relations central to Connell’s analysis of group formation is critically examined and reconstructed in the next chapter.
II. Approaches to 'subjectification': categories and identities

In the second half of the twentieth century, Western societies witnessed new forms of political activity and social struggles: politics anchored on what is variously called 'social movements', 'group memberships' or 'collective identities' based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality and other distinctions and their intersections (see Seidman, 1997: 109-138; 2004: 207-276). Yet, beginning from the 1970s, it has increasingly become evident that concepts like 'group' and 'identity' are multifaceted theoretical constructions (e.g. Jenkins, 1996) and contingent political foundations (e.g. Butler, 1992). This realisation was largely the outcome of mutually reinforcing critiques of 'essentialism' (or different versions of what Connell calls 'categoricalism') in various fields of study, including the attack on a 'primordialist' understanding of ethnic communities (Glazer and Moynihan, 1975), on a 'biological essentialist' understanding of sexual groupings (Vance, 1989) and the emergence of anti-essentialist concepts of 'women' (Stoljar, 1995) and 'men' (Clatterbaugh, 1998). In refusing to treat social 'identities', 'groups' or 'categories' as 'fixed' or 'given' entities, anti-essentialist thinking has directed attention to the process that I call 'subjectification': the process via which (what is variously defined as) 'groups', 'subjects', 'identities' 'self-definitions' or popular and discursive 'categorisations' are socially and historically (and actively or passively or complexly both) established, negotiated and transformed.

The rise of anti-essentialist thinking in different fields of study has produced, not a single account of subject and group formation, but a series of competing understandings of it, a multitude of 'subjectification paradigms' (McNay, 2000: 1-30). 'Subjectification' is thus not a single uncontested 'question' about subject and group formation but (as with 'structuration') a large domain within which a diversity of questions can be posed.
Consider, for instance, a set of interrelated questions pertaining to anti-essentialist thinking and subject formation posed by some leading feminist thinkers in a single collection of readings, entitled *Feminists Theorize the Political* (Butler and Scott, 1992):

Through what exclusions has the feminist subject been constructed, and how do those excluded domains return to haunt the ‘integrity’ and ‘unity’ of the feminist ‘we’? (Butler, 1992: 14)

How can we historicize experience? How can we write about identity without essentializing it? (Scott, 1992: 33)

How can you simultaneously query the constancy of ‘women’ and retain any politics of women, be a feminist? (Riley, 1992: 122)

If the category ‘woman’ does not correspond to any unified and unifying essence, the question can no longer be to try to unearth it. The central issue becomes: how is ‘woman’ constructed as a category within different discourses? (Mouffe, 1992: 371)

These are not the only questions that these thinkers pose and I do not mean to reduce their complex understandings of subjectification to a single question they ask, but the diverse issues that these specific questions raise can be analysed to illuminate different trends in subjectification analysis. To begin with, some questions appear to place a stronger emphasis on the process through which ‘women’ are constructed (particularly, Butler’s and Mouffe’s) while others appear to be more interested in the political implications of construction (Riley’s being the most, directly and explicitly, political in direction). More importantly, the questions address ‘women’ as a group through different concepts. Women are ‘the feminist subject’ in Butler’s question, an ‘identity’ linked to experience in Scott’s question, and a ‘category within different discourses’ in the question posed by Mouffe. The different terms used are not accidental or secondary. They reflect different understandings of what a ‘social group’ is and different meanings of ‘social construction’
and they lead to different kinds of social and historical investigation. For instance, whereas an answer to Mouffe’s question would involve a historical analysis of medical, legal or everyday discursive categorisations and their effects, which would be methodologically equivalent to Foucault’s (1976) history of sexuality or Laquer’s (1990) history of the body, Scott’s question could lead to a historical analysis of the active production of groups through collective social practice and experiences, which would be methodologically equivalent to Thompson’s (1968) history of the making of the working class.

The logic that separates Mouffe’s and Scott’s different articulations of the question (category/discourse, on the one hand, identity/experience, on the other) reflects, roughly, a fundamental and widespread division in understandings of subjectification. Richard Jenkins (1996: 80-89; 2000) has theorised this division in terms of a distinction between ‘social categorization’ and ‘group identification’. The former refers to an approach which analyses the emergence of social groups in terms of external determinations, such as legal or scientific categorizations. The latter refers to an approach that grasps group formation in terms of self-definitions and practices internal to the group, like practices of self and collective identity formation in everyday interaction. In the first case, the group emerges passively, as an imposition. In the second, it emerges actively, as a conscious achievement. Jenkins (1996: 23, 27, 81) rightly argues that, albeit analytically useful, this is a problematic division that needs to be transcended. Thus, for Jenkins (1996), a new question now emerges, namely how categorization and identification (‘achievement’ and ‘imposition’) can be rearticulated in terms of an ‘external-internal dialectic’ (1996: 23, 87). As I will argue later on, when examining the ‘synthetic turn’ in theories of subject formation, similar questions have been posed, explicitly or implicitly, by many other thinkers, including some of the contributors to Feminists Theorize the Political, most notably Judith Butler (1990; 1997a). Connell’s (1995a; 2000b) approach to
subjectification, within the context of 'the theoretico-political problématique of synthesis', is also centred on similar questions. Hence, for the purposes of this analysis, another (temporary and transitory) question now emerges: what are the historical, political and theoretical conditions that have facilitated or necessitated the posing of these (synthetic) questions about subjectification? To answer this transitory question one has to recognise, from the outset, that the division between 'social categorization' and 'group identification', (which other authors articulate in different ways and using different concepts and to which, from now on, I will refer as the division between 'category' and 'identity'- the terms will be defined in detail shortly) cannot be reduced to an analytical, conceptual or 'merely theoretical' distinction. It is a 'real' distinction that has emerged, in different ways and in different contexts, in particular historical moments through specific theoretico-political conflicts and different responses to concrete situations.

To delineate the emergence of the 'category'/ 'identity' distinction, and hence to pave the way for an understanding of the emergence of the 'synthetic turn' in theories of subject formation, I focus on a set of 'subjectification paradigms' that deal with the formation of a particular social grouping: 'the male homosexual'. Grounding the analysis on one of the most widely researched and debated cases of group formation will make it possible to grasp how different conceptions of subjectification emerge in relation (or opposition) to one another, to explore their internal complexity and to specify the political and theoretical issues involved.

In exploring different explanations of subject formation in the context of 'the making of the modern homosexual', I focus on two specific divisions that characterised gay scholarship in the 1970s and early 1980s. The first division was between Mary McIntosh (1968) and Kenneth Plummer (1981b), an instance of a broader conflict between structural functionalism and symbolic interactionism. The second division was between Michel Foucault (1976) and John D'Emilio (1983) and it reflected broader questions
about discourse analysis and agency. These two divisions embody two different manifestations of the division between 'category' (McIntosh; Foucault) and 'identity' (Plummer, D'Emilio) and they can be analysed to illustrate the historical emergence of two opposing but internally differentiated 'subjectification paradigms'.
McIntosh Vs Plummer: role and interaction

Mary McIntosh's (1968) celebrated article ‘The homosexual role’ is generally regarded as the first attempt to conceptualise homosexuality in terms of social and historical construction. Therein, McIntosh sets out to challenge the widespread assumption that homosexuality is a transhistorical condition characterising certain individuals and not others by distinguishing between homosexual ‘role’ and homosexual behaviour (1968: 30-33). This distinction, as she notes, ‘is both legitimate and useful’ because a homosexual role involves more than homosexual behaviour (1968: 33). It consists of a set of social expectations, such as exclusive homosexual behaviour and gender inversion. Moreover, after examining a corpus of anthropological and historical material, McIntosh goes on to show that, although homosexual behaviour has been common in many societies, a distinct male role of ‘homosexual’ is a historically recent phenomenon that first emerged in England at the end of the seventeenth century (1968: 34-38). McIntosh explains the emergence of the homosexual role in terms of its social function: ‘it helps to provide a clear-cut, publicised and recognisable threshold between permissible and impermissible behaviour’ (1968: 32). This functionalist explanation of the emergence of homosexuality is carried to an extreme in the writings of the British social historian Randolph Trumbach (1989a; 1989b; 1998).

Although McIntosh has both historicised and politicised the ‘homosexual role’, her analysis suffers from structural functionalism’s main theoretical problems: its one-sided over-reliance on the structural concept of ‘role’ and its subsequent under-emphasis of interaction and individual and collective practice. To begin with, by drawing a clear line of demarcation between ‘role’ and ‘behaviour’ and by arguing that they ‘should be studied independently’ of one another, McIntosh makes it impossible to think of the two in terms of mutual dependence and dialectical interaction (1968: 33, 39). What is more,
since her analysis focuses almost exclusively on the emergence of the homosexual role and on the effects of this role on actual behaviour, she either treats actors and interaction as passive outcomes of a set of role expectations or ignores them altogether. In this way, McIntosh’s notion of homosexuality as a ‘role’ reduces the emergence of ‘the homosexual’ to the emergence of a ‘function’ which is not shown to be the product of social practice. The similarity of this concept of ‘role’ with the Foucauldian concept of (discursive) ‘category’ will become obvious later on.

It is precisely McIntosh’s one-sided over-reliance on the structural concept of role that led a number of theorists, and most notably Plummer (1975; 1981b; 1981c), to turn to symbolic interactionism for a more activist account of the emergence of the modern homosexual. Having argued that McIntosh’s analysis suffers from ‘over-determination’, Plummer notes that her argument can be ‘enhanced through the utilisation of the more dynamic version of role theory found in the interactionist writings of Turner or Strauss’ (1981b: 23). In this paradigm of subjectification, ‘homosexuality’ is not explained in terms of the emergence of a set of structural role expectations and their functions, but it is rather seen as something that people actively produce in interaction. Furthermore, symbolic interactionism shifts the emphasis from roles that precede and condition practice to the interactional dimensions of group formation. The emergence of a homosexual grouping is now explained in terms of everyday activities in social interaction, such as practices of labelling and acts of homosexual identification (Plummer, 1981c: 69).

Subsequently, whereas McIntosh’s one-sided emphasis on ‘roles’ and their functions underplays the capacity of social groupings to constitute themselves, Plummer’s exclusive focus on the construction of homosexuality in social interaction marginalises questions of structural conditioning and historical determination. As Jeffrey Weeks...
(1991a) notes, ‘by stressing the subjective and the impact of particular labelling events’, symbolic interactionism displays an ‘ahistorical bias’, fails to ‘investigate the question of determination’ and leads to a politics of ‘collective voluntarism’ (1991a: 27-28). That is, Plummer’s analysis gives the impression that a group is constituted independently of historical situations and forces external to itself, making it impossible to account for such factors as the role of the state or medical discourses in constituting a particular social grouping (see Plummer, 1981c: 67). In this sense, Plummer’s interactionist theory of homosexuality and his critique of the notion of ‘homosexual role’ should be seen as a part of what Nicos Mouzelis (1995) calls ‘micro-sociological overreactions to Parsons’, that is as part of an interpretatively-oriented sociological tradition that has, in overreaction to structural functionalism’s under-theorisation of agency, overemphasised the activist and interactionist dimensions of social life at the expense of historical/structural determination (1995: 15-27).

McIntosh’s exclusive focus on the structural concept of role and Plummer’s one-sided over-reliance on social interaction are the outcome of two different ways of looking at the process of subjectification. Role theory approaches group formation from the standpoint of ‘external determination’, where group unity emerges as the passive imposition of functional imperatives. The interactionist approach centres on the ‘internal’ logic of group formation, analysing group unity on the level of practice and interactional encounters. The logic of the opposition between McIntosh and Plummer emerges again, in a different form, in D’Emilio’s critique of Foucault’s interpretation of the construction of homosexuality. The two different understandings of subjectification implicit in the opposition between role and interaction are now rearticulated using the concepts of ‘category’ and ‘identity’ respectively.
Early Foucault Vs D'Emilio: discourse and individuality

In the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault (1976) explains the construction of homosexuality in terms of the emergence of a series of medical and legal discourses. This analysis is an extension of Foucault's earlier work on subjectification, which aims to challenge the idea of 'transhistorical subjectivities' by showing that human beings are made subjects through historically specific discourses. Thus, in *Madness and Civilization*, he argues that it was only in modern times that madness came to be conceptually separated from reason and that the constitution of madness as a separate social category is the historical product of a series of discourses produced by psychiatric scientists (Foucault, 1965). In a similar way, Foucault's (1976) *History of Sexuality* is 'written from the viewpoint of a history of discourses' (1976: 69). Therein, Foucault argues that Victorian society did not repress sexuality but it produced a multiplicity of discourses concerned with sex. The power effect of these discourses was not to suppress perversions, but to specify, classify and solidify them, 'to give them an analytical, visible and permanent reality... and to incorporate them into the individual' (1976: 44). 'The homosexual' was therefore not a pre-existing subject to which the discourses referred. It was rather a phenomenon constituted within the discourse itself. Westphal's famous article of the 1870 on 'contrary sexual sensations', as he put it, 'can stand as its date of birth' (1976: 43).

Although Foucault's (e.g. 1987) later work on 'the technologies of the self' is more sensitive to the activist dimensions of group formation, the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* proposes a paradigm of subjectification that privileges the passive and 'external' dimensions of group construction and reduces acts of homosexual self-identification to mere effects of discursive categories. In debates concerned with the emergence of a homosexual grouping, a field of study in which Foucault is sometimes treated as 'a saint' (Halperin, 1995: 6; see also Mohr, 1992: 222), it is his early work, and
particularly his idea of ‘discursive categorisation’, that has been most influential. In some readings of Foucault, the concept of ‘homosexual category’ takes the form of a ‘discursive structure’ that precedes, constrains and regulates individual action. Thus, acts of homosexual self-identification are inconceivable without the existence of a discursive category of homosexuality. This is so because, as Ian Hacking (1990: 80) explains, ‘intentional human actions must be actions under a description’. That is, to identify themselves as homosexuals, agents must have, prior to their action, a description of the homosexual in mind. Furthermore, the discursive category of homosexuality is said to have generated ‘a description’ under which acts of homosexual self-identification could be performed. What is more, discursive categorisation does not only precede and facilitate but it also forms and conditions acts of homosexual self-identification. In Foucault’s (1976) words, categorisation generated a ‘reverse’ discourse, the discourse of ‘the homosexuals’ themselves, that was articulated ‘in the same vocabulary, using the same categories by which [homosexuality] was medically disqualified’ (1976: 101). As a result, although Foucault shows that power cannot be understood in terms of ‘exteriority’ (1976: 92-102), his analysis (and certain interpretations of it in the context of the construction of homosexuality) does tend to posit a ‘temporal lag’: the group is first constituted by power (hence ‘power’ is always already ‘inside’ the group) and then becomes an agent of resistance through ‘reverse discourse’ (Foucault, 1976: 101) or ‘a strategic power reversal’ (Halperin, 1995: 29). Hence, ‘the group’ is active but it is not active in its formation.

Subsequently, despite Foucault’s avowed hostility to structural functionalism, The History of Sexuality shares role theory’s one-sided focus on the structural and deterministic dimensions of social construction and its under-emphasis of agency (see Mouzelis, 1995: 45-48). However, whereas McIntosh’s structural functionalist notion of homosexuality as a ‘role’ ignores agency altogether, the Foucauldian concept of a
‘discursive category’ of homosexuality relegates it to the level of macro-agency, that is to the discursive practices associated with particular groups of macro actors and institutions, such as law and medicine. As a result, *The History of Sexuality* overlooks the dimensions of agency that Plummer’s symbolic interactionism has (one-sidedly) stressed: the capacity of actors to form groups in social interaction (see Layder, 1994: 110-114 for similar critique of Foucault’s discourse analysis). Thus, Foucault’s analysis exemplifies what Lois McNay (2000: 1-30) calls ‘the negative paradigm of subjectification’: an understanding of the process of identity formation that assumes the passivity of the subject and denies micro-actors any constitutive role in the production of identities. This is a very dynamic paradigm that elucidates the effects of formal and institutionalised categorisations but it has no way of explaining the manner in which these formal categories are produced, negotiated and actively transformed in everyday practice.

John D’Emilio’s (1983) article on ‘Capitalism and Gay Identity’ shifts the emphasis from ‘discursive determination’ to ‘active production’ and in doing so it introduces a radically different paradigm of subjectification. D’Emilio’s (1983; 1989: 457-458) central argument is that the emergence of ‘the modern homosexual’ can be explained in terms of the historical development of capitalism and the free labour system associated with it. In feudal societies, D’Emilio notes, individual survival was structured around a household economy. That is, individuals could survive only as parts of a family that was an interdependent unit of production (1983:144). Some men and women did engage in homosexual activities but the material conditions did not allow them to construct a way of life based on their sexual preference. By the nineteenth century, however, the system of household production was in decline and the emerging ‘industrial capitalism provided the conditions for a homosexual and lesbian identity to emerge’ (1989: 457). ‘Only when *individuals*, as D’Emilio put it, ‘began to make their living through wage labour... was it possible for homosexual desire to coalesce into a personal identity - an identity based on
the ability to remain outside the heterosexual family....' (1983: 144). In this way, D’Emilio is in a position to suggest that the medical discourses did not construct homosexual personal identity and groups. They were rather ‘an ideological response to a changing social reality: some women and men were structuring their lives in a new way’ (1989: 458). Thus, whereas Foucault gives primacy to the emergence of a discursive category of homosexuality and he argues that homosexual identity and resistance (as a ‘reverse discourse’) is a complex product of medical and legal categorisation, D’Emilio stresses that identity precedes discursive categorisation.

Following D’Emilio, Barry Adam (1995; 1996) develops a similar argument in his attempt to account for ‘the differences between the histories of the lesbian and the gay worlds’ (1995: 115-116), that is for the fact that a lesbian identity emerged at least a century after the development of a gay male identity. Adam argues that it is the difference between men and women’s position in the wage-labour system that accounts for the differential histories of male homosexuality and lesbianism. ‘Lesbian and gay relationships’, as he put it, ‘presuppose a degree of free choice which wage-labourers could exercise but housewives could not’ (1996: 115). Furthermore, although a gay male identity emerged at least as early as the 1700s, ‘only when women began to trickle back into wage-labour did a lesbian world begin to emerge, toward the end of the century’ (1996: 115). Moreover, even though D’Emilio and Adam disagree about the dating of the emergence of a homosexual identity, they both explain this historical change in terms of the emergence of a capitalist-boosted individuality.

Whereas the Foucauldian focus on the concept of ‘discursive category’ explains the emergence of the modern homosexual in a manner that overemphasises the deterministic aspects of historical construction, D’Emilio’s and Adam’s emphasis on ‘homosexual identity’ proposes a ‘voluntarist paradigm of subjectification’. In one sense, D’Emilio’s
and Adam’s analyses are also grounded on a concept ‘external determination’ in they consider acts of homosexual self-identification to be the product of the emergence of new economic structures. Yet, the development of capitalism is not seen as a determining or a constraining factor. On the contrary, with the rise of capitalism, ‘affection, personal relationships, and sexuality increasingly entered the realm of choice’ (D’Emilio, 1989: 457, emphasis added; also Adam, 1996: 118). Adam’s emphasis on ‘free choice’ (1996: 115) and D’Emilio’s obsession with ‘individual autonomy’ (1983: 145) are grounded on the idea that capitalism did not determine particular sexual identities but it gave rise to a historically unprecedented individuality. It replaced the system of household production with the system of wage labour and it enabled many men and women to organize their personal lives in a new way. Furthermore, ‘homosexuality’ was the product of individual choice, the product of ‘a capacity to chose’ engendered by the development of capitalism and not the passive outcome of discursive categorizations. Moreover, this historically specific ‘capacity to chose’ accounts not only for the formation of personal identity but also for the formation of a social group. As D’Emilio stressed, it was ‘the decisions of particular men and women to act on their erotic/emotional preference for the same sex… [that] led to the formation of an urban subculture of gay men and lesbians’ (1983: 146).

In short, studies concerned with the formation of ‘the modern homosexual’ have been conducted within at least two distinct paradigms of subjectification. On the one hand, despite their differences, McIntosh (1968) and Foucault (1976) have explored the passive or ‘externalist’ dimensions of group formation: the manner in which functional imperatives or institutionalised discourses impose a passive unity on the homosexual grouping. On the other hand, Plummer (1981b) and D’Emilio (1983) and Adam (1985) have analysed, in different ways, the activist or ‘internalist’ dimensions of subjectification: the manner in which a group emerges out of interaction and/or individual and collective decisions and practices. Each paradigm makes an important contribution to

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the analysis of subjectification but it does so by over-emphasising particular aspects of group formation and suppressing the dimensions explored in the other paradigm. Furthermore, the differences between (and the problems with) the two perspectives are both political and theoretical in character. On a political level, the ‘externalist’ or ‘negative’ paradigm approaches subjectification as subordination and subjection, where (in the case of Foucault) even political resistance is a side-effect or ‘an extension’ of subordination. The voluntaristic paradigm, on the other hand, equates subjectification with resistance itself making social change a question of choice and will. On a theoretical level, the two contrasting approaches appear to reinforce the division between structure and practice, explicated in Chapter III. To paraphrase Giddens (1984: 2), whereas the structural functionalist notion of ‘homosexual role’ and the Foucauldian idea of ‘discursive construction’ are founded upon an imperialism of the social object (‘functions’ or ‘formal categories’), Plummer’s symbolic interactionism and D’Emilio and Adam’s voluntarist analyses propose an imperialism of the social subject (‘interactive construction’ or ‘choice’).

Despite their limitations, the different insights of these two paradigms of subject formation made it possible, in the course of the 1980s and the 1990s, to pose more complex questions of subjectification, questions about the dialectical unity of categories and identities and the interplay of imposition and active construction, of subordination and resistance. In fact, even though I have emphasised their one-sidedness, some of these relatively partial approaches contained within them, in latent forms, the seeds for the development of synthetic approaches to subjectification. Thus, Judith Butler’s (1995a) ‘synthetic’ concept of ‘resignification’ is largely developed through a critical re-reading and reconstruction of Foucault’s (1976) understanding of subjectification while Jeffrey Weeks’ (1998) attempt to reconcile categories and identities is partly inspired by McInstosh’s (1968) article on ‘The homosexual role’. Similarly, although he does not
address these specific debates, Richard Jenkins (2000: 8-9) argues that the interactionist perspective on subject formation, with its occasional emphasis on institutional categorization, labelling and individual internalization, provides a useful (but incomplete) basis for grasping the interaction between internal self-definition and external categorisation. Furthermore, the 'synthetic turn' in theories of subject formation represents both a break and continuity with the subjectification paradigms that preceded it.
III. The ‘synthetic turn’ in theories of subject formation

The two distinct paradigms of subjectification explored above may be specific to gay studies but the logic that separates category-centred and identity-centred approaches to subject formation is also prevalent, in various guises, in other fields of study. Sherry Ortner (1996: 1-20) and Lois McNay (2000: 1-30) address similar divisions in feminist anthropology and feminist poststructuralist analysis, respectively, while Sheldon Stryker and Peter Burke (2000) identify parallel conflicts in understandings of identity in psychological literature. Referring to a wider body of literature, which includes anthropological studies as well as linguistics, Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner and Cain (1998: 3-18) talk about two parallel approaches to identity formation via a distinction between ‘the culturalists’, who stress passive learning and cultural conditioning, and ‘the constructivists’, who emphasise manoeuvring and active negotiation. However, different understandings of the category-identity division are not necessarily articulated in terms of distinct groups of theorists or studies, not even in terms distinct paradigms. In most cases, ‘passive categorisation’ and ‘active identification’ are understood as different processes that need to be brought together (e.g. Jenkins, 2000; Brubaker and Cooper, 2000: 14-16; Emcke, 2000, Wong, 2002) while, in his analysis of the relationship between ‘early’ and ‘late’ Foucault, Stuart Hall (1996) shows how these two dimensions of subjectification can coexist in the work of a single author.

Irrespective of how they are understood (as ‘paradigms’, ‘theories’ or ‘processes’), categorisation and identification are distinguished (in different ways) precisely in order to be synthesised. However, just as the ways in which the category-identity distinction is understood and articulated are diverse, so too the types of synthesis proposed differ. On a general level, attempts to synthesise categorisation and identification have followed certain patterns or ‘logics of synthesis’ similar or equivalent to the logics that inform
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certain synthetic analyses of gender on ‘the level of structuration’ (see Chapter III). In what follows, I introduce what I see as the most influential and most promising types of synthesis, focusing initially on an example from ‘gay historiography’ and then on some debates within ‘queer theory’. The analysis of these studies will pave the way for grasping the specificity and some problematic dimensions of Connell’s approach to subjectification.

Gay historiography: Chauncey’s redefinition of ‘category’

The two different paradigms of subjectification explored in the preceding section through an analysis of studies concerned with the emergence of ‘the modern homosexual’ have paved the way for more complex analyses of ‘the making of the modern homosexual’. Subsequent theoretical studies and concrete historical explorations of the constitution of homosexual categories and identities, especially after the mid-1980s, attempt to take advantage of the insights of both paradigms without collapsing into the reificationism of ‘categories’ or the voluntarism of ‘identities’.

The work of the British social historian Jeffrey Weeks is important in understanding what could be called ‘the synthetic turn’ in gay historiography. Weeks has produced both concrete historical investigations (e.g. 1977; 1989) and complex theoretical analyses (e.g. 1991a; 1991b; 2000), emphasising the interplay of formal categorisations and everyday identity practices as well as the multidimensionality of categories and identities. He draws critically on the two paradigms explored above as well as on other perspectives to argue that ‘the homosexual’ can be seen as both an imposition and a choice, both a counter-discourse and a self-creation. As he put it in an essay entitled ‘Questions of Identity’.
Identity is not a destiny but a choice... Identities are not expressions of secret essences. They are self-creations, but they are creations on ground not freely chosen but laid out by history. So homosexual identities illustrate the play of constraint and opportunity, necessity and freedom, power and pleasure (1991b: 83).

Weeks' argument that 'the homosexual' is simultaneously an imposition and a self-creation is partly based on a more activist understanding of the Foucaultian notion of 'discursive categorization', on his observation that 'there is no automatic relationship between social categorisation and individual sense of self or identity' (1989: 117). Rather than causing (mechanically) 'reverse discourses', formal categories open spaces for creative and diverse responses (1989: 108), for self-definition and individual and collective resistance (1991b: 75). Hence, Weeks attempts to synthesise category and identity not by transcending the distinction itself. He does not produce new concepts or 'third terms' but he proposes a more reciprocal account of the relationship between the already existing ones, restricting the causal force of the Foucauldian notion of 'category' and providing a more situated account of identity practices.

In Gay New York, George Chauncey (1994) proposes a more groundbreaking synthetic approach to subjectification. Rather than negotiating the causal force of 'categories' (a la Weeks), Chauncey redefines the concept of 'category' altogether, making it inseparable from 'identity'. Chauncey's redefinition of 'category' is similar to Giddens' (1984) redefinition of 'structure' (see Chapter III) in that by 'categories' Chauncey refers neither to the formal, institutionalized discursive categorisations of law and medicine nor to a set of 'functional' role expectations, but to a stock of informal knowledge constantly produced and transformed by actors in the course of day-to-day activities in the life-world (1994: 1-29). For Chauncey, elite discourse and 'elite discursive categories' (as they are formalized by doctors, municipal authorities, the police, religious figures, legislators and medical journals) are important historical phenomena but they do not constitute the
primary (let alone exclusive) focus of subjectification analysis because categories like ‘fairy’, ‘queer’, ‘trade’ and ‘gay’ are shown to become ‘popular discursive categories before they become elite discursive categories’ (1994: 27). This is consistent with British historical studies which show, for example, that the term ‘molly’ (meaning exclusive and effeminate homosexual) was widely used in the streets of London from the early eighteenth century, more than one hundred years before the emergence of a formal and institutionalized concept of homosexuality (Trumbach, 1998: 7). Hence, Chauncey is ‘more interested in reconstructing the maps etched in the city streets by daily habit, the paths that guided men’s practices even if they were never published or otherwise formalized’ (1994: 26). Rather than been constituted ‘once and for all’, identities and categorisations are now aspects of a dynamic process of constant production and transformation. Within the context of Chauncey’s analysis, it is therefore problematic to talk about, or specify, ‘the date of birth’ of a particular category (a la Foucault, 1976: 43).

Chauncey’s understanding of subjectification represents an advance over the two paradigms of subjectification explicated in the previous section. On the one hand, his understanding of performative practice is more sophisticated than the voluntarist notion of capitalist-boosted ‘free action’ or the ahistorical concept of interaction: practice is guided by popular categories which are themselves constantly etched, formed and reformed through street-level habitual practice. On the other hand, his understanding of categories as ‘popular maps’ is irreducible to the Foucauldian concept of a ‘discursive category’ and to the functionalist notion of ‘role expectations’: it refers to an informal, actively produced, and constantly negotiated body of knowledge and meanings that inheres in and constitutes social practices. As with Giddens’ (1984) account of structuration, Chauncey’s analysis of subjectification relies on an understanding of categories as ‘virtual’, as being both ‘the medium and outcome’ of performative practice. Hence, ‘virtual categorisation’ and ‘performative practice’ become interdependent and
mutually reinforcing. Practices of homosexual self-identification or labelling are made possible and intelligible by the existence of a homosexual category in the life-world. That is, people can identify themselves, or label others, as homosexuals only if a notion of homosexuality is available and accessible to them. Furthermore, homosexual categories are also the outcome of acts of homosexual self-identification because, in defining themselves, or labelling others, as ‘homosexuals’, ‘mollies’, ‘gays’ or ‘lesbians’, people simultaneously contribute towards the production and transformation of popular categorisations. Homosexual category and identity are now simultaneously constituted, interdependent, and mutually reinforcing.

Chauncey’s redefinition of ‘category’ reflects a broader shift in studies of subjectification, a post- (or late-) Foucauldian turn towards what could be called the ‘everydayzation of categorizations’, similar to what Stuart Hall (1996) names the ‘stylization of everyday life’ (1996: 13). This shift is nowhere more evident than in the field of race and ethnic studies where, beginning with Michael Billig’s (1995) Banal Nationalism, there has been an increased emphasis on the realm of ‘the everyday’, the banal and the ordinary. Hence, studies of ethnic and racial categorizations have stressed the centrality of everyday life ‘national performances’ (Edenson, 2002), the manner in which people produce, negotiate, contest and transform ‘national cultures’ and categorisations (Thompson, 2001) and the active formation and negotiation of racial boundaries in the life-world (Lewis, 2003). Yet, while the ‘everydayzation of categorization’ makes it possible to grasp ‘categories’ and ‘identities’ as interrelated phenomena, to grasp informal categorisation and performative practice as mutually constitutive dimensions of the same processes, it does so by bracketing or suppressing the formal or institutional dimensions of categorisation. Hence, Chauncey’s ‘logic of synthesis’ transcends the ‘category-identity division’ via the production of an ‘intra-category division’, of a splitting up of informal, everyday categorisation and formal,
institutionalised categorisation. The question of the relationship between these two forms of categorisation is left largely unexplored\textsuperscript{14}. As a result, on a political level, Chauncey's logic of synthesis has the effect of de-institutionalizing power struggles and relegating politics to the realm of everyday encounters and interactions.

In this way, although it may not offer a definitive account of the relationship between 'imposition' and 'active construction' in group formation, the 'logic of synthesis' implicit in Chauncey's historical analysis opens up two interrelated lines of investigation. Firstly, in focusing on the 'everydayization of categorisation', it paves the way for the analysis of questions of making: the manner in which 'popular categories' are constantly made, remade and unmade through the very identity practices that they make possible. Secondly, in distinguishing between 'popular' and 'formal' categorisation and in under-theorising their interconnection, it points to the necessity of exploring questions of institutionalisation: the complex and diverse ways in which popular categories relate to (e.g. give rise to; get embedded in; are produced by; are conditioned by; etc) institutionalised categorisations. These two questions, which are distinguished only on an analytical level, have been a major focus of analysis in some complex theoretical and political debates in the emerging field of 'queer theory', most notably in debates centred on Judith Butler's understanding of subjectification.

**Queer theory: Butler on the recitation of norms**

As Jeffrey Weeks (1998: 131) rightly argues, the originality of Judith Butler's work on gender and sexuality has sometimes been exaggerated. Butler (1990) owes most of her popularity to her first book, *Gender Trouble*, where she formulates a notion of gender as 'performative': gender is neither an 'expression' of what one is nor an essential attribute that one can *have* but the performative effect of what people constantly *do*, the 'stylist...
repetition of acts through time’ (1990: 141; also 7-8, 24-25). Butler was the first to articulate this action-based understanding of gender using a set of concepts from continental philosophy (drawing mainly on Nietzsche, on feminist interpretations of Lacan and on Foucault and Derrida) and she was also unprecedented in using it to challenge both heterosexuality and ‘the presumed universality and unity of the subject of feminism’ (1990: 4). Yet, her understanding of gender, as articulated in 1990, was not as groundbreaking as the initial reception of Gender Trouble in fields like literary criticism and ‘queer studies’ may suggest (for a review, see Roden, 2001). Butler’s performative understanding of gender had less impact on fields like British and American sociology of gender (see, respectively, Finch, 1993 and Always, 1995) and sexuality (see, Plummer, 1998) or on critical studies of men and masculinities (see, Hearn, 2004) and gay historiography (see, Lofstrom, 1997) partly because these fields of study generated and debated similar concepts of gender around the same time, if not earlier.15

In the late 1980s, Candace West and Don Zimmerman (1987) argued that gender is a ‘doing’ and that, since people are predisposed to interpret any behaviour as an ‘expression’ of gender, virtually any activity is ‘gender doing’ (1987: 136-137).16 Similarly, in his practice-based approach to subjectification, Connell (1987) insists that ‘if we could use the word ‘gender’ as a verb (I gender, you gender, she genders…) it would be better for our understanding’ (1987: 140).17 Butler may argue that these sociological understandings of gender as practice are radically different from a performative notion of gender because they still assume ‘that there is doer behind the deed’ (1990: 25) as in Connell’s ‘she genders’ where the ‘she’ appears to precede the act of gendering (even though, as I will argue below, Connell’s understanding of subjectification is more complex)–, a criticism that Butler explicitly directs against Goffman’s (1959) notion of ‘role performance’ (see, Butler, 1988: 412; 1995b: 134). However, the assumed originality of Gender Trouble is still unexplained precisely
because this book was popularised via a 'voluntarist' or 'Goffmansian' reading (see, Butler, 1993b: 16-18). Thus, while Goffman's (1976) notion of 'gender as a display' could arguably provide equally useful theoretical foundations for the emerging queer movement, Gender Trouble became a more viable candidate not because it was shown to be theoretically unprecedented but mainly because of its explicitly political orientation. Hence, the brief section of Gender Trouble where Butler (1993: 136-138) discusses the subversive, imitative and parodic dimensions of drag, its capacity to reveal that what is assumed to be an 'original identity' is nothing but an imitation, a copy of a copy without an original, turned out to be the most popular aspect of the book. Furthermore, it was usually used to endorse a 'hyper-voluntarist gender politics where it is assumed that we can meddle at will with our gender identities, changing them as we choose' (Lloyd, 1999: 209; see also Sullivan, 2003: 81-98)18.

While Butler has argued, somehow ironically or even in a 'self-defeating' way, that this voluntarist reading of Gender Trouble is 'a misapprehension' (1993b: 16), 'a misrepresentation' (Osborne and Segal, 1994: 33) or 'a misreading' (1995b: 133) rather than a possible reiteration of a text that fails to permanently fix meaning, Moya Lloyd (1999) has convincingly shown that such a reading was made possible by some ambiguities and obscurities within Gender Trouble itself. Indeed, Butler's (1993a; 1993b; 1995b; 1997a) later work seems to recognise this fact and it can be seen as an attempt to rearticulate her performative understanding of gender in a more complex way, particularly in a way that blocks voluntarist interpretations. It is precisely this part of her oeuvre that I want to examine in this section for it is when Butler is already considered to be an influential thinker and when she sets out to 'to write against [her] popular image' and 'make [herself] less popular' (Osborn and Segal, 1994: 33) that she begins to make some groundbreaking contributions to social theory and to formulate an innovative synthetic approach to subjectification.
In her work published after *Gender Trouble*, Butler attempts to block voluntarist understandings of her concepts of gender practice, identity and resistance in two main ways, which involve two important revisions of her initial definition of gender as 'a repetition of acts through time'. Firstly, she gradually reformulates 'repetition' as 'forced reiteration', '(re)citation' or 'resignification' and, secondly, she begins to place a stronger and more systematic emphasis on the concept of 'norms'. Hence, performative gender practice is now more explicitly defined as 'the forced reiteration of norms' (1993a: 94; Oslon and Worsham, 2004: 344). In line with McNay (1999) and Hall (1996), and for similar though not identical reasons, I regard Butler's 'revised' understanding of performative practice to be a powerful but limited 'attempt to get beyond an understanding of gender identity as a one-sided process of imposition or determination, without lapsing into a voluntarist model of the subject' (McNay, 1999: 176). In particular, while her notions of 'resignification', 'recitation' and 'reiteration' embody a powerful understanding of what I have previously called 'questions of making', an understanding that can complement Connell's analysis of subjectification and power in some important ways, her concept of 'norms' is still underdeveloped and it fails to adequately address 'questions of institutionalisation', an aspect of subjectification analysis that Connell's work will be shown to address in more complex ways. Hence, while Connell's work on subjectification can be enriched by some dimensions of the first part of Butler's revised definition of gender practice ('forced reiteration'), the second part Butler's definition of gender ('norms') can be made more complex and more specific through an encounter with Connell's work.

As regards 'questions of making', Butler's (1997a; 1997b) notions of 'resignification', 'citationality' or 'reiteration' can be seen as 'third terms' that work to break down the opposition of category and identity. As central elements of Butler's understanding of
subjectification, these concepts are developed through a productive interpretation of Foucault’s (1982) understanding of power and subject formation mediated by a critical analysis of Althusser’s (1971) notion of ‘interpellation’, J. L. Austin’s (1962) distinction between ‘performative’ and ‘constative’ utterances and Jacques Derrida’s (1977) critique of Austin. Butler (1997a) begins with the recognition that subjectification is inseparable from ‘submission’ and ‘subordination’: ‘[w]hether by interpellation, in Althusser’s sense, or by discursive productivity, in Foucault’s, the subject is initiated through a primary submission to power’ (1997a: 2). This initial moment of ‘submission’ is two-sided in that, as Butler eloquently puts it, ‘[p]ower not only acts on a subject but, in a transitive sense, enacts the subject into being’ (1997a: 13). However, contra Althusser (1971: 160-165), Butler argues that this ‘forming’ of the subject is not the product of a single act of verbal authoritative hailing (as with Althusser’s example of the policeman that hails a passer-by on the street) but a complex temporal process with deep psychic dimensions. In this process, the subject emerges simultaneously as an effect of power and as an active agent whose practice becomes the site of the subsequent expansion of power. That is, in line with Althusser’s most famous pupil, Butler argues that the subject derives its agency from its subordination and that, consequently, resistance is always caught up in the logics of the power it opposes (1997a: 1-30). Thus, contra the interpretation of Foucault (1976) proposed above, Butler’s own reading of Foucault suggests that resistance does not take the form of a simple ‘reversal’ through which the subject is constituted once and for all. Focusing mainly on Foucault’s (1987; 1988) late work, Butler (2000c; 1997a) argues that power ‘is taken up and reiterated in the subject’s ‘own’ acting’ (1997a: 14) and that, therefore, the subject, as the site of the continuing expansion of power, is constantly coming into being. More than that, given that ‘there is no temporal lag’ (1996: 64) and ‘no conceptual transition’ (1997a: 15) between the passive constitution and the activisation of the subject (between the making of a ‘subordinate other’ and the making
of an ‘active agent’) power loses its appearance of ‘priority’, ‘exteriority’ or ‘temporal precedence’ vis-à-vis the subject (1997: 13).

In further exploring this impossibility of a ‘conceptual transition’, Butler replaces what would be a never-ending debate about relations of determination between imposition and active construction with a series of ‘re-prefixed’ concepts, where ‘re-’ denotes not only that something is done again (past-orientation) but also that something is done anew and in a way that alters the preceding situation (future-orientation). Thus, concepts like ‘re-iteration’, ‘re-citation’ or ‘re-deployment’ appear to make the preceding oppositions (e.g. exteriority/interiority, activity/passivity) virtually redundant precisely because they make any instance of ‘present’ inseparable from ‘past’ and ‘future’. The power of normative categorisations and the agency of reiterative practice become two sides of the same historical process, of a process in which categories and identities are simultaneously made, remade and unmade. Hence, Butler shifts emphasis from instantaneous practices of identity production or events of category imposition to complex temporal processes: identity construction takes place in time and normative categorisations are themselves produced, consolidated and subverted in this temporal process of ongoing reiteration, resignification and redeployment (1993a: 10).

As with Chauncey’s (1994) redefinition of ‘category’, Butler addresses the past-oriented dimensions of performative practice through an analysis of the bounded and radically situated aspects of identity formation. Challenging both voluntaristic readings of Gender Trouble and simplistic understandings of practice like D’Emilio’s (1983), Butler argues that the performative production of identity cannot be reduced to radically ‘free acts’ and individual ‘self-inventions’ or taken to be the fabrication of the performer’s ‘will’ or ‘choice’ (1993b: 20). Rather, people are always forced to operate within the context of intractable and inescapable ‘norms’. Employing a strategy of synthesis similar to the one
that underlies Giddens’ (1984) notion of the ‘duality of structure’, Butler argues that norms are both constraining and enabling, both the limit and the condition of performative, reiterative practice (Osln and Worsham, 2004: 345). On the one hand, norms precede and set limits to practice because people are ‘born into a world in which norms are already acting on [them] from the beginning’ (Osln and Worsham, 1994: 341). Categorisations, like ‘hyperbolic’ versions of ‘man’ and ‘woman’ or ‘straight’ and ‘gay’, are an essential part of what Butler refers to as ‘norms’ (see, 1995b: 136). They are always already ‘there, insistent, as the material to be worked, obdurate, but not for that reason unyielding’ (2000c: 33). Thus, as Butler notes in an Anti-Mouzelian (1995) language, there is no possibility of ‘subject-object dualism’: ‘[t]here is no subject who is free to stand outside these norms or negotiate them at a distance’ (1993b: 17), ‘no possibility of standing outside of the discursive conventions by which ‘we’ are constituted’ (1995b: 136). On the other hand, Butler, like Giddens (1984), is careful not to reify these norms or abstract them from practice. Normative categorisations derive their power from the citational practice they compel and make possible and they are norms to the extent that they are ‘cited’ (1993a: 13). More than that, they are the historical effects of previous social practice, ‘the legacy of conventions’ (1995b: 135) or ‘condensed historicity’ (McNay, 1999: 179), in that the reiteration of gender acts and styles over time produces and naturalises the idea that there are distinct categories from which practice and identity are said to follow. Reiteration, in Butler’s words, ‘creates an effect of gender uniformity, a stable effect of masculinity or femininity’ (1993b: 16-17). Furthermore, actors derive their agency from reworking these historical effects of practice (crystallised as norms) in present acts. Thus, what appears to be an ‘individual act’ or the expression of a will is, for Butler, complex historical work (1995b: 136) in that gender practice ‘draws on’ and reworks preceding conventions. In this sense, every single gender act can be seen as a ‘historical totalisation’ that, like the individual praxis of the professional boxers studies by Sartre (1976) in the Critique of Dialectical Reason, derives.
its power from, and bears the traces of, the historical products of practice that preceded it.

This constant and intrinsically historical 'reworking of the norms', a reworking that accounts for the simultaneous production of normative categories and performative practice, is also understood as being an intrinsically future-oriented activity. Whereas Giddens (1984) reduces this 'reworking' to repetitive and cyclical practice which logically and inevitably reproduces the rules and resources that make it possible (see Chapter III), Butler argues that reiterative practices 'are never simply replicas' of previous practices and pre-existing norms (1993b: 13) or their 'structurally identical repetitions' (2000a: 29). In line with Connell's (1971) critique of Piaget's (1949) 'axiom of inversion' (see Chapter I), Butler argues that 'there is no possibility of recovering or recollecting previous acts- no chance of identical re-enactment' (Lloyd, 1999: 197). This impossibility of reproduction is the product of two interrelated and mutually reinforcing facts: on the one hand, practice is always situational, contextual and thus uncertain (Sullivan, 2003: 85); on the other hand, the norms that compel practice 'are constantly haunted by their own inefficacy' (Butler, 1993b: 22), by their 'constitutive instabilities' (Butler, 1993a: 10) and their subsequent 'vulnerability to reappropriation and resignification' (Mills, 2000: 266). It is precisely this vulnerability and 'expropriability' (Butler, 1993b: 18) of norms, which Butler develops with reference to Derrida's's (1977) principle of 'the iterability of signs', that forms Butler's understanding of the future-orientation of practice and her theorisation of resistance (see Butler, 1997b; Mills, 2000; and Salih, 2002: 90-91, 112-114). Due to their occasional gaps or what Butler calls their 'productive crises' (1993a: 10), the normative categorisations that compel practice are simultaneously carried into the future and potentially transformed by the very performative practices that they make possible. Hence, reiterative performative practice is simultaneously a forced 'reworking of the norm' and a productive reworking of 'the
weakness in the norm' (1993b: 22, emphasis added). Consequently, ‘intentionality’ and ‘agency’ have a place in Butler’s paradigm of subjectification but this place is irreducibly the place granted to them by D’Emilio (1983) and Adam (1995). They are now radically situated and bounded and from this place, as Butler notes citing Derrida, they ‘are no longer [...] able to govern the entire scene’ (1995b: 134).

In this way, Butler’s radical historicisation of ‘questions of making’ refuses to grasp subjectification within the parameters of the ‘free will/determinism’ or ‘active identification/passive categorisation’ oppositions. In doing so, Butler proposes a complex theoretico-political understanding of identity formation, power and resistance: identities are not simply formed in relation to, or in opposition to, other identities (the ‘relational’ perspective) but they are produced through a reiteration of the normalised effects of preceding identity practices; resistance, as a creative redeployment of the effects of the practices that it aims to contest, is therefore a covert strategy in that it is an attack from within (Butler, 1995b: 135, emphasis added) rather than a ‘pure’ and easily recognizable opposition that stands outside the power it contests; power, as a constant reiteration and redeployment of ‘oppositional’ practices, is not only unstable and always incomplete and non-totalising but also covert and flexible in that it is able to coopt resisting forces through constant expansive resignification. Hence, Butler’s ‘politics of reiteration and redeployment’ creates certain alliances with a number of Gramsci-inspired political and theoretical currents that stress not so much the final product of hegemonic struggles (‘consent’) but the complexity of hegemonic processes: the conception of sub-cultural resistance produced in the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in the 1970s, which explores resistance in terms of bricolage, emphasising the subversive appropriation, recontextualisation and symbolic reconstruction of dominant styles and practices (e.g. Hall et. al., 1976; Hebdige, 1979); the subsequent understanding of power and domination in terms of flexible hegemonic blocs that are capable of adapting to the
specificities of changing historical situations by articulating, condensing and coopting oppositional forces (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; Hall, 1988); and the postcolonial analysis of identity, power and resistance that explores the subversive potentialities of negotiation, translation and hybridisation processes (Bhabha, 1994). The politics of redeployment and negotiation that these creative alliances embody is explored in detail in the next chapter where I critically reconstruct Connell’s understanding of ‘power’ and of his idea of ‘hegemonic masculinity’.

Before turning to Connell’s analysis of subjectification, it should be made clear that the dynamism of Butler’s approach to ‘questions of making’ is impaired by her inadequate exploration of ‘questions of institutionalisation’. The major limitation of Butler’s analysis begins to emerge as soon as one sets out to grasp, specify and make concrete the element that Butler regards as the condition and the consequence of reiterative practice: the idea of ‘norms’. In Butler’s work, the idea of ‘norms’ occupies a conceptual space equivalent to the space that the idea of ‘structure’ occupies in dualist theoretical perspectives, such as Giddens’ (1984). It refers to intractable, historically constructed and practice-dependent ‘enabling constraints’. These enabling constraints are not simply imposed or ‘internalised’ by a subject but, in forming people as subjects, they are ‘instituted through our bodies, through our stylistics’ (Oslo and Worsham, 1999: 344) and they operate as complex psychic phenomena, forming the unconscious and activating fantasy (1997a; 2000b: 151-162). Yet, while she carefully explores the psychic and bodily dimensions of norms and (contra Giddens) she is also at pains to avoid any form of ‘reproductionism’, Butler is less clear about the materiality and concrete institutionalisation of ‘norms’. Rosemary Hennessy (1995: 149) has argued that Butler never explains the relationships between norms, on the one hand, and concrete institutions like the family, the military or schools, on the other. Indeed, although Butler occasionally suggests that her concept of ‘norms’ is broad enough to encompass not only normative discourses and symbolic forms
but also concrete material and institutional structures (see Butler, 1998; Oslon and Worsham, 1999: 341), her analysis of ‘norms’ is almost exclusively focused on discursive practices, on questions of representation, signification, symbolism and language. As a concept of ‘structure’, Butler’s notion of norms is therefore severely limited in that it tends to reduce ‘enabling constraints’ to mere linguistic phenomena. This is precisely why, on some occasions, Butler tends to use the terms ‘norms’, ‘linguistic conventions’ and ‘schemas’ interchangeably (1993a: 12-13; 1995b: 134-15).

Hennessy’s materialist critique of Butler is not an isolated event. It has been rearticulated, in different contexts and in even more forceful ways, by a series of other critics of the politics of resignification. Seyla Benhabib (1995: 109-110) has argued that Butler tends to ‘privilege linguistic metaphors’ and ‘hermeneutic processes of signification and meaning-construction’ and to marginalise other dimensions of subjectification, such as family structures, child-rearing patterns and schooling. Similarly, Lois McNay (1999: 181) suggests that Butler tends to prioritize ‘the symbolic over the socio-political’ while Catherine Mills (2000; 2003) explicates how Butler’s ‘linguistic understanding of practice’ leads to an account of resistance that is ‘limited to the linguistic field’ (2003: 261) and ‘forecloses institutional analysis’ (2000: 265). Hence, as Nancy Fraser (1998: 149) puts it, Butler’s analysis suggests that resistance or social change is ‘an abstract transhistorical property of language’ rather than the product of ‘the actual contradictory character of specific social relations’. Criticisms like Fraser’s and Mills’ have been rearticulated and further explored by those that Lisa Adkins (2002: 34) has called ‘the social critics’ of Butler in the context of several debates.24

These ‘social critiques’ of Butler pave the way for identifying certain theoretical, political and methodological problems in her conception of ‘norms’ and, by implication, in her theorisation of normative categorisations. On a theoretical level, Butler’s tendency to
reduce norms to mere 'linguistic conventions' has the effect of privileging informal and everyday categorisations at the expense of more enduring institutionalised categorical distinctions. The undeniable differences and relationships between everyday discursive categories (e.g. the ways in which people re-employ and produce the categories of 'man', 'paedophile' or 'lesbian' in interaction) and materialised and institutionalised distinctions (e.g. the 'male'/‘female’ categorisation of restrooms in public buildings or the 'heterosexual'/‘homosexual’ squares that an HIV survey asks one to tick) are rendered both invisible and irrelevant in Butler's paradigm of subjectification. Furthermore, this one-sided theorisation of 'norms' leads to, and is structured by, equally one-sided notions of political strategy and empirical investigation. Politically, Butler's understanding of normative categorisations cannot avoid reducing resistance and political strategy to an everyday linguistic practice. Thus, in an example of reiterative resistance that she offers in an interview, Butler explains how she negotiated, replayed and reiterated positively the category 'lesbian' which she received as an insult from a kid. This is a complex form of politics as a historical reworking of normative categories but it is inappropriate for articulating and theorising other forms of subjectification politics, most notably resistance to institutionalised categorisations. For instance, one would need more than spontaneous wordplay to dismantle the pathologised category of 'lesbian' that structures institutionalised medicine and medical policies or, to use again a previous example, to resist the rigid sexual categorisations of the HIV survey. Consequently, it follows that the methodological agenda implicit in Butler's politics of reiteration is also limited (see, Mills, 2000: 265). While 'street-level participant observation' and textual analysis are important methodological tools, they are of limited value in understanding the workings of, and resistance to, institutionalised categorisations. A more complete understanding of subjectification requires analyses of practices, interactions and power struggles in concrete institutional sites, like schools and militaries.
In short, the synthetic turn in subjectification analysis consists of a series of diverse understandings of subject formation that attempt to move beyond the ‘active identification/passive categorisation’ opposition. Butler’s synthetic paradigm of subjectification, and particularly her notion of politics as reiteration and redeployment, offers some important insights into the complex historical process of the making and reworking of normative categorisations. Yet, it does so in a way that marginalises questions of institutionalisation. The distinctiveness of Connell’s synthetic approach to subjectification is to be found mainly in his tendency to place a stronger emphasis on the institutional dimensions of subject formation.

IV. Connell on ‘gender hegemony’ and group formation

While Butler’s analysis of subjectification relies on an abstract and unspecified concept of ‘structure’ as ‘norms’, which appears to dissolve into mere ‘linguistic conventions’, Connell’s approach to subject formation is developed in the context of a more sophisticated and more grounded understanding of ‘structure’. The internally differentiated concept of social structure critically analysed in Part II forms the basis of Connell’s analysis of gender on the level of subjectification. His examination of the relationship between gender ‘categories’ and ‘identities’ draws on the distinction between ‘gender regime’ and ‘gender order’ (see Chapter III, Figure III). In contrast to Butler’s tendency towards ‘abstractionism’, Connell’s analysis of subjectification is developed through concrete studies of gender in specific institutional sites and their gender regimes. Most notably, his work on the formation of masculinities in schools provides the basis for understanding the making of gender groupings, the constitution of relationships and hierarchies and the negotiation of social power (e.g. Connell, 2000: 131-176). The analysis of gender in schools explores group formation in terms of situated hegemonic struggles and it informs Connell’s broader understanding of the formation of groupings.
and hierarchies in societal and global gender orders. Hence, in exploring Connell’s understanding of subjectification, this section focuses on his analysis of hegemonic processes and group struggles in the context of specific gender regimes and broader gender orders. However, before turning to this material it is important to revisit Connell’s critique of categoricalism and sex role theory, for it is through a reaction to these perspectives that Connell begins to formulate an original approach to subjectification.

Beyond categoricalism and sex roles

In Chapter III, I analysed Connell’s critique of ‘sex role theory’ and ‘categoricalism’, paying particular attention to their theorisation of social structure and to Connell’s attempt to transcend the ‘voluntarism/determinism’ opposition generated by these two perspectives. Therein, I also alluded to the fact that these two incomplete approaches to social structure embody two equally incomplete understandings of group formation, power and struggle but I did not explore their understandings of power in any detail. It is now important to rearticulate Connell’s critique from the standpoint of power and group formation and to show how he moves from these limited perspectives to a complex analysis of subjectification that centres on hegemonic processes.

Connell’s general critique of the sex role framework is based on the recognition that the theory is ‘logically vague’ (Connell, 1995a: 26), ‘internally incoherent’ (Carrigan, Connell and Lee, 1985: 166) and ‘contradictory’ (Connell, 1979b: 205). Hence, while its notion of ‘structure’ (as ‘role expectations’) eventually collapses into subjectivism and voluntarism (see Chapter III), its theorisation of identity and group formation ends up in the other extreme, exaggerating the degree to which masculinities and femininities (as ‘role enactments’) are prescribed and passively produced by existing role expectations. This complex form of ‘voluntaristic determinism’ is the product of an interrelated
methodological and theoretical confusion: role theory fails to distinguish between
‘normative’ (expected or approved) and ‘standard’ (actual) behaviour, between what is
expected of people and what they actually do, creating the impression that the normative
sex role is the majority case (Connell, 1987: 52). Hence, according to Connell (1987),
most role theory is not constructed around problems generated from field observation
while the small minority of role theorists that do conduct close-up field research ‘have to
push the data very hard to get anything like the theoretical model of ‘roles’ out of it’
(1987: 52). In this way, since ‘sex roles’ are taken for granted and conflated with actual
gender practice, it is not hard to see why, for sex role theorists, gender practice is always
the mechanical outcome of pre-existing roles.

These theoretical and empirical obscurities have important political implications. In
failing to distinguish between normative role and actual practice, role theory fails to
explore the relationship, or even grasp the difference, between ‘ideology’ (the normative
role) and ‘resistance’ (actual departures from the role). More than that, in ‘The concept of
role and what to do with it’, Connell (1979b) aims to show that role theory is itself a
‘theoretical ideology’ in that it systematically portrays roles as ‘correct’, desirable and
unavoidable, as something that people naturally do (1979b: 204-205). Hence, it offers a
‘consensual theory of society’, an account of social order characterized by ‘mutual
agreement’, and it renders class and gender conflicts invisible (1979b: 205). Furthermore,
‘the association of role theory with concepts of ‘deviance’ and programs of therapy is not
accidental at all’ (1979b: 204). It is through the concept of deviance that power and the
systematic resistance to power is concealed and it is through programs of therapy that
‘role-contestation’ is repressed. Thus, ‘the girls who become tomboys, the women who
become lesbians, the shoppers who become shoplifters, the citizens who become
revolutionaries’ are not understood as emerging social groupings (1979b: 202). They are
simply pathologised and lumped together under the concept of ‘deviance’. Finally, since
it is the contradictions and the power conflicts within the social system that generate change, role theory’s inability to theorize power and resistance produces a static, ahistorical account of subjectification. Role theory is thus a specific form of ‘categoricalism’ in that it takes the roles for granted and fails to theorize their constant coming-into-being, transformation, and supersession (1979b: 206).

In his later writings, Connell stresses that sex role theory’s neglect of group conflict and resistance is two-dimensional (see, especially, Carrigan, Connell and Lee, 1985: 156-168; Connell, 1985: 262-264; 1987: 47-54; 1995a: 21-27). On the one hand, the theory underplays and legitimizes power relationships between genders. It treats the ‘female role’ and the ‘male role’ as equal and reciprocally dependent on each other and thus renders any concept of power between men and women irrelevant. As Connell repeatedly notes, ‘we do not speak of ‘race roles’ or ‘class roles’ because the exercise of social power in these areas of social life is more obvious to sociologists’ (1987: 50; Carrigan, Connell and Lee, 1985: 167). With sex role theory, however, the underlying biological dichotomy conceals and legitimizes the power that men exercise over women. As a result, ‘the notion of an overall social subordination of women... is not a conception that can be formulated in the language of role theory’ (Carrigan, Connell and Lee, 1985: 167). On the other hand, the sex role framework is also incapable of theorising power relationships within genders. As already noted, by granting primacy to normative over standard behaviour, sex role theory reduces emerging oppositional groupings to instances of ‘deviance’ and it thus fails to acknowledge the existence of a multiplicity of femininities and masculinities and to theorise the power among men and among women (1987: 52). Thus, male homosexuality and lesbianism, for example, appear to be the product of some personal eccentricity or imperfect socialization and not aspects of gender struggles (1995a: 25-27).
While sex role theory ignores power altogether, other forms of categorical gender thinking that focus on power relations tend to propose what could be called a ‘football match conception of gender’ \(^2\): the idea that men and women constitute two internally undifferentiated blocks that first exists as logical categories and then enter into a particular kind of power relationship (Connell, 1983e: 55, 57). In radical feminist analyses, according to Connell, this categorical conception of power offers women ‘a metaphysical solidarity (‘all women’)’ and ‘an omnipresent enemy (‘all men’), as in Brownmiller’s (1975) understanding of rape in terms of ‘a conscious process of intimidation by which all men keep all women in a state of fear’ (Connell, 1987: 61).

Some more complex categorical analyses of power tend to incorporate other dimensions of inequality (like ‘class’ or ‘race’) and, through a logic of cross-classification, they produce multi-dimensional grids on which people can be located, making it possible to talk about the specificity of ‘working class men’ or ‘middle class Anglo women’.

Expanding his critique of ‘the dimensional logic’ of stratification theory examined in Chapter I, Connell (1987: 59) argues that ‘the more sophisticated the cross-classification becomes, the more firmly is the analysis embedded in a static logic of categories’. Thus, cross-classification categoricalism addresses power in a direct way and provides a sound basis for mobilising political action but is does so in a very abstract and schematised way. It tends to reify social categories, to take them for granted and to underplay the historical process through which they are actively produced (Connell, 1987: 56). In the final analysis, it lacks a concrete account of subjectification, an analysis of the manner in which the groups come into being.

In this way, Connell’s critique of sex role theory and categorical understandings of gender generates a set of questions about subjectification and power. Particularly, it stresses the need to grasp what role theorists call ‘roles’ as historically specific sets of ideas and practices that represent the interests of particular social groups; to theorise what

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role theorists relegate to ‘deviance’ in terms of practices of resistance; to explore how historically novel social groupings emerge out of such practices; and thus to think of the ‘categories’ that categorical thinking takes for granted as formed and transformed in group struggle. Connell’s voluminous work on masculinities can be seen as a systematic attempt to address questions like these.

One of his earliest and most influential writings on ‘masculinities’, an article co-authored with Tim Carrigan and John Lee that bears the title ‘Towards a new sociology of masculinity’, provides a clear account of how Connell proceeds to address these questions. Therein, Connell and his collaborators outline the problems with sex role theory and then, after an analysis of the work of ‘gay historians’ (especially, Weeks, 1977), they turn to the concept of ‘hegemony’:

‘Hegemony’... always refers to a historical situation, a set of circumstances in which power is won and held. The construction of hegemony is not a matter of pushing and pulling between ready formed groupings, but it is partly a matter of the formation of those groupings. To understand the different kinds of masculinity demands, above all, an examination of the practices in which hegemony is constituted and contested- in short, the political techniques of patriarchal social order (Carrigan, Connell and Lee, 1985: 181).

Thus, the concept of ‘hegemony’ brings together questions of historicity, group formation, social practice, power, resistance and group struggle. In short, it addresses most of the issues raised in Connell’s critique of sex role theory and categorical understandings of power.

Furthermore, it is appropriate to approach Connell’s understanding of subjectification and power from the standpoint of his analysis of hegemonic processes. This will help clarify
not only his complex alternative to sex role theory and categoricalism but also the manner
in which he attempts to move beyond the active identification/passive categorisation
opposition. Moreover, to grasp the total complexity of this concept, one has to begin from
where Connell begins: from concrete empirical analysis. Not only does he follow
Gramsci (1971) and consistently define hegemony ‘in historically concrete terms’
(2002e: 89), as a concrete ‘situation’ (1977a: 220; 1980: 156; Connell and Irving, 1980:
22-23) and ‘historically mobile relation’ (1995a: 77), but he also introduces the concept
in the context of concrete empirical work. Thus, it is not in G&P, a predominantly
theoretical work, that the concept of hegemony is initially employed to analyse gender
relations. It is in the concrete analyses of gender in schools developed in Ockers and
Disco-maniacs (OD) and in Making the Difference (MD) that the ideas of gender
hegemony, ‘hegemonic masculinity’ and ‘gender regime’ are collectively introduced
(Kessler, Ashenden, Connell and Dowsett, 1982a; Connell, Ashenden, Kessler and
Dowsett, 1982). These studies, along with Connell’s subsequent work on masculinities in
schools (especially, 1989; 1996d; 2000; 2002a), offer a concrete and situated account of
subjectification through the analysis of hegemonic processes in a specific institutional
regime and they pave the way for Connell’s broader analysis of subjectification in wider
gender orders. Thus, following the developmental logic of Connell’s analysis, I will
firstly examine subjectification in the context of a specific regime and then I will proceed
to analyse his understanding of group hierarchies and struggle in the wider gender order.

Institutional involvement and gender hierarchies in schools

Connell’s analysis of gender subjectification in schools addresses both ‘questions of
making’ and ‘questions of institutionalisation’. Like Butler, he is at pains to show that
subjects are actively constituted through radically constrained practices. Hence, he shifts
emphasis from reified and abstract ‘roles expectations’ or pre-constituted categorisations
to ‘what people actually do’ (1996a: 56, emphasis added) and to the conditions and
effects of their ‘doings’. Thus, again in line with Butler, he proposes a complex synthetic understanding of subjectification that grasps gender groupings as passively constituted and actively produced in dialectical processes of categorisation and identification. Yet, Connell’s ‘logic of synthesis’ is radically different from Butler’s and this difference between the two opens creative spaces for theoretical expansion.

To begin with, in Connell’s analysis of subjectification, the element that constraints and enables practice is theorised, not in terms of abstract and unspecified ‘norms’, but in terms of specific institutional gender regimes and the wider gender order in which they are embedded. Thus, in his analysis of group formation and power struggles in schools, constraint and enablement comes from ‘the school’ itself, from its institutional arrangements, its historically constructed gender regime (or ‘state of play’) and its relationships to the gender regimes of other institutions, like the family or the state. ‘The school’ is implicated, or actively engaged, in the production of gender groupings in two main ways, which correspond to the two interrelated meanings Connell and his collaborators attach to the concept of ‘the school’:

There are, in a sense, two schools in every set of school buildings: the ‘informal’ school which is the world of the kids themselves, and the formal school, the official structure [...] the one paid for by the government and controlled by the teachers, and the one that grows up in the crannies and corners of the first, controlled by the kids (Connell, Ashenden, Kessler and Dowsett, 1982: 81, 162).

The ‘formal school’ places intractable constraints on the kids but it also offers them resources and enables them to ‘operate by proxy, to produce results one’s own capacity would not allow’ (Connell, 1987: 92). It does not enact ‘boys’ and ‘girls’ into being in a mechanical way but it constraints and makes possible their ‘active enactments’, which take place in the context of hegemonic struggles in the ‘informal school’, in the broader
context of peer networks and youth culture. The two dimensions of ‘the school’ are inseparable but they can be distinguished here to highlight ‘questions of institutionalisation’ (‘formal school’) and ‘questions of making’ (‘informal school’) and their interrelationships.

**Formal school and institutional differentiations: resources and reactions**

The ‘formal’ or ‘official’ school’s involvement in the production of gender groupings is central and explicit: the uniform it prescribes puts girls in skirts and boys in suits; the sports it encourages put girls in netball teams and boys in football teams; and its ‘hegemonic curriculum’ forces ‘choices between metalwork and cookery, arrangements of classes which, by merely assuming that girls will become secretaries and boys draughtsmen, make it difficult for either to be the reverse’ (Kessler, Ashenden, Connell and Dowsett, 1982: 11). The school also forces differentiations among boys and among girls. For instance, the differentiation of masculinities and femininities occurs in relation to a school curriculum which, by organising knowledge hierarchically and institutionalising academic failure via competitive grading and streaming, sorts boys and girls into an academic hierarchy (Connell, 2000: 137).

In Connell’s later work on masculinities, the centrality and intractability of institutional definitions of masculinity (e.g. curriculum-based or sport-based) is constantly stressed: ‘[s]chools create institutional definitions of masculinity. Such definitions are impersonal; they exist as social facts. Pupils participate in these masculinities simply by entering the school and living in its structures’ (2000: 154). In other words, institutional differentiations are forceful and inescapable. They are what Butler (2000c: 33) would call ‘the material to be worked’ but they are now empirically derived and they are defined and specified in concrete ways. Connell and his collaborators call these institutional
constraints the 'arena' or the 'site' in which a complex set of identities and relations are actively produced (Kessler, Ashenden, Connell and Dowsett, 1982a: 1, 11). A 'site', as Connell (2000) explains,

... can be understood in two ways. It can be examined as an institutional agent of the process. To understand this, we must explore the structures and practices by which the school forms masculinities among its pupils. Alternatively, we can examine the school as a setting in which other agencies are in play, especially the agency of the pupils themselves (2000: 151-152).

In Connell's analysis, the school as an 'agent' and the school as a 'setting' are systematically analysed together. Just as the primary school children studied by Connell in TCCP are actively involved in the production of 'structures of political beliefs', so too high school students do not reproduce the school's gender differentiations in a passive manner. Rather, as the rich and complex material presented in MD suggest, the school as 'an agent' provides the 'the material' which students actively translate into 'gender resources' or 'objects of opposition'. The outcome is a dynamic process in which different and conflicting forms of class and gender identities and relations are formed and transformed. The process is more complex, tension-ridden and dynamic than passive notions of 'role learning' would account for.

For instance, at Rockwell High School in a working-class suburb, the authors of MD and OD encounter students like Bill Poulos and Heather Arlott who construct their gender identities in opposition to the official school. These students use the school as the foil against which they construct oppositional gender identities. Bill's aggressive and sexist masculinity is achieved through resistance to school authorities and by delinquencies like smoking and drinking. Heather also contests school authorities but her resistance...
undermines conventional forms of femininity. Yet, in the same school, Connell and his collaborators encounter also ‘A’ stream students, the ‘school achievers’ like Mark Gray, who opt for a chance of promotion out of their class milieu via school success. Mark uses the school as a resource and distances himself from ‘hoods’ (‘toughs’) like Bill to construct a masculinity centred on competitive achievement (Connell, Ashenden, Kessler and Dowsett, 1982: 82-93). Moreover, just as Rockwell High School provides the setting for the production of a curriculum-based distinction between the ‘hoods’ and the ‘A-stream boys’, other schools pave the way for the production of similar distinctions centred on school sports, separating ‘the football heroes’ from ‘the Cyrils’, that is from the non-violent, studious boys (Connell, Ashenden, Kessler and Dowsett, 1982: 93-100). As with curriculum-based differentiations, sport-based distinctions are analysed in terms of the active reworking of the material provided by the formal school.

The formal school’s total involvement in the process of gender subjectification extents beyond institutional definitions and differentiations. In ‘Cool Guys, Swots and Wimps’, Connell (1989) shows that the very physical structure of the school, its architectural organisation, is implicated in the making of masculinities. The boy’s toilet block, ‘the dunnies’, is taken up and actively transformed into a space that accommodates a series of practices, ranging from cigarette smoking to ‘getting dirty books out’, that construct a masculinity in opposition to the school’s official structure (Connell, 2000b: 133-136). The ‘hoods’ in the toilet block rework the space and invest it with new meanings. They gradually become the object of fear for other groups of boys but the relationships between groups are constantly constructed and reconstructed in the context of peer-group life, both inside and outside the buildings of the school, and it is mediated by commercial youth culture. This is what Connell and his collaborators refer to as the ‘informal’ or ‘unofficial’ school, (Connell, Ashenden, Kessler and Dowsett, 1982: 120-126; 162-165).
and it is in this context that hegemonic struggles and the making and remaking of gender groupings can be fully understood.

Informal school and peer culture: differentiation, contestation, hegemony

Informal peer group life links ‘the school’ to the broader gender order of society. The informal school embodies a complex network of ideas, images, emotions and categorizations related to gender and sexuality that students draw on and recreate in concrete interactions in the physical spaces of the school building and outside of it. Like the formal structure of the school, the informal peer milieu supplies materials that the kids rework in conversations, situated interactions and conflicts. For instance, the logic, language and practice of heterosexual romance encourage certain gender practices and discourage others, propose specific gender differentiations and make kids ‘offers’ of certain ‘places’ in the gender order. Kids engage in these practices, they take up and rework the ‘offers’ and they negotiate existing differentiations ‘not because they are driven by raging hormones, but in order to acquire or defend prestige, to mark difference and to gain pleasure’ (Connell, 2000b: 163). Far from being a straightforward learning of roles or constituted once and for all, the production of groups, relationships and hierarchies are parts of ongoing hegemonic struggles ‘in which distinctions are made and sustained, power yielded, people formed (Connell, 1983e: 58).

The idea of hegemonic struggles emerges as a key issue in Connell’s understanding of subjectification. Hegemonic struggles take place in specific institutional settings but they are mediated by the broader culture. Sport is a case in point. Young people’s experience of sport is a gendered activity fused with popular representations, emotions, meanings and symbolisms pertaining to gender, sexuality and the body. People rework these cultural materials in specific contexts and they produce and negotiate gender differentiations, hierarchies and power relationships. In OD, Connell and his

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collaborators focus on the relationship between sport and the formation of masculinities in Milton College, a private high school for boys. They show how football becomes the medium for the active construction of a ‘culturally exalted’ masculinity and for the emergence of hierarchies and relations of power among boys. More than that, they show how groups are simultaneously ‘passively constituted’ and ‘actively produced’ in relational processes of gender differentiation and struggle (Kessler, Ashenden, Connell and Dowsett, 1982: 5-6). This relational perspective is reiterated in Connell’s (1995a; 2000b) later work on gender and masculinities, where two important complementary concepts emerge: ‘gender differentiation’ and ‘gender contestation’. These two concepts, which are implied and assumed rather than explicitly articulated, highlight the complex interconnections between the passive and the active dimensions of subjectification.

On the one hand, ‘gender differentiation’ refers to the fact that, in its struggle for hegemonic domination, a group is constituted and strengthened by differentiating and distancing itself from other groups (Connell, 1995a: 40), ‘by establishing particular contrasts with and distances from other categories’ (Connell, 1987: 137; see also 1996b: 159). The ‘football heroes’ at Milton College claim and gradually sustain a leading position not simply through public displays of sporting prowess but by differentiating themselves from the boys who have no investments in sports. The latter are ‘condemned by the football heroes to be known as the ‘Cyrils’’ (Kessler, Ashenden, Connell and Dowsett, 1982: 5-6). Furthermore, in contrast to a ‘football match conception of gender’, neither the first nor the second group of boys predate the hegemonic struggle. They are produced together and defined through their relationships. From the point of view of gender differentiation, the agency of the ‘football heroes’ is radically situated. Their practices are not the product of a natural or pre-social inclination. ‘There is a fierce push behind [their] involvement in football’ which they embrace to differentiate themselves from ‘the Cyrils’ (Connell, Ashenden, Kessler and Dowsett, 1982: 93). In this process,
'the Cyrils' seem to emerge passively, as an imposition: they are constituted as a group, reconstituted and redefined from the point of view of the hegemonic group. Moreover, the notion of gender differentiation suggests that, in the process of achieving hegemony, it is not only the hegemonic group that comes into being. Since hegemony, an intrinsically 'relational concept' (Connell, 2002e: 90), means hegemony over other gender groups, those being subordinated, the groups from which the hegemonic one differentiates itself, get redefined and reconstituted at the same time. This is precisely what Connell and his collaborators mean when they state that '[t]he ability to impose a particular definition on other kinds of masculinity is part of what we mean by 'hegemony'" (Carrigan, Connell and Lee, 1987: 179).

The notion of 'gender contestation', on the other hand, refers to the fact that the process of differentiation is never settled once and for all. '[H]egemony does not mean total control' (Connell, 1995a: 37). As a relationship, it is always contested, rearticulated and renewed and, hence, 'historically mobile' (Connell, 1995a: 77). While 'the Cyrils' may appear to emerge as an imposition, as a 'pure external determination', they contest the cultural power of the hegemonic group and they are actively formed and reformed on the basis of such contestations. 'Those who reject the hegemonic pattern', as Connell (1995a: 37) put it, 'have to fight or negotiate their way out'. In Masculinities, he refers to James Walker's (1988) study of young boys in a secondary school in Sydney which shows that those who scorn the cult for football cannot 'freely walk away from it' (Connell, 1995a: 37). They have to establish 'some other claim to respect' which, in the case of Walker's ethnography, 'they did by taking over the school's newspaper' (Connell, 1995a: 37). In doing so, they formed an alternative 'gender grouping' through 'contestation' of the hegemonic model, a masculinity defined with reference to editorial capacities. Hence, subordination is not synonymous with passivity or lack of agency. Neither are 'contestation' and 'differentiation' distinct or parallel 'events' or 'processes'.

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They are understood in terms of 'simultaneity' and 'mutual reinforcement': as interdependent and co-existing *forces* taking place *within* the same processes of subjectification.

**Power struggles and hegemonic masculinity in the gender order**

Connell’s early analysis of subjectification in schools is followed by what could be called an empirical and theoretical ‘expansion’. His specific analysis of power and gender struggles in a particular gender regime paves the way for a broader understanding of power relations and hegemonic processes in gender orders. In this ‘expansive move’, Connell proceeds to develop a set of general ‘subjectification principles’, or what he calls ‘empirical conclusions’, that ‘have more than local significance’ (Connell, 2000b: 9). These principles are produced through an ‘expansion’, rather than a ‘generalisation’, in that they are consistent with, and reinforced by, other empirical analyses (Connell, 1998a: 4). Focusing specifically on the construction of masculinities, Connell (1998a; 2000b: 9-14; 2002f) specifies seven subjectification principles (namely, ‘multiple or plural masculinities’, ‘hierarchy and hegemony’, ‘collective masculinities’, ‘bodies as arenas’, ‘active construction’, ‘division or contradiction’ and ‘dynamics’) which can be reformulated and condensed into three interrelated ideas: *simultaneity, relationality* and *contingency*. These ideas embody Connell’s synthetic understanding of subjectification and his theorisation of power and resistance.
Simultaneity: masculinity as ‘place’ and ‘practice’

The idea of ‘simultaneity’ encompasses Connell’s notions of ‘bodies as arenas’, ‘active construction’ and ‘collective masculinities’ and their interrelationships. It refers mainly to the fact that gender groupings are irreducible to bodies and that they are simultaneously ‘practices’ and ‘places’ (or ‘positions’) in gender relations (Connell, 1995a: 71; 2000b: 30).

For Connell, bodies do not determine patterns of gender practice even though, as it will be shown in detail in Chapter VII, they are constantly and deeply involved in subjectification processes. Thus, the making of the ‘football heroes’ in Milton College involves a concrete refashioning and disciplining of bodies and invests bodies with symbolism but it is not the mechanical outcome of bodies. Furthermore, just as the distinction between ‘Cyrils’ and ‘football heroes’ is the product of social practice rather than a biological effect, so too other distinctions among men are ‘constructed by masculinising practices’ (Connell, 1983e: 58). In this sense, ‘masculinities’ are to be understood in terms of ‘active construction’: they ‘come into existence as people act... [they] are actively produced, using the resources available in a given social setting’ (Connell, 2000b: 12). Hence, as in Connell’s early work on social class, the idea of ‘active construction’ makes it possible to circumvent any form of biological ‘categoricalism’ and to de-reify social groups.

In line with Butler’s (1997b) notion of ‘performativity’, Connell’s idea of ‘active construction’ cannot be reduced to instantaneous acts of creation. The emphasis is on ‘the process of configuring practice through time’ or, as Connell puts it drawing again on Sartre’s (1976) theorisation of practice, on temporal ‘gender projects’ (Connell, 1995a: 72). To grasp masculinities and femininities as gender projects is to recognise that
subjectification is a temporal process in which practice is simultaneously situated and productive:

Seeing gender learning as the creation of gender projects makes it possible to acknowledge both the agency of the learner and the intractability of gender structures. Gender patterns develop in personal life as a series of encounters with the constraints and possibilities of the existing gender order. In these encounters, the learner improvises, copies, creates, and thus develops characteristic strategies for handling situations in which gender relations are present—learns 'how to go on' in particular ways. Over time, especially if the strategies are successful, they become settled, crystallizing as specific patterns of femininity and masculinity. (Connell, 2002a: 82).

Hence, as in Butler's account of the making of 'norms', Connell suggests that masculinities and femininities are the effects of radically constrained practices over time. Furthermore, at this point, it is important to note that Connell's attempt to distance himself from Butler, on the ground that her notion of 'performativity' is characterised by a 'refusal to think about the consequences of action, ultimately a refusal to think historically' (Ouzgane and Coleman, 1998), is (strictly speaking) inaccurate and politically damaging: it conceals an important theoretical and political alliance in that both authors de-reify categorical understandings of masculinity and femininity through an emphasis on the historical effects or consequences of social practice (e.g. Butler, 1993b: 16-17; 1995b: 134-136).

Despite this alliance, Connell's critique of Butler becomes justified as soon as it is recognised that his understanding of 'effects' or 'consequences' is more complex and more multifaceted than Butler's. Just as Connell's examination of onto-formative practice on the level of structuration emphasises the capacity of practice to bring into being an intractable material reality, so too his analysis of performative practice on the level of subjectification suggests that the effects of femininity and masculinity practices cannot be...
reduced to mere linguistic conventions. Over time, such practices produce not merely conceptual distinctions and categorisations that occupy a ‘virtual’ space ‘in people’s heads’ and facilitate subsequent practice but solid collectivities and concrete institutionalised differentiations. In his work on masculinities, Connell elaborates these concrete institutional effects of performative practice through the idea of ‘collective masculinities’: masculinities are not just ‘ideas in the head’ or individual identities but they ‘are also extended in the world, merged in organised social relations’ (1995a: 29). They are ‘defined collectively in culture and are sustained in institutions’ (2000b: 11). Hence, they are both ‘subject position[s] in the process of representation, in the structures of language and other symbol systems’ (Connell, 2000b: 30; 1996b: 163) and institutionalised formations that structure the gender regimes of institutions like ‘the state’ (1990a). It is precisely these solid and visible effects of performative practice that Butler’s understanding of subjectification tends to underplay: the historical capacity of practice to form solid (and yet constantly forming and reforming) groupings and to produce definite institutionalised ‘places’ of masculinities and femininities in the gender regimes of militaries, schools and hospitals (e.g. ‘gay soldiers’, ‘male teachers’ ‘male nurses’).

Furthermore, masculinities as ‘places’ in culture, representation and institutions are the condition and the effect, the medium and the object of masculinities as ‘configurations of social practice’. This is precisely what makes practice simultaneously situated and productive and renders a rigid ‘category’-‘identity’ distinction theoretically inadequate. For instance, with regards to ‘homosexuality’, Connell sees practices that form a gay male identity as historically situated. In Masculinities, he notes that some ‘men are in a position to adopt, negotiate or reject a gay identity, a gay commercial scene and gay sexual and social networks, all of which they encounter ready formed...they are the inheritors of the world made by the gay liberationists and ‘pink capitalists’ (1995: 161,
emphasis added). It is the existence of a historically produced ‘place’ in gender relations that structures and makes such practices possible. This ‘place’ is not a mere linguistic category. It encompasses spatially situated ‘social networks’ (a gay scene), popular conceptions of sexual practice and it pervades the education system and the labour market (see, Dowsett, Davis and Connell, 1992). Neither do ‘places’ produce mechanical effects. ‘Places’ are to be understood as historically specific offers to which ‘the inheritors’ actively respond in individual and collective and always contextually specific ways (Connell, 2000b: 162-163).

Moreover, the idea of ‘simultaneity’ refers not so much to the multi-dimensional character of gender groupings (as ‘places’ and ‘practices’) but to the simultaneous existence of these dimensions and their synchronic and diachronic relationships. This is the major idea behind Connell’s (1995) most compact definition of ‘masculinity’:

‘Masculinity’, to the extent that the term can be briefly defined at all, is simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experience, personality and culture (1995: 71, emphasis added).

The interrelationships between these dimensions of ‘masculinity’ can be specified empirically, depending on the state of play in regime-level and order-level gender politics. For instance, ‘the places’ that ‘gay men’ occupy in gender relations (as parts of representation or as formal institutionalised distinctions) can be more liable to active transformation in particular gender remiges, more clear-cut in the gender orders of certain societies and non-existent in particular historical moments. Hence, the relationship between ‘place’ and ‘practice’ is always an empirical question and an understanding of it requires a situated analysis of group relations and struggles. The analysis of the differentiation/contention dialectic in Milton College is just one specific example of
concrete relations of subjectification, showing how solid groups are produced through institutionally situated practices, and from situated examples like this Connell is able to produce a more general analysis of group relations and power.

**Relationality: hierarchies, group relations and hegemonic masculinity**

The idea of ‘relationality’ encompasses Connell’s principles of ‘plural or multiple masculinities’ and ‘hierarchy and hegemony’. Against the notion of a unitary and undifferentiated male ‘role’, Connell argues that there are multiple patterns of masculinity in institutional settings and societal and global gender orders. Hence, ‘[w]e need to speak of masculinities, not masculinity’ (2000b: 10). More than that, different masculinities are not ‘alternative lifestyles’ (1995a: 76) that ‘sit side-by-side like dishes on a smorgasbord’ (2000b: 10). They exist in definite social relations with each other, relations of hierarchy and exclusion, alliance and opposition, hegemonic domination and subordination. Central to Connell’s understanding of ‘relationality’ and power is the idea of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ which addresses power relationships among men as well as between men and women.

According to Connell (2000b: 10-11; 2002a: 12-27; 1998a: 5), the results of gender research on workplace relations, the military, the media and other settings reinforce some important conclusions derived from his own analysis of gender relations in schools: different forms of masculinity are produced *together and in relation* to one another. Just as the ‘Cyrils’ and the ‘football heroes’ in Milton College are produced through relational processes of ‘contestation’ and ‘differentiation’, so too masculinities in other institutional settings and in gender orders are relationally constructed. For instance, the differentiation of heterosexual and homosexual masculinity is a recurrent form of relational construction. Hence, while Connell systematically contests ahistorical generalisations
about men and masculinities, he argues that ‘[w]hat can be generalised is the principle of connection. The idea that one symbol can be understood within a connected system of symbols applies equally well in other spheres. No masculinity arises except in a system of social relations’ (1995a: 71, emphasis added). As shown in Chapter I, ‘the principle of connection’ is a constant point of reference in Connell’s early work on children’s political thinking and social class: it is initially introduced to stress that children’s political thinking does not consist of ideas isolated from one another and from other aspects of social life (1972a: 251-251) and it is subsequently rearticulated in the context of class analysis with reference to Claude Levi-Strauss’ ‘principle of interdependence’ and Georg Lukacs’ ‘principle of totality’, which state ‘that bits of social reality should not be analysed in isolation; that one should always look for the context, the connections, and work back from them’ (Connell and Irving, 1980: 2, Connell, 2004: 13-15).

As with his relational understanding of social class, Connell’s analysis of subjectification in terms of ‘relations’ and ‘interconnections’ is inseparable from his analysis of power. Hence, while in some structuralist analyses the idea of ‘relationality’ is treated as an abstract rule distinct from social struggles (e.g. Saussure, 1916), Connell’s understanding of the relational production of masculinities becomes the medium for an analysis of gender hierarchies and power relationships. Thus, the relational construction of masculinities in schools does not generate a multiplicity of masculinities in which ‘difference’ represents alternative and equally desirable ways of being a boy. It reflects struggles among boys where different masculinities emerge in opposition to one another and hierarchies are formed. Hence, relational production ‘involves control of some people over others, and the ability of some groups to organize social life to their advantage’ (Connell, Ashenden, Kessler and Dowsett, 1982: 180). Moreover, the patterns of power and group relations actively produced in a single ‘setting’ like a school are not isolated
phenomena. They are ‘synchronically interrelated’ with patterns that can be found in other settings within the same society, forming the gender order of that society:

It is not a question of one gender pattern in school, another in a family, and another in a workplace, all independent of each other. They are related: they mesh with each other to make an overall pattern, one of the most general and most powerful structures in our society (Connell, Ashenden, Kessler and Dowsett, 1982: 72).

For Connell, the patterns that emerge through situated practices and relational constructions and form the gender order of a society embody two interrelated forms of power relations and struggles, what can be called relations ‘between’ and ‘within’ genders or ‘inter-gender’ and ‘intra-gender’ relationships, respectively: relations between men and women, on the one hand, and relations among men and among women, on the other. Hence, beginning from the early 1980s, Connell’s understanding of ‘relations’ becomes more complex that the one assumed in ‘You can’t tell them apart nowadays, can you?’ in the mid-1970s (Connell, 1974a, see Chapter II). MD and OD is a turning point in that Connell and his collaborators emphasise multiplicity and conflict not only between boys and girls but also amongst boys and amongst girls.

Connell’s most widely cited concept, the idea of ‘hegemonic masculinity’, is a concept developed to address both ‘intra-gender’ and ‘inter-gender’ struggles and relationships. The concept is initially introduced in MD and in OD to refer to the form of masculinity that occupies the position of cultural dominance at a particular historical moment and in a particular social ‘setting’ (Kessler, Ashenden, Connell and Dowsett, 1982a: 10-11). Hence, in its origins, this concept addresses power relationships among men while a parallel concept, ‘hegemonic femininity’, is introduced to theorise power relationships among women (Kessler, Ashenden, Connell and Dowsett, 1982a: 10). Both concepts are centred on ‘intra-gender’ relations and ‘regime-level’ analysis. In fact, it important to

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bear in mind that the notions of 'hegemonic masculinity' and 'gender regime' are produced together in the context of educational research in the early 1980s. With Connell's 'expansive move' from regime-level analysis to order-level analysis, two interrelated shifts take place. Firstly, the idea of 'hegemonic masculinity' is expanded to refer to relationships and struggles in the gender order of a society as a whole (Connell, 1987: 182-188) and in global gender orders (Connell, 1993b; 1998a). This is a silent and obscure shift that lacks a mediating concept, like 'regimental hegemonic masculinity', that would make it possible to distinguish, and explore the relationship, between regime-level and order-level struggles and relationships (I will discuss some problematic implications of this shift in the next chapter). Secondly, with the move from regime-level to order-level hegemonic struggles, Connell shifts emphasis from intra-gender relations to the relationship between intra-gender and inter-gender relations. Hence, since the publication of 'Towards a new sociology of masculinity', 'hegemonic masculinity' is no longer a concept that deals exclusively with relationships among men but it becomes the vehicle for theorising the connection between intra-gender and inter-gender relations (Carrigan, Connell, and Lee, 1985). Particularly, during the 1990s Connell employs this concept to elucidate three kinds of 'relationships': relationships among men and (to a lesser degree) among women (or intra-gender relationships); relationships between men and women (or inter-gender relationships); and relationships between inter-gender and intra-gender relationships. Thus, with Connell's second shift, the idea of 'hegemonic masculinity' emerges as a key concept for analysing the complexity of power relations in the current gender orders of developed capitalist and patriarchal societies. Furthermore, Connell's understanding of 'relationality' and power can be analysed through a focus on this 'triple relationship' addressed by the concept of 'hegemonic masculinity'.

As regards 'intra-gender relationships', 'hegemonic masculinity' can be understood in terms of a social ascendancy of one group of men over others. In the current Western
gender order, as Connell notes, such ascendancy is best exemplified by the hegemony of heterosexual over gay men. Gay men are subordinated to straight men not only in terms of social status and prestige but also in terms of political, economic and legal discrimination (Carrigan, Connell, and Lee, 1985: 170-182). Albeit to a lesser extent, effeminate masculinities are also subordinated to the hegemonic model, while others, such as ‘working class’ or ‘black’ masculinities, are said to be ‘marginalized’. Thus, while ‘subordination’ refers to relations internal to the gender order, the concept of marginalization describes the relationships between the masculinities in dominant and subordinated classes or ethnic groups, that is relationships that result from the interplay of gender with other structures, such as class and ethnicity (1995a: 80-81). As it is shown by the example of struggles amongst boys in Milton College, the formation of a hegemonic group involves not the ‘marginalisation’ or ‘subordination’ of pre-existing groupings but the very construction of those groupings and, therefore, the emergence of resistance.

The idea of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ provides the basis for understanding not only men’s but also women’s ‘intra-gender’ relationships. Kessler, Ashenden, Connell and Dowsett’s (1982a: 10) initial idea of ‘hegemonic femininity’ is gradually replaced by the notion of ‘emphasised femininity’ (Connell, 1987: 183-188). Unlike ‘hegemonic femininity’, the idea of ‘emphasised femininity’ is subordinate, rather than parallel, to ‘hegemonic masculinity’ in that it addresses relations and differentiations among women not in terms of parallel hegemonic struggles that produce hierarchies of femininities but as a side-effect of struggles amongst men. Hence, different forms of femininity, Connell argues, are constructed in relation to ‘hegemonic masculinity’. Some are organized as an adaptation to it, while others are defined centrally by strategies of resistance or forms of non-compliance (1987: 183). It is to the former, which is a form of ‘false consciousness’ or what Kathleen Barry (1979: 172) calls ‘male identification’, that Connell gives the name ‘emphasized femininity’. As examples of the latter, he cites ‘spinsters’, ‘lesbians’,

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'unionists' and 'madwomen'. Although 'emphasized femininity' is honoured and culturally exalted, the concentration of power in the hands of men leaves limited scope for it to construct institutionalized power relationships over other kinds of femininity. Power relationships between femininities are therefore less acute and noticeable than power relationships between masculinities (1987: 186-188).

'Hegemonic masculinity' is also a concept developed to address 'inter-gender' relationships. Thus, it can be understood as the configuration of gender practice that produces and sustains the domination of men and the subordination of women. This understanding of hegemonic masculinity derives from Connell's acceptance of the essential feminist insight that the relations between genders involve oppression and domination (Carrigan, Connell, and Lee, 1985: 140). These oppressive relations are 'centred on a single structural fact': 'the global dominance of men over women' (Connell, 1987: 183). Although particular groups of men benefit less than others from the subordination of women and although 'the number of men rigorously practising the hegemonic pattern in its entirety may be quite small' the majority of men benefit from the hegemonic pattern (Connell, 1995a: 79). The overall advantage that men 'as a group' gain in patriarchal societies, or what Connell (2002a: 142-143) calls 'the patriarchal dividend', can be analysed in terms of the four sub-structures of gender. As regards the social relations of labour, men's position in patriarchal societies yields a series of material advantages, or what Connell (1995a: 82) calls the 'material dividend', which include higher incomes or easier access to education. In terms of power relations, men control the means of institutionalized power, such as the state or the army. Similarly, the sub-structure of 'cathexis' is characterized by male superiority and violence rather than reciprocity and intimacy while in 'symbolic relations' the masculine is usually constructed as the positive and valued side of a binary opposition (see Connell, 2002a: 55-68). In this context, 'hegemonic masculinity' can be understood as a historically
specific configuration of social practice that produces and sustains an unequal gender order and guarantees that a ‘surplus of resources is made available to men’ (Connell, 2002a: 142). In Connell’s (1995a) words, ‘hegemonic masculinity can be defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women’ (1995a: 77).

In his analysis ‘intra-gender’ and ‘inter-gender’ relationships, Connell grasps hegemonic masculinity as a practice that is ‘always constructed in relation to various subordinate masculinities as well as in relation to women’ (1987: 183). Hence, it generates dominance not only over women but also over subordinate masculinities. Following the logic of the distinction between ‘intra-gender’ and ‘inter-gender’ relations, these two interconnected dimensions of hegemonic masculinity can be understood in terms of a distinction between external (‘hegemony over women’) and internal (‘hegemony over other masculinities’) hegemony. Furthermore, it is important to note Connell’s analysis of hegemonic relationships grants primacy to external over internal hegemonic processes. For Connell, hegemonic masculinity is first and foremost a strategy for the subordination of women: ‘it would hardly be an exaggeration to say that hegemonic masculinity is hegemonic insofar as it embodies a successful strategy in relation to women’ (Carrigan, Connell, and Lee, 1985: 180). Internal hegemony or dominance over other masculinities, on the other hand, seems to be a means for the achievement of external hegemony rather than an end in itself. It is the global dominance of men over women, as Connell notes, ‘that provides the main basis for relationships among men that define a hegemonic form of masculinity’ (1987: 183). This implies that some forms of masculinity are subordinated precisely because the configuration of practice they embody is inconsistent with the currently accepted strategy for the subordination of women. Gay masculinities, for example, are subordinated to the hegemonic model because their object of sexual
desire undermines the institution of heterosexuality, which is of primary importance for
the reproduction of patriarchy. In this way, the subordination of particular groups of men
becomes an aspect of 'the overall logic of the subordination of women to men' (Carrigan,
Connell, and Lee, 1985: 174), 'an important part of how a patriarchal social order works'
(Connell, 1987: 183). Internal subordination or marginalisation is therefore a part of the
strategy for external hegemony.

Connell's tendency to grant primacy to external over internal hegemonic relations is, in
some respects, problematic. For instance, it forecloses the possibility that in specific
situations the relationship between internal and external hegemonic struggles may take a
different form. This possibility is further foreclosed by his interrelated failure to
distinguish between regime-level and order-level hegemonic processes, a distinction that
would make it possible to develop a more diversified and context-specific account of
hegemonic relations. (I will return to these questions in the next chapter). Yet, it should
be stressed that Connell's emphasis on the relationship between inter-gender and intra-
gender hegemonic processes yields an account of power relationships more complex than
the one proposed by feminist categoricalism. 'Patriarchy' is no longer merely a question
of 'men dominating women' but it is now grasped as a complex structure of gender
relations in which internal hegemonic struggles play a central role. Hence, for Connell, an
understanding of the complexity of inter-gender relationships in a given historical
situation cannot be achieved without grasping the complexity of relationships among men
and among women. At the same time, this emphasis on internal-external
interrelationships paves the way for a more complex understanding of resistance,
focusing on the possibility of alliances among men as well as between groups of women
and marginalised or subordinate groups of men. Connell's understanding of resistance
and social change can be analysed through the development of the idea of 'contingency'.
Contingency: contradiction, group solidity and oppositionality

The notion of ‘contingency’ encompasses Connell’s principles of ‘division’ or ‘contradiction’ and ‘dynamics’ (see, 1998a: 6; 2000: 13-14; 2002f: 36-37). For Connell, personal identities and social groupings are not homogeneous, but are always internally complex and divided, embodying conflicting and contradictory desires, practices and tendencies. These tensions and contradictions, along with the conflicts and possibilities that result from intra-gender and inter-gender relationships and from the interplay of gender with other social structures, account for the facts of ‘contingency’ and ‘historical dynamics’: hegemonic situations and relations are liable to historical transformation; the power of particular gender groupings can be defended, contested, reconstructed or abolished; and the groupings themselves are constantly formed and reformed. In this context, Connell proposes an understanding of social transformation and resistance in terms of ‘alliance politics’. Compared with Butler’s politics of ‘radical resignification’, Connell places a stronger emphasis on the collective dimensions of resistance and on the solidity of gender groupings but he tends to underplay the possibilities of subversive redeployment and to reduce the domination/resistance relationship to a rigid opposition.

Connell identifies two different forms of division or contradiction. Firstly, there are contradictions within personal identities. Even a surfing champion like Australian Steve Donoghue, who is constructed by the media as an exemplar of masculinity, engages in contradictory practices. ‘[H]is own exemplary status prevents him from doing exactly what his peer group defines as thoroughly masculine behaviour: going wild, showing off, drunk driving, getting into fights, defending his own prestige’ (Connell, 1990b: 86; also Donaldson, 1993: 647). Most men occupy an even more ambivalent position towards hegemonic masculinity. They live their lives in a relationship of ‘complicity’ with it. The concept of ‘complicit masculinity’ plays a vital role in Connell’s theory because the hegemonic model does not correspond to the actual activities of the majority of men.
Hegemonic masculinity is largely a 'cultural ideal' that is constantly promoted by cultural institutions through the production of exemplary masculinities, such as media images of Sylvester Stallone, which are consistent with the reproduction of patriarchy. The men who benefit from the patriarchal dividend but do not embody 'hegemonic masculinity' are, in certain situations, more likely to turn against patriarchal structures. 'Marriage, fatherhood and community life often involve extensive compromises with women' or even concrete encounters with feminism that can result in a conscious distance or contestation of hegemonic masculinity (1995a: 79-80; 124-142).

Secondly, there are the more explicit tensions and contractions of intra and inter gender relationships described above. These divisions produce pressures for social change in various ways. As regards the relationships between genders or the process of external hegemony, 'a gender order where men dominate women cannot avoid constituting men as an interest group concerned with defence, and women as an interest group concerned with change' (1995a: 82). The emergence of the women's liberation movement is a fair indication of this contestation of external hegemony. Similarly, internal hegemony has found its antithesis in the emergence of the gay liberation movement since subordinate masculinities, as Connell stresses, 'are subordinated rather than eliminated' (1987: 184).

These counter-hegemonic politics exist in tension with a series of explicit collective defences of hegemonic masculinity and the gender order it sustains. As an example of an active defence of hegemonic masculinity, Connell cites refers to 'pro-gun lobby' politics: '[a]t both symbolic and practical levels, the defence of gun ownership is a defence of hegemonic masculinity' (1995a: 212).

While pro-gun lobby and gay liberation politics depend largely on the 'movement model', Connell suggests that there are also other 'strategic possibilities' for progressive gender politics (1995a: 236). There are prospects for
masculinity politics... outside pure gender politics, at the intersections of gender with other structures. These are situations where solidarity among men is pursued for other reasons than masculinity, and may support a project of gender justice, especially where there is explicit solidarity with women in the same situation. These situations arise in labour and socialist parties, the unions, the environmental movement, community politics, anti-colonial resistance movements, movements for cultural democracy and movements for racial equality (1995a: 237).

In these situations, gender politics arise in the junctions between different movements and they are based on the overlapping of interests between groups rather than on a single gender-interest based grouping. A politics of alliances that unites forces ranging from women to peace activists, as Connell concludes, is currently the most effective strategy for dismantling hegemonic masculinity (1996a: 68-70; 1995a: 234-238).

It is such contradictions and possibilities that make hegemonic situations contingent and ‘always contestable’ (Connell, 1995a: 76). Hence, Connell deals with the facts of contradiction and contingency and he theorises the possibility of social change and resistance without compromising the collective dimensions of social practice and the solidity of gender grouping. This is an important corrective to Butler’s individualised and linguistic understanding of practice which melts resistance into individual acts of resignification. Hence, not only is Connell more sensitive to questions of institutionalisation but he also makes it possible to do away with ‘categoricalism’ without doing away with groups.

V. Conclusion

Despite his emphasis on alliances, Connell’s theorisation of power and conflict tends to underplay the possibility of redeployment. A tendency towards an ‘oppositional’
understanding of power and resistance is already evident in his critique of sex role theory: resistance is a direct 'contestation' of dominant roles (1979b: 202) and hence a 'departure' from them (1987: 52, emphasis added), rather than a subversion from within. Such an understanding of resistance is radically different from Butler's notion of resistance as creative reiteration of norms and it tends to underplay the possibility that forms of resistance are made possible by the power that they contest. Furthermore, despite Connell's systematic attempt to distance himself from categorical understandings of power that rely on simple male/female or homosexual/heterosexual dualisms, his overall theorisation of power is still cast in terms of 'pure oppositionality' (Bhabha, 1988: 11). This is a critical line of thinking developed in detail in the next chapter where it is shown that it is possible to develop a concept of power that reconciles Connell's emphasis on the possibility of group solidarity with Bulter's analysis of redeployment and hence transforms the notion of 'hegemonic masculinity' into a less oppositional form of domination.
Notes

1. In this context, by 'essentialism' I refer to a perspective that reduces social groups and collective identities to 'fixed', 'static' and 'transhistorical' entities based on some 'essential' core or foundation (biological or otherwise). The studies cited in the main text include extensive reviews of the literature in question and/or make important analytical distinctions. In saying that critiques of 'essentialism' in different fields of study have been 'mutually reinforcing', I want to stress that they have often developed in relation to one another. For instance, Steven Epstein's (1987) classic article 'Gay Politics, Ethnic Identity' draws on anti-essentialist literature on ethnicity to criticise both essentialist and constructionist understandings of homosexual identity and group formation. For a more comprehensive analysis of the relationship between anti-essentialist thinking about ethnicity and sexuality, see Nagel (2000) and Sinfield (1996).

2. I have borrowed the concept of 'subjectification' from Lois McNay (2000: 1-30). Other authors have used similar terms to talk about the process of subject, identity and group formation. Most of the concepts proposed, including Judith Butler's (1995a: 229; 1997a: 11) notion 'subjectivation' and Rudi Visker's (1995: 87-98) term 'subjectivisation' (translated from German), are not simply developed with reference to the work of Michel Foucault but they are often different translations and elaborations of his French assujettissement (e.g. Foucault, 1985: 253) which, according to Galvin (2003: 150), 'has no English equivalent'. I will examine Foucault's and Butler's work later on but, in this context, it is important to clarify that I have opted for McNay's concept of 'subjectification' precisely because it is broader and more encompassing than 'subjectivation' or 'subjectivisation', naming the process of subject and group formation itself, not a particular way of theorising this process. Hence, in McNay's (2000: 8) analysis, Foucault's account of subject formation appears to be an instance of 'subjectification', a paradigm among many. In this way, even though some authors use 'subjectification' as another term for Foucault's assujettissement (e.g. Rose, 1996), in this chapter I adopt McNay's broader understanding of the concept.

3. Feminist Theorise the Political is a book full of questions. The editors pose a variety of questions in the introduction (Butler and Scott, 1992: xiv-xvii) where they explicitly state that '[t]he aim of this book is not to settle these questions, but to generate new and productive directions for them' (Butler and Scott, 1992: xiii). The book as a whole substantiates what Vance (1989: 15) sees as the 'chief virtue' of anti-essentialist thinking: it challenges common assumptions by raising historically novel and constantly changing sets of questions. In analysing this book, I focus on the questions themselves and not on the authors that articulate those questions. By this, I do not mean to suggest that it is irrelevant who poses the question (which is an epistemological issue), but I simply want to stress that the work of these authors is structured by a multiplicity of theoretical and political questions and it is irreducible to the specific questions I have isolated from their writings.

4. I say 'could' because this is not exactly the way in which Scott proceeds to address the question she poses. In fact, Scott (1992: 29-30) is at pains to distinguish her notion of 'experience' from the one used by Thompson (1968) while she also places more emphasis on the discursive dimensions of identity formation. She argues that Thompson's historical analysis tends to essentialize social class but this is a contested interpretation that needs more careful justification because it contradicts most authors' understandings of the implications of E. P. Thompson's work (e.g. Ortner, 1996; Pollert, 1996). In any case, and independently of her position towards Thompson, Scott's focus on 'experience' does appear to place a stronger emphasis on people's active involvement in the process of identity-construction.
5. Historically, studies that deal with the emergence of ‘lesbians’ and ‘male homosexuals’ as distinct social groupings (‘categories’ or ‘identities’) have followed different trajectories (see, Vicinus, 1993; Trumbach, 1991; Jeffreys, 1985). What has emerged, as Weeks (1991a: 40) notes, ‘is not so much a single explanation for the emergence of ‘a homosexual identity’ as a differential social history [and explanation] of male homosexuality and lesbianism’. I will focus exclusively on the literature on male homosexuality because that was the context in which most debates about group formation took place.


7. In his later work, Foucault attempts to develop an account of the activist dimensions of group formation by concentrating on the notion of ‘technologies of the self’, on the practices through which individuals actively create personal and collective identities (see, Martin, Gutman and Hutton, 1988). However, he does not explicitly relate this notion to the construction of homosexuality. Thus, since ‘Foucault never adequately connects the two phases or emphases in his work’ (Layder, 1994: 111), he ‘vacillat[es] between the moments of determinism and voluntarism’ (McNay, 2000: 9). It has been Judith Butler’s (1990; 1997a) major objective (and achievement) to reconcile these two dimensions of Foucault’s work and I will explore her analysis in some detail in the next section of this chapter. For a very insightful analysis of Foucault’s changing understanding of subjectification, see Hall (1996: 10-13) and Visker (1995: 74-105).

8. For Foucault-inspired interpretations of the construction of homosexuality, see Halperin, 1990; 1995; Davidson, 1990; Katz, 1995; Weeks, 1977; Faderman, 1981; Vicinus, 1993; Hutter, 1993; Jeffreys, 1985; Rey, 1989; Van der Meer, 1989. Although the religious metaphor just mentioned may imply that these studies reproduce in a faithful way the saint’s original argument, Foucault’s discourse analysis has been creatively extended and supplemented by subsequent work in at least three main ways. Firstly, historians like Weeks (1989: 141-156) and Davidson (1990) have analyzed the discourses of early sexologists, most notably Havelock Ellis and Krafft-Ebing, in a more detailed way and they have therefore provided a much more serious historical documentation for the discursive constitution of the homosexual. Secondly, historians of lesbianism, like Faderman (1981: 239-253) and Vicinus (1993: 440-446), have applied discourse analysis to the study of lesbianism, while, thirdly, Katz (1995) turned the discussion around and examined the discursive construction of ‘the heterosexual’. More than that, some of these studies, and especially Weeks’ (1989; 1991a; 1991b) work, escape ‘discursive reductionism’ and offer more complex and multifaceted accounts of subjectification. I will return to Weeks’ work when examining the synthetic turn in subjectification analysis.

9. These paradigms are not usually distinguished. It is therefore not a surprise to see that scholars as informed as Diana Fuss (1989: 99) grasp D’Emilio’s work as a ‘Foucauldian analysis’. What is more, these may not be the only paradigms or there may be different ways of identifying distinct paradigms in the literature in question. Hence, I say that there have been ‘at least’ two paradigms because in this review I have not examined the totality of the social constructionist explanations for the emergence of the modern homosexual. My analysis focuses selectively on a group of explanations that embody conflicting theoretical assumptions and ignores other explanations of ‘the making of the modern homosexual’. As I
have already mentioned, a more comprehensive review of these studies can be found in Lofstrom (1997).

10. The studies cited in this paragraph make important analytical distinctions. All the authors are concerned (roughly and in different ways) with what I call 'category-identity division' but they use different concepts to theorise this distinction (e.g. choice-coercion for Emcke, 2000). The interest in various versions of this distinction is not new. Jenkins (1996: 23; 2000: 9) traces the distinction back to the Marxist analysis of the relationship between 'class in itself' (categorisation) and 'class for itself' (identification) while Wong (2002: 455) relates it to Berger and Luckmann’s (1967: 194-200) analysis of the relationship between personal (subjective) identity and social (objective) ‘identity-types’. Following a line of investigation initiated some years earlier by Connell (1982a), Young (1994) theorises the ‘unity’ of ‘women’ with reference to Sartre’s (1976) distinction between an actively formed and self-conscious ‘group’, on the one hand, and a passively unified ‘series’, on the other.

11. In fact, if ‘identity’ is a dimension of ‘social practice’ and ‘category’ is a dimension of ‘structural organisation’ then synthesis on the level of subjectification and synthesis on the level of structuration become practically indistinguishable. Hence, I should repeat that the structuration/subjectification distinction is analytical rather than absolute and that in concrete research and in theoretical analysis the two levels are explored simultaneously (e.g. Ortner, 1996). However, the distinction is still useful because, for example, there are studies that offer systematic analysis of the relationship between category and identity without developing a comprehensive concept of social structure (e.g. McNay, 2000). As I will explain later on, this is a main feature of Judith Butler's (e.g.1990) work.

12. I do not mean to underplay the originality of this thinker. Weeks' voluminous work, produced during the last three decades, is more complex and multifaceted than this brief analysis may imply. Here, I have focused only on some dimensions of his work that are important for understanding subsequent debates about category and identity. For a broader and more systematic analysis of the historical development of his ideas, see Turner (2000: 66-69).

13. Billig's (1995) work introduces the idea of the centrality of ‘everyday life’ but it is subsequent work that links everyday life to popular categorization and agency (see, Thompson, 2001: 28-29). Throughout this chapter, I discuss debates about sexual and gender subjectification with reference to debates about racial and ethnic subjectification. This is not meant to suggest that questions of subjectification are identical, independently of disciplinary context and focus of analysis. Rather, I simply want to specify some broad interdisciplinary tendencies.

14. This is not to say that Chauncey treats formal categorisations as irrelevant, secondary or trivial. In his earlier work (e.g. Chauncey 1982), he argues that medical discursive categorisations are powerful social forces and in Gay New York he does not ignore formal categorisations altogether. But the ‘logic of synthesis’ implicitly articulated in Gay New York relies exclusively on, and grants primacy to, popular categorisations without exploring their relation to formal categorisations (e.g. forms of correspondence or non-correspondence or complex relations of determination between formal and informal categories). The only form of relation that Chauncey addresses is a temporal one, that is the fact formal categorisations were historically preceded by popular categorisations. (Chauncey, 1994: 26-27).

15. Butler's (1987; 1988) performative understanding of gender was also articulated in the late 1980s but, as already mentioned, it was not until the publication of Gender Trouble that this understanding of gender becomes popular and influential. However, the studies cited indicate the limited popularity of Gender Trouble in certain academic fields in they offer (or claim to offer) comprehensive reviews of the literature without mentioning Judith Butler’s (1990) work. When they do mention Gender Trouble, as in the case of Plummer (1998: 609), it is suggested that Butler’s understanding of gender is simply an extension of the dramaturgical

16. In their highly influential article, ‘Doing Gender’, Candane West and Don Zimmerman (1987) draw on Erving Goffman’s (1976) analysis of gender, according to which gender is not a set of roles that precede and structure interaction, but something that people actively produce in interaction, a ‘display’: a series of ‘perfunctory, conventionalised acts’ through which men and women produce gender differentiation while seeking confirmation of their own gender identities (1976: 69). Following Goffman, West and Zimmerman’s ethnomethodological understanding of gender rejects the functionalist ‘notion of gender as a role [because it] obscures the work that is involved in producing gender in everyday activities’ (1987: 127). However, they are also critical of Goffman’s interactionist ‘notion of gender as a display [because it] relegates [gender] to the periphery of interaction.’ In doing so, they argue, not simply that gender is a ‘doing’, not merely that- since people are predisposed to interpret any behaviour as an expression of gender- virtually any activity is ‘gender doing’ (1987: 136-137), but also that gender is a ‘situated doing’. That is, in the final part of their article, they relate gender practice to the ‘institutional arrangements of society’, to the context in which it occurs (1987: 140-147). West and Zimmerman’s emphasis on ‘doing’ was further developed and extended in West and Fenstermaker’s (1995) ‘Doing Difference’ (see also Fenstermaker and West, 2002). For an account of the relationship between this ethnomethodological approach to gender and Butler’s (1990) work on ‘gender performativity’, see Moloney and Fenstermaker (2002) and Thorne (2001).

17. Similarly, Butler (1990: 24) argues that ‘gender is not a noun’.

18. Giddens (1987) argues that Goffman’s social theory is often simplified and Butler may be part of this tendency to ‘simplify Goffman’ in that her passing critique of the idea of ‘gender as a display’ is not the production of a serious engagement with Goffman’s work. This is not the place to examine the validity of her critique of Goffman but it should made clear that I use the term ‘Goffmansian’ with reference to Butler’s understanding of Goffman’s work and not to a undesputed interpretation of Goffman.

19. The concept of ‘resignification’ and especially the concept of ‘norm’ are not absent from Gender Trouble (e.g. Butler, 1990: 138, 148) but they are less central than in Butler’s later work. This is reflected in the logic that structures the index of the book: there is no entry for ‘norms’, ‘resignification’, ‘recitation’ or ‘reiteration’ (the last two being virtually absent from the book), but there is an entry for ‘repetition’ (1990: 170-172). ‘Repetition’ may partially embody the meaning of ‘resignification’ but it disappears from the indexes of Butler’s later books and the concepts of ‘norms’ and ‘resignification’ now become worth indexing (e.g. 1997a; Salih and Butler, 2004). I offer this explanation mainly because, despite the existence of a large body of literature that interprets Butler’s work, these shifts in her language (which reflect more substantial theoretical shifts) have been largely neglected. However, Butler herself alludes to the first revision in an interview published shortly after the publication of Bodies that Matter: ‘It is important to understand performativity... through the more limited notion of resignification. I’m still thinking about subversive repetition, which is a category in Gender Trouble, but in the place of something like parody I would now emphasise the complex ways in which resignification works in political discourse’ (Osborne and Segal, 1994: 33). And, again, in Bodies that Matter, she states: ‘the Derridean analysis of iterability is to be distinguished from simple repetition in which the distances between temporal ‘moments’ are treated as uniform in their spatial extension’ (1993a: 245).

20. These three concepts may be irreducible to one another but, for the purposes of this analysis, I will use them interchangeably because they articulate the same (or similar) dimensions of social practice. In fact, on most occasions, Butler herself uses the terms interchangeably and links them to the category of ‘repetition’ (e.g. 1993a: 12-15; 1993b: 16-18; Oslon and Worsham, 2004: 334-353). A very lucid critical analysis of these concepts, of their origins...
and of the position they occupy in Butler's thought, has been produced by Catherine Mills (2000).


22. Butler pays more attention to the instability and incompleteness of power, focusing on the reiterative potentials of resistance, and she tends to underplay its flexibility and its capacity to reiterate, redeploy and co-opt resisting forces. However, an understanding of power in terms of redeployment and cooptation is a logical outcome of the politics of resignification. I will explore these dimensions of power in detail and in concrete ways in the next chapter.

23. For the connection between Butler and Stuart Hall, see Hall (1996) and Butler (2000c). For an account of the relationship between Butler, Hall and Homi Bhabha, see Sinfield (1996) and for Butler alliance with Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, see Smith (1994) and some of the essays in Butler, Laclau and Zizek (2000).

24. Most of these critiques have been developed in the context of distinct, broader and complex debates. The most renowned of these debates is what came to be known as the 'Butler-Fraser debate' (see Butler, 1998 and Fraser, 1998). It took place in the pages of New Left Review and it is centred on the relationship between 'the social' and 'the cultural', or 'the material' and 'the symbolic'. However, the debate also raises more complex and more multifaceted issues than the ones I have mentioned in the text. For a comprehensive analysis of, and engagement with, this debate, see Adkins (2002), Smith (2001) and Fraser (1999). What is known as the 'Butler-Benhabib debate', a debate in which Nancy Fraser (1995) was also involved, is interrelated but distinct (see Benhabib, 1995 and Butler, 1995b). Although the focus of this second debate is mainly on questions of agency and 'choice', issues of institutionalisation and 'discursive reductionism' are also central. For this second debate, see Webster (2000) and Stern (2000).

25. This expression is borrowed from Althusser (1975: 50) and, although it is not used by Connell himself, it is very close to what he means by 'categorical understandings of power'.

26. Connell's attempt to distance himself from Butler is evident not only in the statement made in the interview just cited, but also in TMB where he argues that Butler is unable to theorise 'institutional life, violence, resistance (except as individual choice) and material inequality' (Connell, 2000b: 20; see also 2002a: 33; 71 for a less critical reference to Butler). However, he refuses to engage with the complexity of Butler's work, citing only Gender Trouble. His brief comments indicate the existence of an alliance between Connell and the 'social critics' of Butler but they tend to conceal important commonalities and the possibility of a productive alliance between Connell and Butler. I will explore some possibilities below. An important step towards a Connell-Butler comparative analysis has been made by Hawkesworth (1997).

27. Connell's distinction between 'patriarchal' and 'material' dividend is not always consistent. In some cases, the term ‘patriarchal dividend’ is used to refer to the overall benefits that men gain in patriarchal societies (e.g. Connell, 1995a: 82; 2002a: 142) but in others it is used to refer simply to the material ones (e.g. Connell, 2000b: 35; 1996b: 162). When ‘patriarchal dividend’ refers to the overall advantages, Connell uses the term ‘material dividend’ to refer to a specific dimension of ‘patriarchal dividend’ in the context of labour relations.
CHAPTER SIX
CHAPTER SIX
The Space of Power

I. Introduction

In the preceding chapter, I emphasised that Connell’s analysis of group formation and social struggle centres on intra-gender and inter-gender hegemonic processes. Compared to Judith Butler’s (1997a) theory of ‘performativity’, Connell’s approach is more sensitive to questions of ‘institutionalisation’ and ‘collective interests’ but it forecloses the possibility of ‘redeployment’ and, as a result, it proposes a necessarily ‘oppositional’ account of political practice and struggle. In this chapter, I reconstruct Connell’s understanding of power in such a way as to account for the non-oppositional ways in which oppositional collective interests are articulated in political struggle. Hence, I aim to reconcile Connell’s emphasis on collective oppositional interests with Butler’s concept of redeployment, making it possible to theorise power and resistance in terms of collective practices that, far from being radically opposed to one another, use ‘the other’ as a resource in political struggles centred on creative redeployments. Particularly, focusing on Connell’s concept of ‘hegemonic masculinity’, the cornerstone of his theorisation of gender power, I argue that the collective interests of particular groups of men may be articulated through forms of political practice that do not oppose, marginalise and annihilate oppositional interest-based groupings (e.g. ‘black men’ or ‘women’) but redeploy the effects of their practices (e.g. ‘gay signifiers or styles’; ‘black men’s culture’) in order to conceal the objective oppositions of interests and to ensure their continuity (Demetriou, 2001). Furthermore, in so far as redeployment and non-oppositional practices of domination are possible empirical manifestations of social struggle rather than theoretical postulates, Connell’s unitary idea of a ‘hegemonic
masculinity’ must be replaced by a notion of ‘context-specific hegemonic strategies’ (Jefferson, 2002: 72), which makes it possible to distinguish between situations in which oppositional forms of struggle predominate from situations in which strategies of redeployment are more central. Hence, in reconstructing Connell’s understanding of power, in making it more flexible (i.e. not necessarily oppositional), it is necessary to articulate what, in the preceding chapter, I called the missing ‘mediating concept’ in Connell’s theorisation of hegemony: ‘regimental hegemonic masculinity’, a notion that allows one to theorise the diversity of hegemonic strategies and the specificity and situational character of regime-level struggles.

In developing this two-fold critique of the idea of hegemonic masculinity (in terms of ‘flexibility’ and ‘situationality’), Butler’s idea of ‘redeployment’ is a useful theoretical tool but it is not the only concept that makes it possible to move beyond ‘oppositional’ understandings of power. As I suggested in the preceding chapter, Butler’s ‘politics of resignification’ is part of a more general tendency towards non-oppositional theorisations of power relationships, a tendency that includes Stuart Hall’s (1988) idea of a ‘historic bloc’, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe’s (1985) work on ‘socialist strategy’ and Homi Bhabha’s (1994) concepts of ‘translation’ and ‘hybridity’. I call this theoretical current ‘Gramsci-inspired’ because, especially in the work of Hall, Mouffe and Laclau, this non-oppositional understanding of social struggle is developed through a differential reading of Antonio Gramsci’s (1971) Prison Notebooks. This reading is ‘differential’ because it centres not so much on the outcome of hegemonic struggles (‘consent’) but on the complexity of the process through which this outcome is achieved. The idea of ‘redeployment’ can be understood as a major aspect of this process. Hence, a starting point for a critical reconstruction of Connell’s oppositional idea of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ is provided by the work of Gramsci himself, particularly by a reading of the Prison Notebooks that emphasises the possibility of non-oppositional politics. This is the
major objective of the first section of this chapter, which also shows how such a reading of Gramsci can lead to recent ‘Gramsci-inspired’ conceptions of non-oppositional struggle. Having developed a reconstructive critique of Connell’s idea of hegemonic masculinity through a differential reading of Gramsci, I then proceed, in the following section, to show how other critics of Connell’s understanding of power have reached similar conclusions. Most notably, the work of Tony Jefferson (2002) and Wetherell and Edley (1999) have, in distinct ways and via different logics, also stressed the ‘situational’ and ‘non-oppositional’ character of hegemonic masculinity. In this sense, such studies are part of an emerging trend, which I refer to as the ‘new sociology of hegemonic masculinity’. In the last section, I give shape and empirical grounding to this two-fold critical reconstruction of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ through a brief case study. Particularly, focusing on the relationship between heterosexual and homosexual masculinities in the context of regimes of media representation, I argue that hegemonic masculinity is not a purely heterosexual configuration of practice that is constructed in ‘total opposition’ to gay masculinities. A corpus of empirical evidence is analysed in order to show that hegemonic masculinity is a ‘hybrid bloc’ that is formed through the ‘redeployment’ and ‘translation’ of the effects of subordinate practices. Furthermore, it is precisely through such flexible non-oppositional strategies that the reproduction of intra-gender and inter-gender power relationships is ensured. Hence, this chapter aims to expose and reconstruct a split within Connell’s theorisation of subjectification and power: his tendency to reduce political practice to an overt domination/subordination opposition.

II. Hegemonic masculinity and masculine bloc: from opposition/negation to negotiation

As pointed out in earlier chapters, Connell’s interpretation of Gramsci’s (1971) idea of ‘hegemony’ centres on two key issues. On the one hand, it focuses on the process of group formation: on the complexity of interest articulation, on relational constructions, on
situated struggles and on the contingency of historical situations. On the other hand, as with most other understandings of ‘hegemony’, Connell’s (1987: 184-185) interpretation is also focused on the idea of ‘consent’, where ‘consent’ is understood not as a self-sufficient phenomenon but as an aspect of what Gramsci (1971: 169-170) calls ‘dual perspective’: a contextually specific and constantly shifting ‘force-consent relationship’. Hence, while the hegemony of particular groups of men is achieved through the winning of mass support (as with the cultural celebration of exemplary masculinities and the production of organic ideologies, like sex role theory, that naturalise and justify existing power relationships and produce varying degrees of complicity), it is also backed up by brute force, like violence over women and children in the family or organised violence by police and the military.

While Connell tends to keep the issues of ‘group formation’ and ‘consent’ relatively distinct, Gramsci’s major emphasis is precisely on the relationship between them: on how the consent of subordinate interest-based groupings is won through the very process in which a ‘hegemonic bloc’ is formed, a process that involves constant negotiations, temporary compromises and the formation of productive alliances. Furthermore, although Connell’s and Gramsci’s analyses of subjectification and power follow similar patterns, Gramsci’s account is less oppositional in that the achievement of consent in the context of group formation involves precisely the collapse of political oppositions. This is the central idea in Gramsci’s concept of ‘hegemonic bloc’, which I introduce below before turning to the critique and reconstruction of Connell’s idea of ‘hegemonic masculinity’.

**Rereading Gramsci, recovering Machiavelli: flexibility and the hegemonic bloc**

Gramsci’s (1971) analysis of hegemonic struggles follows certain patterns identified in the examination of Connell’s analysis of subjectification in Chapter V. Particularly,
although Gramsci does not explicitly distinguish between the ‘external’ and the ‘internal’ dimensions of hegemonic processes, a relevant distinction is central in his discussion of the dual nature of class domination. ‘[A] class is dominant’, Gramsci states in the Prison Notebooks, ‘in two ways, i.e. ‘leading’ and ‘dominant’. It leads the classes which are its allies, and dominates those which are its enemies’ (1971: 57). This distinction is here not identified with the distinction between hegemony and dictatorship. It is rather a distinction *within* the concept of hegemony itself in that it refers to the different strategies adopted by a class in its hegemonic struggle against social groups whose interests are radically opposed to its own (e.g. proletariat versus bourgeoisie) and against groups whose interests could be reconciled to those of the class seeking hegemony (e.g. proletariat versus peasantry). The strategies that correspond to these two struggles, namely ‘domination’ and ‘leadership’ respectively, are said to be radically different from each other. For Gramsci, ‘domination’ is directed against ‘enemies’, who must be dominated ‘even by armed force’, while ‘leadership’ is directed against ‘kindred and allied groups’, who must be led (1971: 57). The objective of leadership is the formation of a ‘historic bloc’ that unites all the allied groups and produces a new hegemonic articulation of forces, movements and interests. In the struggle for leadership, a new conception of the world emerges, a conception that is relatively homogeneous and consistent with the project of domination. This process involves subordinating some of the interests of the groups that are led but it is also very productive. In certain situations, struggles for leadership result in a unification of diverse forces and construct of a common political objective: domination.

Furthermore, using the language introduced in the previous chapter, leadership and domination could be thought of as internal and external hegemony respectively.

Although it would be very simplistic to equate hegemony in the arena of gender relations with class hegemony, there are some striking structural similarities in the two processes
as addressed by Connell and Gramsci. They both differentiate, implicitly but consistently, between internal and external struggles (leadership/domination; hegemony over subordinate masculinities/over women) and they grant primacy to the latter. Internal hegemony, on the other hand, is seen as a means to external hegemony, not an end in itself. In Gramsci’s analysis, ‘leadership’ appears to be both a precondition and a means to external hegemony but, in the final analysis, it is ‘merely an aspect of the function of domination’ (1971: 59). Similarly, for Connell, relationships among men are crucial but they are always structured by a single structural fact, an ultimate objective: ‘the global dominance of men over women’ (1987: 183). Furthermore, in both theoretical accounts, internal hegemony refers to a strategic moment where the class/gender seeking external hegemony undergoes a process of internal formation, unification and homogenization. The process is always conflict-ridden and it is never fully completed. Temporary appearances of internal coherence are usually achieved at the expense of ‘kindred groups’ or ‘subordinate masculinities’ but it is precisely this internal struggle that produces a hegemonic articulation capable of pursuing a project of external domination.

Despite following similar patterns, Gramsci proposes a more subtle understanding of this fundamental process of internal hegemony. Whereas Connell grasps this process in a rather ‘elitist’ way, with subordinate and marginalized masculinities having no effect on the construction of the hegemonic model (more about this below), Gramsci’s analysis of internal struggles is dialectical: it involves various forms of reciprocity and mutual interaction between the class that is leading and the groups that are led. For Gramsci, while internal hegemony culminates in the formation of a historic bloc that is achieved through the leadership of the fundamental class, this does not mean that the elements of the ‘kindred groups’ are totally subordinated or eliminated. Some of these elements, particularly those that are consistent with the project of domination, are appropriated and they become essential constitutive elements of the
historic bloc. This process of ‘appropriation’ could be called ‘dialectical pragmatism’ (Demetriou, 2002: 51-52) in that the fundamental class is in constant dialectical contact with the allied groups and appropriates/incorporates what appears pragmatically useful and constructive for the project of domination at a particular historical moment. Pragmatically useless or harmful elements, on the other hand, are subordinated and eliminated because they have no historical value vis-a-vis the construction of the hegemonic project of domination. Thus, in his analysis of the Italian Risorgimento, Gramsci shows how the formation of a new class, led by the Moderate Party, involved ‘the gradual but continuous absorption... of the active elements produced by allied groups’ (1971: 58-59). The outcome of this process is not an intact or hyper-coherent Moderate Party that annihilates all forces in the internal struggle. It is a new hegemonic articulation, an amalgam of elements, an ‘equilibrium’ (1971: 161) that embodies the best possible strategy for external hegemony. It is a ‘historic bloc’ whose hybridity and historical specificity are reminiscent of ‘common sense’.

In this way, Gramsci’s analysis of hegemonic struggles points to the existence of one empirical possibility, of what I call the possibility of ‘internal negotiation’: in internal struggles, hegemonic blocs are formed not through total opposition to forces with different interests but through ‘pragmatic negotiations’. Moreover, it is precisely this element of constant negotiation that makes ‘group formation’ and ‘consent’ inseparable: leadership struggles produce hegemonic articulations that are hybrid and internally complex and, hence, capable of containing diverse forces and winning the consent of groups with oppositional interests. While Gramsci’s empirical analysis of ‘negotiation’ is centred primarily on internal struggles, on struggles for leadership, there is nothing in his general understanding of hegemonic processes that forecloses the possibility of external negotiations. Indeed, Ernesto Laclau’s (2000b) interpretation of Gramsci, with its emphasis on ‘transformistic practice’ (see, Gramsci, 1971: 58-59), allows for a more
general possibility: 'that the oppressive regime engages itself in a hegemonic operation and attempts to absorb transformistically... some of the oppositional demands. In this way, it can destabilise the frontier that separates it from the rest of society' (Laclau, 2000b: 303). However, it is important to stress that ‘transformistic negotiation’, especially in struggles for domination, is not a negotiation of ‘demands’ or ‘interests’. It is a negotiation on the level of political practice designed to guarantee precisely the reverse: that objective inequalities, and hence oppositional interests, remain intact.

Negotiation is primarily a symbolic process that conceals and makes unrecognizable the connection between interests and the political articulation of social practice designed to guarantee those interests. For instance, the subordination of homosexual masculinities is guaranteed by a form of political practice that is formed through a symbolic negotiation with gay cultures that, not only makes no concessions on the level of interests, but it is a negotiation designed to conceal heterosexual interests (more about this in the last section). It is precisely this refusal to equate non-oppositional political practice with non-oppositional interests that sets Gramsci apart from ‘reformist politics’. Hence, Gramsci’s analysis of hegemonic struggles provides an account of power relationships that stresses the facts of oppression and domination through an emphasis on the complexity of political practice, on manoeuvring and negotiation, rather than on pure oppositional politics.

Gramsci’s theorisation of power in terms of ‘flexibility’, ‘concealment’, and ‘unrecognizability’ is inspired by an Italian intellectual who was also imprisoned for political reasons and whose influence on the ‘philosopher of praxis’ is often underplayed in contemporary understandings of the idea of ‘hegemony’: Niccolo Machiavelli. Machiavelli (1961) wrote Il Principe in the early sixteenth century to criticise the rulers of his age and to propose complex political, diplomatic and military strategies for successful leadership. The book is usually translated in English as The Prince (e.g.
Machiavelli, 1961, translated by George Bull) but contemporary Greek translations as *O Ηγεμονός* (from *Ηγεμονία* = hegemony – e.g. Machiavelli, 1993, translated by Maria Kasotaki) make the connection with hegemony, and therefore ‘flexibility’, obvious. For Quentin Skinner (1981), it is precisely the question of flexibility and the capacity to adapt to changing situations that structures Machiavelli’s critique of political leadership: ‘the basic weakness they all shared [i.e. the rulers criticised by Machiavelli, including Cesare Borgia and Julius II] was a *fatal inflexibility* in the face of *changing circumstances*… they would have been far more successful if they had sought to accommodate their personalities to the *exigencies of the times*’ (1981: 15, emphasis added). It is this emphasis on ‘flexibility’ and ‘situationality’ that Gramsci (1971: 125-205) finds instructive when he writes *The Modern Prince* (his metaphor for the communist party). Hence, in analysing struggles for leadership and domination, Gramsci (1971: 169-170) evokes ‘Machiavelli’s centaur’ as a symbol of complexity and flexibility:

> A prince must understand how to make a nice use of the beast and the man. The ancient writers taught princes about this by an allegory, when they described how Achilles and many other princes of the ancient world were sent to be brought up by Chiron, the centaur, so that he might train them his way. All the allegory means, in making the teacher half beast and half man, is that a prince must know how to act according to the nature of both, and that he cannot survive otherwise... So, as a prince is forced to know how to act like a beast, he should learn from the fox and the lion; because the lion is defenceless against traps and the fox is defenceless against wolves... (Machiavelli, 1961: 99).

Thus, in Machiavelli’s allegory, in the politics of the fox and the lion, Gramsci finds a form political practice that is effective because of its deceptive (Machiavelli, 1961: 100) and flexible character. Machiavelli’s aspired prince is formed, not by reinforcing and making explicit his opposition to the rest of society, but by constructing an image, an external appearance and a reputation that conceals this opposition (Machiavelli, 1961: 95.
Moreover, not only does Gramsci translate this Machiavellian politics of concealment and unrecognizability into the language of progressive collective transformation but he also specifies, empirically, a possible logic of unrecognizability: negotiation. For it is precisely through the process of ‘internal negotiation’ that an emerging hegemonic bloc produces a political articulation whose hybridity conceals and makes unrecognizable both the line that separated forces that are leading from forces that are lead and the line that separates subordinate from dominant forces.

Neo-Gramscian developments: consenting bloc, translation and unrecognizability

The idea of ‘negotiation’ central in Gramsci’s understanding of hegemonic processes is further developed and elaborated in contemporary critical analyses of power and resistance. It is precisely in this context that the importance of Butler’s (1993b; 1995b) idea of ‘redeployment’ can be appreciated. For ‘redeployment’ can be understood as a specific dimension of negotiation, as an aspect of a non-oppositional political struggle in which oppressive regimes are able to conceal intractable oppositions of interests by redeploying the effects of practices articulated by resisting forces. Hence, the idea of ‘transformistic practice’ introduced above is best understood in terms of ‘transformistic redeployments’ that produce hybrid, unrecognizable and potentially deceptive configurations of social practice. With transformistic redeployments, power loses its appearance of exteriority or opposition vis-a-vis subordinate forces.

While Butler’s neglect of concrete empirical analysis makes it difficult to understand how transformistic redeployments work in specific situations, other neo-Gramscian analyses of power offer more grounded accounts of negotiation. Dick Hebdige’s (1979) analysis of subcultural style is focused on the articulation of resistance rather than domination and it reveals, through concrete examples taken from British post-war youth movements like
the punks and the skinheads, the inadequacy of oppositional understanding of power. The forces of resistance studied by Hebdige (1979: 16-17, 104-105) are constructed not in total opposition to that which they aim to contest but through creative appropriations and subversive repossessions of the effects of dominant practices. He focuses on struggles on the level of symbolism, signification and appearance and he shows how mainstream styles, objects, commodities and patterns of practice are ‘stolen’ (1979: 18) by subordinate groups and configured into hybrid forms of social practice. The resulting bricolage is a form of resistance that is simultaneously ‘unstable’, in that ‘all these elements constantly threaten[] to separate and return to their original sources’ (1979: 25), and ‘deceptive’, in that its heterogeneous composition conceal its opposition to certain regimes of power (1979: 117).

Focusing on practices of domination and on the complexity of power, Stuart Hall’s (1988) analysis of ‘Thatcherism’ embodies an equally forceful critique of oppositional understandings of social struggle. He shows that ‘the effectivity of Thatcherism’ did not rest on its internal coherence and homogeneity or on its capacity to explicitly oppose subordinate forces. It is through its very incoherence and heterogeneity, through its ability to articulate diverse forces and movements and to accommodate various forms of resistance, that Thatcherism legitimated itself and masked the social inequalities it benefited from (1988: 4-5). Hence, for Hall (1988), understanding Thatcherism involves doing away with a widespread illusion: ‘that ideology must be coherent, every bit of it fitting together, like a philosophical investigation’ (1988: 166). In contrast to this ‘illusion of coherence’, Thatcherism is shown to thrive on incoherence for it is through an inclusionary symbolic reworking of opposing tendencies, and hence through the articulation of hybrid discourses, that it ensures consent and the continuity of social contradictions.
Employing and further developing Hall’s non-oppositional understanding of Thatcherism, Anna Marie Smith (1994b; 1997) has explored the complexity of Thatcherite politics of race and sexuality. As regards sexuality, Smith (1997) shows that Thatcherite homophobia cannot be reduced to pure oppositional politics: strategies of ‘one-dimensional exclusion’ that rely on the construction of ‘a singular ‘us’ versus ‘them’ frontier’ (1997: 113). On the contrary, the hegemonic project of Thatcherism represented an attempt to blur the ‘us/them’ frontier through complex representational manoeuvres. It was systematically constructed as the occupant of an ‘imaginary middle ground’, as the ‘tolerant centrist’ that mediated between two extremist camps: violent queer-bashers and the whole homophobic moral backlash on the one hand, and the disease-spreading, child-seducing and corrupt queers on the other (1997: 113-115). Hence, for Smith, Thatcherism’s formation as a hegemonic bloc was inseparable from its aspiration to win mass consent. It was through its formation as a heterogeneous, inclusionary bloc that Thatcherism managed to speak effectively to the very forces that it identified as ‘enemies’ (1994b: 42). It is for this reason that Smith (1997: 114) grasps Thatcherism as a ‘consenting bloc’.

While Hall and Smith provide a complex account of the relationship between negotiation and the formation of a ‘consenting bloc’, postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha (1988; 1990; 1994) has developed a set of concepts that address some more subtle but equally important dimensions of negotiation. For Bhabha, negotiation involves ‘translation’ and ‘hybridisation’. When signifiers, practices or cultural styles are appropriated in negotiation processes, they do not retain some ‘original’ meaning or function. They are transformed, rearranged, adapted and translated into new contexts. This is widely documented in studies of cultural style, including Hebdige’s (1979) analysis introduced above. For instance, Gregg Blachford (1981: 200-202) observes that when the gay male sub-culture takes objects from the heterosexual male culture, it transforms them into
something new with a quite different meaning. Hence, clothes historically associated with working class masculinities are given a more sexualized meaning in the gay world. They are ‘worn differently in the gay sub-culture from the way they are worn by ‘real men’. They are much tighter fitting, especially tailored to be as erotic and sensual as possible’ while they are also combined with some kind of jewellery, such as chains on the neck or earrings, that are unlikely to be found on heterosexual workers (1981: 200). To appropriate is therefore to translate and re-contextualize, to produce something new, a hybrid formation that is ‘neither the one nor the other’ but it is a historically novel combination, a ‘third space’ that enables new strategies to emerge (Bhabha, 1990: 211).

When such an understanding of negotiation is utilised to theorise the formation of hegemonic blocs, it becomes possible to grasp the unrecognizability of power and its potentially deceptive character: in so far as ‘negotiation’ is not a simple inclusion/exclusion dialectic (a la Smith, 1994b: 17) in which an oppressive regime incorporates some oppositional elements and marginalizes others but it is a process of hybridisation that translates the familiar into something new, it is a very deceptive process that transforms what appears counter-hegemonic into an instrument of hegemonic domination. Negotiation does not ‘incorporate’ or ‘embrace’ oppositional elements. It translates them into something novel and, in doing so, it ‘alienates our political expectations’ and the ‘very forms of our recognition’ of domination and resistance (Bhabha, 1988: 11).

In short, an understanding of hegemonic processes in terms of negotiation, as it was developed by Gramsci and further elaborated and exemplified by other neo-Gramscian thinkers, makes it possible to move beyond oppositional understandings of political struggle and to grasp the complexity of domination and resistance. Concepts like ‘redemption’, ‘transformistic negotiation’, ‘consenting bloc’, ‘translation’ and ‘hybridity’ provide a basis for transcending notions of politics that reduce social struggles
to explicit polarizations between clearly differentiated fronts, to pure confrontations of forces that exist in relations of exteriority to one another, to 'the politics of the obvious'. In doing so, such concepts pave the way for grasping political struggles in terms of complex manoeuvres, negotiations and strategies of concealment and unrecognizability. Hence, the Gramsci-inspired understanding of political practice introduced in this section enables both a critique and a reconstruction of Connell’s oppositional understanding of hegemonic masculinity. Such a critique is undertaken below, before turning to a non-oppositional reconstruction of masculinity politics.

The poverty of oppositional understandings of hegemonic masculinity

Whereas the preceding analysis of Gramsci’s idea of hegemony emphasises the possibility of non-oppositional struggles and transformistic redeployments, Connell’s understanding of hegemony is centred on *negation rather than negotiation*. His theoretical articulation of the concept of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ is not intrinsically oppositional (I will return to this in the next section) but his empirical investigation of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ does not move beyond the politics of polarisation in which hegemonic masculinity is constituted through explicit negations of other forces. In Connell’s analysis, hegemonic masculinity achieves internal leadership and external domination not through complex manoeuvres that conceal and make unrecognizable the frontier that separates it from subordinate and marginalised masculinities but through the constitution of clear-cut borders that mark it off from other configurations of gender practice. The secondary literature that employs this concept takes Connell’s oppositional politics to an extreme, replacing Gramsci’s politics of negotiation, concealment and unrecognizability with the politics of negation, pure opposition and obvious confrontation.
As mentioned above, Gramsci’s empirical analysis links hegemonic struggles to consent via an emphasis on internal negotiation. It is in struggles for leadership that a hybrid and flexible bloc capable of dominating external forces is formed. Connell also grasps internal struggles (especially among men) as a means to the achievement of domination over women (see Chapter V). Yet, his empirical analysis of such struggles emphasises explicit negation rather than negotiation. The outcome of the struggle for internal hegemony is not a hybrid historic bloc, as in Gramsci’s account, but a hegemonic masculinity that is clearly demarcated from subordinated and marginalized ones. In Connell’s relational analysis, as shown in the previous chapter when exploring his understanding of subjectification in terms of differentiation/contestation, hegemonic masculinity is constituted by negating alternative configurations of social practice. Non-hegemonic elements are confined ‘to ghettos, to privacy, to unconsciousness’ (Connell, 1987: 186). Hegemonic masculinity relates to non-hegemonic ones only by subordinating and marginalizing them and thus their potential pragmatic value in the construction of external hegemony is underplayed. In the final analysis, the project of internal hegemony seems to become an end in itself and this is inconsistent with Connell’s theoretical tendency to privilege inter-gender over intra-gender relations.

Connell’s empirical account of hegemonic masculinity is thus substantially inconsistent with his theoretical articulation of the concept. There are two conflicting and incompatible articulations of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ in Connell’s work: on the one hand, his theoretical definitions emphasise that hegemonic masculinity is a situated strategy and thus a ‘historically mobile relation’ (Connell, 1995a: 77; 1998d: 475-476; 2002e: 89-90); on the other hand, his empirical analyses reify hegemonic masculinity into the negative pole of a necessarily oppositional struggle (see Martin, 1998; Collier, 1998: 19-20). This inconsistency appears to parallel his ‘theoretical history/concrete history’ inconsistency, examined in Chapter IV, and it generates corresponding problems, most
notably ‘elitism’ and ‘reificationism’. The first articulation is compatible with Gramsci’s emphasis on flexibility but, as Jefferson (2002) argues, it is the second articulation that has dominated analyses of hegemonic masculinity in sociology and in other fields. Furthermore, it is important to stress that the secondary literature’s reifying uses of the concept of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ (which are examined below) are not grounded on a ‘misreading’ of Connell’s work. Rather, they reiterate and take to an extreme some inconsistencies and problems generated by Connell’s own analyses.

Connell’s tendency towards ‘elitism’ is evident in his brief account of the origins of the masculinity that is now globally dominant. In ‘The big picture’, which was criticised in Chapter IV for its neglect of agency and for its reifying and elitist tendencies, Connell (1993b) develops a historical analysis of the emergence of hegemonic masculinity where subordinate and marginalized masculinities have no effect on the construction of the hegemonic model. The latter appears as an essentially white, Western, rational, calculative, individualist, violent and heterosexual configuration of practice that is never ‘infected’ by non-hegemonic elements. Non-hegemonic masculinities appear only as possible alternatives, as counter-hegemonic forces that exist ‘in tension with’ (1993b: 610) the hegemonic model but they never penetrate it. The two are thus constructed as an opposition, as two distinct and clearly differentiated configurations of practice. However, non-hegemonic masculinities are not totally absent from the formative process of hegemonic masculinity. In Connell’s relational analysis, ‘hegemonic masculinity’ emerges through a pure negation and subordinate/marginalized models appear to be ‘passively present’: they become both the condition of hegemonic masculinity’s existence and its necessary opposite. Thus, homophobia is ‘the bedrock of hegemonic masculinity’ (Donaldson, 1993: 645). This tendency towards elitism is thus accompanied by a tacit assumption: that external domination requires internal opposition. This is the main assumption, the postulate that structures Connell’s empirical analysis of hegemonic
struggles but it is never explicitly elaborated or justified. As I will show in the last section of this chapter, it is also empirically incorrect.

Connell's elitist reading of historical processes, with its neglect of negotiation and its emphasis on pure negation and opposition, generates a very limited understanding of domination and resistance. It reduces power relationships to visible and recognizable oppositions and, as a result, it misses the total complexity of subordination and contestation. For instance, while Connell does not fail to mention that gay masculinities are configurations of gender practice that do not necessarily and mechanically challenge patriarchal gender orders, he tends to see them as the 'opposite' of hegemonic masculinity, as an 'external' force that is constituted through pure negation and constitutes a counter-hegemonic possibility. In *Masculinities*, Connell's (1995a) anti-Piagetian emphasis on 'irreversibility' takes this oppositional understanding of power to an extreme:

Plainly a gay community does not automatically generate an oppositional masculinity politics. Yet the *presence* of a *stable alternative* to hegemonic masculinity - the *irreversible* achievement of the last quarter-century - reconfigures the politics of masculinity as a whole, making gender dissidence a *permanent possibility*. Both practical and theoretical challenges to the gender order will continue to arise, not necessarily from a partly pacified gay community, but certainly from the situation defined by its *presence* (1995a: 219-220, emphasis added).

Hence, even the most dynamic dimensions of Connell's work, his emphasis on the historical effects of social practice and on the irreversibility of such effects, become obstacles when merged with his oppositional understanding of power. For Connell's analysis forecloses the possibility that, while the effects of social practice are irreversible in some sense (there is no possibility of returning to an *identical* situation), they are also 'expropriable' and 'redeployable', in Butler's (1993b: 18) sense of these terms. This is
precisely the possibility that emerges when one thinks of hegemonic processes in terms
‘of negotiation rather than negation’ (Bhabha, 1988: 11). Hence, ‘the gay community’
ceases to be simply an ‘external alternative’, whose presence is restricted to a realm
outside of the hegemonic bloc and facilitates specific counter-hegemonic challenges and
possibilities, and becomes also a potential part of the hegemonic bloc itself. Far from
being a pure externality or opposition, it also acquires a ‘translated presence’ and
becomes a more expansive and more complex force that is simultaneously external and
internal to the bloc.

When approached from a different angle, Connell’s tendency to simplify resistance has
the effect of reifying ‘hegemonic masculinity’ and underplaying the complexity of
domination. His lean towards elitism, his neglect of the possibility of negotiation and his
postulate of internal opposition generate an account of hegemonic processes in which
hegemonic masculinity is defined through its negation of subordinate elements in internal
struggles (black, non-Western, irrational, effeminate or non-violent) rather than by its
ability to subordinate women. It is systematically identified with such figures as Sylvester
Stallone (1987: 185) and such movements as the gun lobby (1995a: 212-216; 1996a: 62)
or fascism (1995a: 193; 2002a: 145). Explicit violence and war become the primary
examples via which one can explore the nature of the hegemonic pattern (Connell, 1985).
In the final analysis, ‘hegemonic masculinity’ is reduced to a list of negative traits, a set
of individual attributes or characteristics (Martin, 1998). Hence, in underplaying the
reflexivity of hegemonic blocs, the capacity of hegemonic masculinity to constantly
renew itself through negotiation, translation and hybridisation, Connell’s empirical
analysis reduces the power of particular groups of men to a pure and explicit negative
appearance and in doing so he replaces social struggle with a reified concept abstracted
from struggle.
It is precisely this elitist, reified, purely negative and oppositional empirical articulation of 'hegemonic masculinity', rather than Connell's more complex theoretical articulation, that most of the literature that makes use of this concept employs, rearticulates and expands. Hence, hegemonic masculinity is conceptualised as a 'thoroughly heterosexual' (Tomsen, 1998: 48-49), violent (Gillet and White, 1992; Jansen and Sabo, 1994) and criminal (Kersten, 1993) configuration of gender practice. How and why such practices relate to 'the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy' (Connell, 1995a: 77) is usually left unexplained. Having been abstracted from struggle, 'hegemonic masculinity' is turned into a 'discourse' that directs attention away from the very complexity of gender struggles. At the risk of generalisation, this recent Connell-inspired discourse on 'hegemonic masculinity' can be condensed into three general ideas: 'negativity', 'totality' and 'singularity'. It is these three problematic ideas that unify discussions of 'hegemonic masculinity' in different fields of study and take Connell's elitism and reificationism to an extreme.

By 'negativity', I refer to the tendency to reduce 'hegemonic masculinity' to a list of negative attributes and to the subsequent neglect of the possibility of negotiation. As Martin (1988: 473) puts it, hegemonic masculinity is often seen as a 'substantially negative' type that is united by its ugliness and negativity and by its explicit opposition to femininity and subordinate masculinities. Hence, hegemonic masculinity is understood not as a temporary, constantly emerging force in a hegemonic struggle but as 'pure negativity'. It is therefore not a coincidence that one of the main academic fields in which the idea of 'hegemonic masculinity' has been influential is 'gender criminology'. Therein, as Richard Collier (1998: 1-35) argues in a critical review of the literature, 'hegemonic masculinity' is often reduced to 'a description, a list of 'masculine' traits' (1998: 20) that are seen as 'explaining, the cause of, the crimes of men' (1998: 19).
In other fields, the reduction of hegemonic masculinity to pure negativity is often accompanied by ‘negative operationalisations’, that is by attempts to distinguish, specify and personify the negative traits or attributes in question. Consider, for example, how Anthony Giddens (2001) introduces the concept in a recent sociology text for undergraduate students:

According to Connell, hegemonic masculinity is associated first and foremost with heterosexuality and marriage, but also with authority, paid work, strength and physical toughness. Examples of men who embody hegemonic masculinity are Sylvester Stallone, Bruce Willis, Humphrey Bogart and Jean-Claude van Damme (2001: 119).

Feminist sociologist Joan Acker’s (2004) conception of power may be more complex than Giddens’, in that it encompasses both ‘overt and covert strategies of domination’ (2004: 30-31), but her operationalisation of ‘global hegemonic masculinity’ is equally negative:

In today’s organizing for globalization, we can see the emergence of a hegemonic hyper-masculinity that is aggressive, ruthless, competitive and adversarial. Think of Rupert Murdoch, Phil Knight or Bill Gates... R.W. Connell [1998a] describes a ‘trans-national business masculinity’ as ‘marked by increasing egocentrism, very conditional loyalties (even to the corporation), and a declining sense of responsibility for others (except for purposes of making image)’. This masculinity also seems marked by arrogance, a passion to control, ruthlessness, and aggression (2004: 29-30).

Hence, in focusing on direct and visible displays of power, not only do these negative operationalisations of hegemonic masculinity underplay the possibility of negotiation, concealment and unrecognizability and thus miss the total complexity of domination. They also turn a complex concept, initially developed to theorise social struggle, into a list of characteristics and personalities. Thus, negativity involves both an oversimplification of power relationships and reification.
‘Totality’ is not a distinct idea but it is what makes ‘negativity’ coherent and absolute and blatantly reveals that the conception of power involved in some discussions of hegemonic masculinity is a purely oppositional one. If negation/negativity is an idea that underplays the possibility of negotiation, then ‘totality’ can be thought of as an idea that underplays the incoherence and hybridity of a hegemonic force, as a postulate that prevents one from grasping a hegemonic force as a bloc. Hence, by ‘totality’ I refer to a particular manifestation of what Hall (1988: 165) calls the ‘illusion of coherence’, to the tendency to treat the negative traits and characteristics taken to make up ‘hegemonic masculinity’ as a hyper-coherent and complete ‘whole’, a closed and unified totality that incorporates no otherness.

In the literature that employs the idea of hegemonic masculinity, ‘totality’ manifests itself in different forms. For Sharon Bird (1996), hegemonic masculinity as a totality is constructed and maintained through male homosocial interactions whereby other masculine practices are denied and ‘marginalized, if not suppressed entirely’ (1996: 121). For Judi Addelston and Michael Stirrat (1996), ‘totality’ is achieved through what I have previously called ‘passive presence’ rather than mere suppression or marginalisation:

[H]egemonic masculinity is narrowly defined by what it is drawn in opposition to: women, gay men, effeminacy, and so on. Without these borders, to police and preserve the context of hegemonic masculinity, the construct begins to unravel (1996: 58, emphasis added).

It is therefore the passive presence of ‘purely oppositional’ forces that constitutes hegemonic masculinity as a totality and marks its clear-cut ‘borders’. Hence, Addelston and Stirrat’s ‘and so on’ expression is not meant to emphasise the open-ended and negotiable character of ‘the borders’ but to totalise and make immutable the negativity of
hegemonic masculinity. It is a widely rehearsed expression that highlights that the concept of 'hegemonic masculinity' is used in a negative, oppositional and abstract way: if the readers can think of more 'excluded groups', they can add them together to reach a definition of hegemonic masculinity via an identification of its place in a relational system of oppositions. In the final analysis, no matter what form it takes, the exclusive emphasis on oppositions and clear-cut borders, on total exclusion and negation, serves to reduce 'hegemonic masculinity' to a coherent, closed and unified system equivalent to the 'Cuvierian' concepts of structure that Connell (1971) attacked in his early writings (see Chapter I). In this context, when elements 'inconsistent' with this unified totality are noticed, when particular aspects of a hegemonic force do not fit the researchers conception of 'negative attributes', they are said to be 'contradictions' that undermine the coherence and dynamic of hegemonic masculinity (see, Connell, 1990b). Thus, expanding on Connell’s (1990b) examination of the practices of a surfing Champion taken to be an exemplar of hegemonic masculinity, Donaldson (1993) equates the champion's distance from 'going wild, showing off, drank driving [and] getting into fights' with lack of power, a gap in his hegemonic gender practice (1993: 647).

The third idea that structures contemporary discourses on 'hegemonic masculinity', which I call 'singularity', is a logical outcome of the fallacies of 'negativity' and 'totality'. If 'hegemonic masculinity' is always a negative and hyper-coherent totality, then domination can only manifest itself in a singular form: direct, explicit, visible and hyper-coherent negativity. Thus, despite the tendency to talk about masculinities rather than masculinity, the concept of 'hegemonic masculinity' is still '[almost] always used in the singular' (Jefferson, 2002: 71). Indeed, most of the literature that employs this concept is trapped in a conception of politics where struggle can take no other form than a visible opposition marked by clear-cut borders (Bhabha, 1988; Demetriou, 2001). Such an understanding of power forecloses the possibility of negotiation and, because
negotiation is a possible strategy rather than a necessity, it underplays the fact that in a given historical moment gender struggles may be structured by a diversity of strategies, by situational political techniques centred on dialectical balances of negotiation and visible opposition. Thus, gender strategy may need to be less oppositional in certain gender regimes or more diversified in complex gender orders. Furthermore, whereas a conception of hegemonic struggle in terms of ‘negotiation’ and ‘flexibility’ necessitates an open-ended and diversified understanding of strategy, where a hegemonic bloc is capable of adapting to the specificities of different situations through constant manoeuvring, a conception of hegemony in terms of ‘negativity’ and ‘totality’ makes it impossible to grasp struggle in terms of ‘context-specific hegemonic strategies’ (Jefferson, 2002: 72), to recognise that ‘hegemonic strategies can vary across different parts of a social formation’ (Wetherell and Edley, 1999: 337). In Connell’s own analysis, this lapse into ‘the singularism of hegemonic masculinity’ is marked both by the lack of a context-specific hegemonic concept, like ‘regimental hegemonic masculinity’ (see Chapter V), and by his subsequent tendency to talk about ‘hegemonic masculinity’ and ‘strategy’ in the singular (e.g. Connell, 1995a: 77).

In short, the idea of ‘hegemonic masculinity’, as used in Connell’s empirical work and in other literature on gender relations, has generated a series of theoretical and political problems. In Connell’s empirical analysis, the concept is used in an elitist and reified way, underplaying the possibility of negotiation and, consequently, the total complexity of power relationships. These problems are magnified in the secondary literature that redeploy this concept in such a way as to reduce the complexity of social struggles to the ‘negativity’, ‘totality’ and ‘singularity’ of a reified ‘hegemonic masculinity’. In the final analysis, despite its potential theoretical complexity, ‘hegemonic masculinity’ has been turned into a discourse that prevents one from grasping precisely what is central to hegemonic processes: negotiation, manoeuvring, flexibility, concealment and
unrecognizability. Having missed the complexity of the Machiavelli-inspired ‘politics of
the fox and lion’, this discourse has constructed ‘hegemonic masculinity’ as a ‘beast’ that
is blatantly negative in its visibility, overwhelmingly total in its formation, exclusively
singular in its strategy. The main objective of the next two sections of this chapter is to
reconstruct this discourse of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ and to restore the complexity of
social struggles. A starting point for such a critical reconstruction is the existing literature
on hegemonic masculinity, including the work of Connell himself, for despite the
problems with this body of literature a rudimentary version of ‘a new sociology of
hegemonic masculinity’ is already implicit in it.

III. Situational and flexible: toward a new sociology of hegemonic masculinity

Connell’s empirical reification of hegemonic masculinity exists side by side with a more
complex theoretical articulation of the concept. Some of the secondary literature that
makes use of this concept has also generated insights that make it possible to move
towards a more complex understanding of hegemonic masculinity. In this section, I
introduce these insights and merge them with the Gramscian and neo-Gramscian
understandings of hegemonic processes in terms of negotiation and flexibility. This
makes it possible to articulate a more complex understanding of hegemonic masculinity,
which serves as the basis for a concrete exemplification of hegemonic struggle in the next
section.

Authorization/inclusion and beyond

Despite Connell’s tendency towards ‘elitism’ and ‘reificationism’, some of his general
and rather abstract statements about hegemonic masculinity contain the seeds for the
development of a more complex approach. For instance, in Gender and Power, Connell
(1987) argues that, because gender is a complex structure of power relationships, the
strategy which guarantees the power of men and the subordination of women (i.e.
‘hegemonic masculinity’) needs to be equally complex: ‘no simple or uniform strategy is possible: a ‘mix’ is necessary. So hegemonic masculinity can contain at the same time, quite consistently, openings towards domesticity and openings towards violence…’ (1987: 186). And Connell, at least on a theoretical level, does not exclude the possibility that this ‘mixed strategy’ may be achieved via a process of ‘internal negotiation’. Hence, in Masculinities, he admits that different forms of masculinity ‘are in constant interaction’ (1995a: 198) and that the formation of the strategy of hegemonic masculinity may be influenced by the existence of subordinate or marginalized models. He coins the important but neglected term of ‘authorization’ to suggest that the hegemonic model may authorize some elements of subordinated or marginalized masculinities (1995a: 80-81).

‘Thus, in the United States, particular black athletes may be exemplars for hegemonic masculinity’ (1995a: 81).

Even though Connell has not systematically pursued their empirical implications, notions like ‘mixed strategy’ and ‘authorization’ provide a rudimentary basis for moving beyond the politics of pure negation and oppositionality. They provide a basis because they assume the possibility of negotiation and, in doing so, they problematize the reduction of hegemonic masculinity to a hyper-coherent totality. But this basis is rudimentary not simply because such concepts occupy a marginal position and remain underdeveloped in Connell’s work but mainly because the complexity of negotiation cannot be reduced to simple acts of ‘authorization’ in which ‘hegemonic masculinity’ incorporates alternative elements in additive ways, without transforming the nature of those elements. Neither can the outcome of negotiation be equated with a ‘mix’ whose constitutive elements are identical to those that preceded the process of authorization. When developed to its full potential, an understanding of negotiation in terms of ‘mixed strategy’ and ‘authorization’ yields nothing more than a simple ‘inclusion/exclusion dialectic’, where ‘included’ elements simply get added on to the hegemonic configuration. Robert Hanke’s (1992)
analysis of the representation of masculinities in American television shows how this ‘dialectic’ works in a specific social setting: gay men are excluded or ‘symbolically annihilated’, as they rarely feature as regular major characters or they are ‘negatively stereotyped’, but ‘there have been some exceptions to this pattern of invisibility that suggest that hegemonic masculinity operates through inclusion as well as exclusion…’ (1992: 194-195, emphasis added). While Hanke (1992: 195), like Connell (1995a: 81), does not fail to note that ‘inclusion’/‘authorization’ does not mean ‘acceptance’/‘recognition’ but it is an aspect of hegemonic masculinity’s attempt to ‘defuse crisis tendencies […] in order to remain hegemonic’ (Hanke, 1992: 196), the logic that structures his analysis of negotiation is still somehow mathematical, not cultural: without developing specific concepts that address the complex symbolic dimensions of negotiation processes, one is forced to reduce gender struggle to percentages of visibility and invisibility and to grasp ‘inclusion’ as logical addition.

When I counterpose ‘redeployment’ to ‘inclusion’, ‘translation’ to ‘authorization’ and ‘hegemonic bloc’ to ‘mixed strategy’, I mean to juxtapose Connell’s and Hanke’s mathematical conception of negotiation with a culturally complex one: to redeploy is not to ‘include’ or add an element whose identity remains unchanged but to take something on and transform it in a process where identical repetitions are impossible (Butler, 2000a: 29); to translate is not to ‘authorise’ a pre-existing element or practice but to take it as a starting point in order to produce ‘something else’, to reconstitute that element via the very act of translation (Bhabha, 1988: 13); to form a hegemonic bloc is not to produce a ‘mix’ that can be logically decomposed into its constitutive components but to produce ‘something new’, a ‘third space’ that is irreducible to the sum total of its constitutive elements (Bhabha, 1990: 221).
Yet, despite their shortcomings, notions like ‘authorization’ and ‘inclusion’ point to the fact that the discourse of ‘negativity’, ‘totality’ and ‘singularity’ has been under attack, albeit in implicit and underdeveloped ways. Since the late 1990s, this attack has become both broader and more explicit. A new sociology of hegemonic masculinity has been emerging in the context of different fields of research. Most notably, in fields like ‘gender criminology’ and ‘discursive psychology’ the emphasis on ‘negativity’, ‘singularity’ and ‘totality’ has been replaced by the interrelated ideas of ‘flexibility’ and ‘situationality’ and ‘hybridity’, all of which share the Gramscian and neo-Gramscian emphasis on the complexity of hegemonic struggles (e.g. Wetherell and Edley, 1999; Jefferson, 2002). In what follows, I examine a number of prominent studies to show some of the distinctive features of this new, emerging approach to hegemonic masculinity.

**Flexibility: beyond pure negativity**

In their discursive psychology of masculinity, Margaret Wetherell and Nigel Edley (1999) offer an explicit critique and reconstruction of the concept of hegemonic masculinity. They take as a point of departure Connell’s tendency to reduce ‘hegemonic masculinity’ to ‘pure negativity’. As they put it, hegemonic masculinity ‘tends in Connell’s writings to be correlated with what might be called macho masculinity and exemplified by characters in popular films such as Rambo, Rocky and The Terminator’ (1999: 336-337). Hence, they encounter a problem similar to what I have called ‘elitism’:

Hegemonic masculinity is presented in Connell’s work as an aspirational goal rather than a lived reality for ordinary men. Indeed, a key feature seems to be its ‘impossibility’ or ‘fantastic’ nature... As social psychologists, however, we wonder about the appropriateness of a definition of dominant masculinity which no man [except a handful of well-known exemplars] may ever actually embody (1999: 337, emphasis added).
In this way, Wetherell and Edley argue that a more interactional and more psychological analysis of hegemonic masculinity is needed, an analysis that centers on everyday life negotiations and interactions rather than on a list of attributes or an elite of exemplars:

‘How are the norms conveyed, through what routes, and in what ways are they enacted by men in their daily lives?... How is hegemony conveyed interactionally and practically in mundane life?’ (1999: 337).

Just as Wetherell and Edley’s (1999) theoretical and methodological basis challenge Connell’s ‘reificationism’ and ‘elitism’, their empirical conclusions launch a direct attack on the idea of ‘negativity’ and, by implication, ‘totality’. For the two British psychologists conclude that everyday constructions of hegemonic strategies are not structured by the list of attributes that the discourse of negativity operationalises as ‘hegemonic masculinity’. Rather, the men interviewed in their study ‘portrayed themselves as ‘ordinary’ in relation to a macho stereotype dismissed as extreme, over the top, a caricature, seen as a sign of immaturity...’ (1999: 351). Far from indicating that they are ‘beyond gender power’, it is precisely this strategic distance from a macho style, the fact that ‘they do not seem to aspire to the most common definition of hegemonic masculinity’, that enables these men to secure their powerful position in the gender order (1999: 351, emphasis added). Hence, Wetherell and Edley’s analysis leads to what they believe to be a paradox: ‘paradoxically, one could say that sometimes one of the most effective ways of being hegemonic...may be to demonstrate one’s distance from hegemonic masculinity. Perhaps what is most hegemonic is to be non-hegemonic!’ (1999: 351). This paradox dissolves, however, as soon as it is recognized that the two social psychologists juxtapose two incompatible notions of hegemony, the first based on the Gramscian politics of complexity, concealment and unrecognizability and the second on the discourse of hegemonic masculinity as pure negativity and on the ‘politics of the obvious’. Once this incompatibility is acknowledged, then the statement becomes not
simply logical but tautological: what is most ‘hegemonic’, in the Gramscian sense of the term where hegemony involves concealment and unrecognizability, is to be ‘non-hegemonic’ in Connell’s sense of the term, where hegemony is reduced to a recognizable negativity.

Whetherell and Edley’s (1999) discursive psychology can be therefore seen as an attempt to introduce complexity into the analysis of hegemonic gender struggles. In so far as men are shown to rule precisely when they do not appear to rule, hegemonic masculinity ceases to be a hypercoherent negativity and political analysis moves from the realm of the obvious and the purely oppositional to the realm of complex manoeuvring and strategic concealment. Implicit in Wetherell and Edley’s emphasis on flexibility and concealment is also the possibility of multiple hegemonic strategies in that the focus on everyday interactions and negotiations allows for a more situated analysis of hegemonic struggles. Yet, the possibility of diverse strategies has been more forcefully established in other fields of study.

**Situationality: beyond singularity**

While ‘gender criminology’ has been one of the fields in which the discourse of ‘negativity’, ‘totality’ and ‘singularity’ has been constructed, it has also generated important studies that challenge this discourse (e.g. Collier, 1998). Particularly, Tony Jefferson (2002) has articulated the most explicit and direct critique of the idea of ‘singularity’.

Taking his cue from Whetherell and Edley (1999) and from other critics, Jefferson (2002) argues that ‘the widespread use (and abuse) of the term hegemonic masculinity’ (2002: 66) has resulted in a tendency to use the term ‘attributionally’, to focus on a series of
negative traits, 'as if it referred simply to a list of 'manly' attributes- competitive, aggressive, risk-taker, strong…' (2002: 70). For Jefferson, the consequence of this 'attributional understanding of hegemonic masculinity' is not simply to reduce the idea to pure negativity and 'to render the notion static' (2002: 71). It is also to underplay the contingency of hegemonic strategy and the possibility of situational, context-specific construction. This possibility is central to what Jefferson calls a 'relational' understanding of hegemony, an understanding that centers on social struggle and complex manoeuvring rather than on static lists of attributes (2002: 71). With a relational understanding, it becomes possible to think of hegemonic domination in terms of multiple strategies, depending on the specificity of the historical situation. Hence, a single 'exemplar' of hegemonic masculinity may need to engage in a diversity of strategies in order to adapt to different contexts with distinct forms of social relationships. For instance, Jefferson (2002) envisages Bill Gates

'performing' 'transnational business masculinity' to business audiences, a version of Gilmore's 'selfless' masculinity in philanthropic contexts, and a specific, knowledge-based, 'whizz-kid' masculinity when confronted with a gathering of fellow experts (2002: 72).

Hence, it is the complexity of gender orders that makes it necessary to rearticulate 'singularity' in terms of 'context-specific hegemonic strategies'. Jefferson’s rearticulation of 'hegemonic masculinity' is therefore more appropriate for an analysis of hegemonic struggles in specific gender regimes and, hence, more compatible with a notion of 'regimental hegemonic masculinities'.

Jefferson’s critical analysis points to a broader feature of the 'new sociology of hegemonic masculinity': the tendency to use the term in the plural rather than in the singular (e.g. Collinson and Hearn, 1996: 10-11; Martin, 1996: 188). Implicit in this shift
away from the idea of ‘singularity’ is also a challenge of the fallacy of ‘totality’ for, if hegemonic strategies are potentially diverse and context-specific, hegemonic masculinity ceases to be a closed system. While a critique of ‘totality’ is also implicit in Whetherell and Edley’s (1999) work, this idea has found its most explicit and forceful antithesis in a series of empirical studies that emphasise the constant hybridisation, and hence incoherence, of contemporary hegemonic blocs.

Hybridity: beyond totality

In line with Gramsci’s understanding of a hegemonic force as a hybrid and internally incoherent bloc, ‘the new sociology of hegemonic masculinity’ theorises the internal heterogeneity of hegemonic masculinity not in terms of debilitating contradictions that undermine its power (à la Connell, 1990b or Donaldson, 1993) but in terms of productive hybridisations that account for the flexibility and manoeuvrability of masculine hegemonic blocs.

The dynamics of hybridisation has been widely, and most clearly, documented in studies of men’s lifestyle magazines in Britain (Mort, 1988, Nixon, 1996; Stevenson, Jackson and Brooks, 2000; 2003; Benwell, 2003a; 2003b). In this highly innovative body of literature, the emergence of the ‘new man’ or ‘new lad’ in the 1990s is seen as a hybrid representational construction that is formed via an external negotiation with feminist discourses and an internal negotiation primarily with gay cultures and that constitutes an attempt to legitimate male power in historically novel ways. Hence, far from basing its strength on a hyper-coherent negative visibility, hegemonic masculinity owes its power and legitimacy to constant strategic negotiation. For Bethan Benwell (2003b), it is precisely this element of negotiation and the possibility of ‘unrecognizability’ it facilitates that accounts for hegemonic masculinity’s ‘strategic adaptability to new social,
commercial and political imperatives whereby an appearance of change is in fact bound up with eternal renewal' (2003b: 27). Furthermore, the critique of the idea of totality is here inseparable from a critique of pure negativity and singularity.

Research in the United States points to the existence of parallel trends in strategies of representation. David Sarvan’s (1998) examination of the formation of contemporary American hegemonic masculinity is a case in point. Basing his study on an analysis of various cultural texts, Sarvan argues that a new masculinity became hegemonic in the 1970s. He delineates the ‘gradual ascendancy of [a] new, more feminised and blackened white masculinity’ (1998: 37), of a masculinity that offers ‘subjects positions that have been marked historically as being both masculine and feminine, white and black’ (1998: 9). Sarvan makes it clear that the ascendancy of this hybrid masculinity ‘represents an attempt by white men to respond to and regroup in the face of particular social and economic challenges’, such as the ‘re-emergence’ of the feminist movement and the rise of the lesbian and gay rights movements (1998: 4).

While studies of masculinities and representation have been central in moving beyond an understanding of hegemonic masculinity in terms of ‘totality’, hybridisation is not restricted to the realm of representation. Brian Donovan’s (1998) analysis of the masculinity of Promise Keepers links hybridisation to organised masculinity politics. Donovan argues that the Promise Keepers have constructed a hybrid masculinity, a masculinity that ‘combin[es] traits of both ‘sensitive’ and ‘tough men’’ (1998: 826). In doing so, they have produced ‘innovative forms of power that potentially shore up male authority’ (1998: 820). As with Sarvan’s (1998) analysis and in line with the British studies of representation, Donovan’s research reinforces the argument developed out of Gramsci’s conceptualisation of the process of internal hegemony in the first section of this chapter: that the masculinity that occupies the hegemonic position at a given
historical moment is a hybrid bloc that incorporates diverse and apparently oppositional elements through constant negotiation.

In short, the emerging 'new sociology of hegemonic masculinity', a rudimentary version of which is already implicit in Connell's theoretical work, challenges the ideas of 'negativity', 'singularity' and 'totality'. In doing so, it paves the way for more complex analyses of power relationships, for analyses that move beyond the level of oppositional politics and explicit confrontations and explore the complexity of hegemonic struggles in terms of flexibility, negotiation and unrecognizability. A brief case study that exemplifies this complex politics of negotiation is undertaken in the next section.

IV. Gay masculinities and the formation of a hegemonic bloc

In the preceding sections, I have critiqued and reconstructed Connell's oppositional understanding of hegemonic masculinity via a general theoretical analysis and I have introduced a series of non-oppositional concepts, including negotiation, redeployment, translation and hegemonic bloc. I have also introduced an alternative approach to gender struggle through the examination of what I call the 'new sociology of hegemonic masculinity'. In this section, I give some more concrete empirical grounding to the proceeding analysis. I exemplify and reiterate the critical reconstruction of the concept of 'hegemonic masculinity' via a focus on a specific historical case of 'internal negotiation' in a specific 'site of negotiation'. Particularly, drawing on a diverse body of literature, I explore the case of the strategic redeployment of gay cultures since the 1970s in the context of media constructions of masculinity in Anglo-American 'gender regimes of representation'14. I argue that hegemonic masculinity has not been constructed in total opposition to gay masculinities. On the contrary, many elements of the latter have been incorporated, through redeployment and translation, into an emerging hegemonic...
masculine bloc whose hybridity and heterogeneity is able to render the patriarchal dividend invisible and to legitimate patriarchal domination.

Some important clarifications are necessary from the outset. While the following analysis centres primarily on ‘regimes of media representation’, I have deliberately merged the analysis of representation with an analysis of concrete gender practices in social interaction precisely because I want to stress the interconnection between discursive constructions of masculinity and concrete configurations of gender practice: the more visible gay culture is in the realm of representation the more likely it is to get selectively and creatively redeployed by ‘the straight masses’ in concrete interactions. Hence, the question of ‘gay visibility’ proves to be a crucial precondition for redeployment and it constitutes a point of departure in my analysis. Yet, because negotiation does not mean simple addition, ‘visibility’ is only a starting point, not the end of negotiation or ‘negotiation in itself’ (a la Hanke, 1993). Thus, I proceed to link visibility to negotiation via an exploration of instances of redeployment, translation and hybridisation. It is in the study of this ‘link’ that the politics of concealment and unrecognizability can be explored.

Legitimation crisis and gay visibility

The emergence in ‘western societies’ in the late 1960s, of what is commonly called the second wave women’s liberation movement, interrogated, among other things, what was construed as patriarchy. Patriarchy was in need of new legitimatory strategies and many men were forced to reconstruct their patriarchal techniques of domination, to reformulate their claim to power and their masculine identities. Meanwhile, groups of men that had been largely excluded from the hegemonic bloc had, by that time, become visible. Black diaspora and the emergence of the gay liberation movement, for example, brought black and gay masculinities from the margins to the centre. The answer to the legitimation crisis of patriarchy involved the formation of a new masculine hegemonic bloc that
incorporated some of the elements produced by these ‘marginal’ and ‘subordinate’ masculinities, particularly those elements that, when translated, could prove useful for the legitimation and reproduction of patriarchy. In the discussion that follows, I concentrate on the importance of a set of gay elements and practices in the formation of the contemporary masculine bloc.

The process through which gay elements and practices become embedded in a masculine bloc is closely associated with the question of gay visibility. Gay culture can have an impact on the male population in its totality and it can contribute to the project of patriarchal domination only if it is visible. Wide documentation over the last three decades attests to an unprecedented increase of homosexual visibility in modern Western societies (for a review, see Hennessy, 1995). Gay male images are present in fundamental aspects of modern cultures, from mainstream movies (Wood, 1987) and fashion (Martin, 1993: 135-140; Hennessy, 1995: 168-170) to popular music (Studer, 1994; Savage, 1990) and popular culture as a whole (Kamp, 1993).

This is not to say that gay visibility is a new historical phenomenon. As Chauncey (1994) has shown in his history of gay male culture in New York, gay men were highly visible figures there as early as the 1890s. Contrary to what he calls ‘the myth of invisibility’, ‘gay men boldly announced their presence by wearing red ties, bleached hair, and the era’s other insignia of homosexuality’ (1994: 3). Similarly, the ‘molly houses’ in early-eighteenth-century England, produced their own distinctive conventions, a highly developed and elaborated ‘system of symbolization’ by which ‘mollies’ were able to identify each other. So visible was this culture that, as the raids and trials of the time testify, ‘[i]ts visibility was its bane’ (Bray, 1982: 92). Yet, in late capitalist societies gay visibility has taken new forms. It is no longer the mere result of ‘gay agency’, of the actions and visibility strategies of homosexual subcultures, but it is now also closely
related to the logic and structures of late capitalism. As Stuart Hall (1991: 20) notes, the
global expansion of late capitalism is based on the development of identity-specific forms
of marketing that can reflect every difference and reach even the smallest and more
marginal group of individuals. Furthermore, the development of marketing strategies,
such as ‘gay window advertising’ (Clark, 1993: 188), has brought about a new degree of
homosexual visibility.

The increasing circulation of gay images in popular culture during the three preceding
decades is a multidimensional phenomenon. On one level, it can be understood as an
aspect of increasingly internally diversified gender orders, where ‘visibility’ points to the
existence of what Connell (1995a) would call ‘permanent possibilities’ for ‘gender
dissidence’ (1995a: 219). On another level, the connection between gay visibility and
commercial capitalism points to the fact that the increasing visibility is part of an attempt
to embrace the homosexual as a consuming rather than as a social subject (Clark, 1993:
other words, it is a part of a strategy for the reproduction of capitalism, not for the
‘liberation’ of homosexuals. More importantly, on a third level, the increase in gay
visibility and the gradual ‘incorporation’ of fragments of gay culture into the mainstream
can also be understood as a strategy for the legitimation and reproduction of a patriarchal
gender order. The ‘assimilation of gays into mainstream middle-class culture’, as
Hennessy (1995) notes, ‘does not disrupt postmodern patriarchy and its intersection with
capitalism; indeed it is in some ways quite integral to it’ (1995: 170). By making gay
culture more visible, capitalism makes it possible for many men to redeploy and translate
bits and pieces of this alternative culture and to produce new configurations of practice
that enable them to reproduce their dominance over women in historically novel ways.
Hence, it is on this third conceptual level that gay visibility proves to be an aspect of
internal negotiation and internal negotiation proves to be a means for external domination.

**The birth of the ‘straight queer’: Redeployment, concealment, unrecognizability**

The dominant man of the 1950s, 1960s and even early 1970s was ‘sexless’ and ‘decent’ since there was an overt disdain for male beauty and softness, ‘a taboo on tenderness’ as Lynne Segal (1988: 87) put it. Dressiness (Savage, 1990: 156) and even the use of aftershave lotion (Blachford, 1981: 252) were largely confined to homosexuals. In analysing the dominant masculine type of that time, Sean Nixon (1996: 170-179) examines male representations in fashion photography in terms of codes of casting, dress, posture, expression, lighting and setting. He concludes that there was ‘little fleshiness or sensuality’ in the models that appeared in the magazine *Town*, that the design and the cut of the clothes worked to produce a desexualised, narrow and straight-lined body while the facial expression of the models was ‘reminiscent of modern day gangsters’. These elements were further strengthened by the codes of lighting and setting and they functioned to produce a particular way in which the male reader looks at the model, a particular ‘gendering of the look’ that encouraged identification with, rather than desire of, the model (1996: 177).

This form of hegemonic masculinity reflected male domination in an overt way and the rise of the women’s movement during the same time encouraged less overt ways for men to reflect this domination. Meanwhile, various homosexual subcultures, which expanded during the 1950s and the 1960s, produced their own distinctive masculinities. Although from the late 1970s onwards groups of gay men embraced an exaggerated macho style, the gay subcultures of the two or three preceding decades displayed an aesthetic sensibility and a sense of beauty that the hegemonic masculinity of the time
lacked (Blachford, 1981). They emphasized the pursuit of pleasure and the concentration on the self, they sexualised the male body and introduced dressiness for men as well as a series of other signifiers, such as earrings or feminine hairstyles, that appear to blur sexual difference. According to Nixon (1997), far from opposing, annihilating or marginalizing the elements produced by these gay masculinities, groups of heterosexual men welcomed some of them because they provided a masquerade behind which women's subordination could be masked. Due to the fact that early gay masculinities were closer to dominant forms of femininity rather than to traditional masculinities, a hegemonic bloc could appropriate some of these elements in order to make the gender division of patriarchy less visible and thus win women's consent. Thus, the new hegemonic bloc that emerged after the early 1970s was a 'bricollage of masculinity' that drew from the gay subculture (Mort, 1988: 203-205), a 'straight queer' as David Kamp (1994) put it.

Sean Nixon (1997) compares his findings of the 1970s that I summarized above with some more recent fashion photos taken from modern men's mainstream lifestyle magazines, particularly from The Face, Arena and GQ. The casting of the models (young with strong well-defined features), as Nixon observes, produces a mixture of 'boyish softness' and 'assertive masculinity' while some elements of the clothing in the stylings have a 'strong intertextuality with gay masculinities' (1997: 308). These elements, along with the 'strongly narcissistic absorption or self-containment of the models' (1997: 307), work to produce a 'gendering of the look' that draws on forms of looking 'historically associated with gay men' (1996: 201). What is important here is that these images, which represent a 'loosening of the binary opposition between gay and straight-identified men' (1996: 202), have not been created from scratch but they reflect 'shifts in forms of masculinity culture outside the consumer institutions' (1996: 197). Indeed, as Martin (1993) notes, since gay sensibility sells to both gay and straight men, 'just about everyone...
dresses a little gay these days' (1993: 140). The appropriation and translation of a series of signifiers and practices from gay subcultures, such as earrings for men or dressiness, make the dominant form of masculinity appear softer and less opposed to contemporary femininities (on a symbolic level). It is for this reason that it can generate new forms of power centred on concealment and unrecognizability for negotiation produces a softer appearance, a symbolic softening of oppositions, that has the effect of masking and stabilising intractable oppositions of interests.

Some commentators have gone as far as to report that even practices like drag can be translated in processes of negotiation (Sinfield, 1996: 279-280; Hennessy, 1995: 169). Drag has been redeployed and turned into a symbol of heterosexual manhood since, as one of Rowena Chapman’s (1988) interviewees explains, ‘the kind of man who turns up at a party as woman is usually so confident of his masculinity that he doesn’t care what he looks like...’ (1988: 240). By embracing drag, however, the man in question is able to blur gender difference, to render the patriarchal dividend invisible, ‘to circumvent feminist arguments, and absent himself from masculinity and thus for any responsibility for it’ (1988: 243). In cases like this, the appropriation and translation of what appears to be an oppositional element represents a strategic attempt to create a hybrid masculinity via an expansive reworking of existing symbolic material. The fact that men are constantly reconfiguring their masculinities in order to achieve particular ends and to adapt to the specificities of given situations has also been demonstrated in studies of masculinities in the workplace, where ‘men workers understand gender as a self-conscious stratagem in interactive service work, a sign to be made, deployed and used as an item of exchange’ (Adkins, 2001).

But the appropriation of gay male elements is not restricted to fashion photography or fashion itself. Recent analyses of male images in advertising have demonstrated the
existences of an explicit ‘gay imagery’ (Mckinnon, 1997: 107). Most commentators agree that the existence of gay elements and styles in mainstream advertising works to sexualise, eroticise or fetishise the male body (Rutherford, 1988: 32, 59; Simpson, 1994: 94-130; Nixon, 1997: 293-295). Male representations in Levi 501 (Mort, 1988: 192-202) and Calvin Klein (Mackinnon, 1997: 99-111) advertisements, for example, have less to do with machismo, strength and virility than with the fracturing and eroticisation of the male body. In a similar way, popular music seems to blur the distinction between gay and straight masculinities. Early Pop Music, ‘which was riddled with homosexuality and the sensibility that we now call camp’ (Savage, 1990: 158), encouraged the emergence of narcissistic and androgynous masculinities. The mods, as Savage notes, were not a sexual subculture but they assumed what had been an exclusively homosexual style. They were wearing more effeminate and more colourful clothes while some of them even used make-up and mascara (1990: 160-161). In other studies, it is documented that some rock stars have worn skirts on the stage (Hennessy, 1995: 169), while others pretend to be gay (Simpson, 1994: 204-210; Kamp, 1994: 96). Furthermore, this appropriation of gay elements blurs sexual difference, enables some masculinities to appear less rigid and thus conceals patriarchal domination. But this ‘gender flexibility’, as Hennessy (1995) rightly notes, ‘is pernicious because it cast the illusion that patriarchy has disappeared’ (1995: 172). In cases like these, then, negotiation becomes again the medium for the production of forms of domination centred on unrecognizability.

The presence of gay elements and the fact of negotiation is even more noticeable in popular movies, where male film stars, from Tom Cruise to Arnold Schwarzenegger, are gradually constructed in more eroticised ways (Simpson, 1994: 212-215; Mackinnon, 1997: 79-92). Chris Hulmlund (1993), for example, argues that Sylvester Stallone, whom Connell (1987: 184-185) sees as an exemplar of a pure heterosexual masculinity, has recently worn a new masquerade. In two of his more recent films (Lock Up and Tango),
Stallone is no longer a loner, a Rocky or a Rambo who wins impossible battles all by himself. He is now joined by another man, a figure that Holmlund calls ‘Stallone clone’:

By naming this second man the Stallone clone, I do not just mean he looks, talks and acts like Stallone. In these films, Stallone and the clones are very fond of each other, so for me, ‘clone’ evokes the butch clone, the homosexual who passes as heterosexual because he looks and acts ‘like a man’ (Holmlund, 1993: 214-215).

Furthermore, the homoeroticism and the male bonding that these films contain may appear to undermine traditional conceptions of masculinity and power relationships. Yet, Holmlund does not fail to recognize that masquerades may conceal something. There is always the possibility that there is something masked behind Stallone’s new masquerade and that therefore the gay element may play a legitimating function. ‘The veil’, as he notes with reference to Homi Bhabha, ‘conceals bombs’ (Holmlund, 1993: 218).

Moreover, this partial ‘homosexualization’ of heterosexual men is a very effective strategy because it uses ‘the subversive, messy form of camouflage’ in order to produce something new, hybrid and unrecognizable and it ‘does not come like a pure avenging angel speaking the truth of... pure oppositionality’ (Bhabha, 1988: 11).

Similarly, David Sarvan’s (1998: 213-239) analysis of the film Cruising suggests that there is a strong connection between the mainstreaming of gay culture and the reproduction of patriarchy. Sarvans’ main focus is the sadomasochist culture, which has become central to the production of certain gay male identities since the 1970s. The film Cruising, as narrated by Sarvan, is about the excursion of a heterosexual undercover cop, Steve Burns (played by Al Pacino) into New York’s gay sadomasochist subculture in search for a ‘homo killer’ (1998: 214). Sarvan notes that, as the film progresses, Steve Burns begins to appropriate elements from the gay sadomasochist subculture and to redeploy them in the context of his own gender configuration of practice. For instance,
‘while having sex with [his girlfriend] (which, tellingly gets more violent) he involuntarily hears the dance music of the [sadomasochist] clubs...’ (1998: 215). In doing so, the ‘newly homosexualised’ (1998: 215) cop is able to reproduce his patriarchal power over his girlfriend through redeployment and hybridisation. When translated into the realm of heterosexual sexual practice, male sadism and female masochism can be a mechanism of patriarchal reproduction and legitimation in that it eroticises male power.

As the research analysed in this brief case study shows, hegemonic masculinity is in a constant process of negotiation, translation, hybridization and reconfiguration. Gay masculinities, on the other hand, are not simply ‘passively present’. Through translation, they become constitutive parts of a hybrid hegemonic bloc whose heterogeneity and incoherence are its sources of power. This implies more than a recognition that hegemonic masculinity is capable of transforming itself in order to adapt to the specificities of new historical conjunctures. To say that hegemonic masculinity is a hybrid bloc that continually reconfigures itself through hybridisation is not simply to acknowledge that hegemony is ‘a historically mobile relation’ (Connell, 1995b: 77). It is to stress that hegemonic masculinity changes in a very deceptive and unrecognizable way. It changes through translation and hybridization, through the transformation of what appears counter-hegemonic and progressive into an instrument of backwardness and patriarchal reproduction. To understand hegemonic masculinity as hybridity is therefore to avoid falling into the trap of believing that patriarchy has disappeared simply because heterosexual men have worn earrings or because Sylvester Stallone has worn a new masquerade.

The reduction of hegemonic masculinity to a closed, coherent and unified totality that embraces no otherness, no contradiction, and takes no other form than a pure and visible negativity is therefore an illusion that must be done away with. For it is precisely through...
its hybrid and apparently contradictory articulation that hegemonic masculinity reproduces itself. Hence, the configuration of practice that guarantees the reproduction of patriarchy needs not necessarily be the one traditionally associated with white or heterosexual masculinities. It is in fact a hybrid masculine bloc that is made up of both straight and gay, both black and white elements and practices. Furthermore, whereas in Connell’s empirical analysis the existence of non-white or non-heterosexual elements in hegemonic masculinity is a sign of contradiction and weakness, for me it is precisely its internally diversified and hybrid nature that makes the hegemonic bloc dynamic and flexible. It is its constant hybridisation, its constant appropriation of diverse elements from various masculinities that makes the hegemonic bloc capable of reconfiguring itself and adapting to the specificities of new historical conjunctures.

V. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have critically explored the concept of power that structures Connell’s analysis of subjectification. Connell’s empirical examination of hegemonic struggles reduces social conflict to visible confrontations between clearly differentiated and directly opposed forces. This oppositional understanding of power underplays the possibility of negotiation and, as a result, it proposes a reified and elitist concept of ‘hegemonic masculinity’. The secondary literature that employs Connell’s idea of hegemonic masculinity takes these problems to an extreme, equating hegemonic masculinity with a purely ‘negative’, ‘total’ and ‘singular’ gender strategy of domination.

The Gramscian and neo-Gramscian analysis of hegemonic struggles in terms of negotiation paves the way for moving beyond Connell’s oppositional understanding of power. Gramsci’s emphasis on the possibility of ‘internal negotiation’, along with Butler’s idea of ‘redeployment’, Hall’s understanding of ‘hegemonic bloc’ and Bhabha’s
work on 'translation' and 'hybridisation' make it possible to grasp hegemonic masculinity in terms of more flexible and less oppositional strategies. This non-oppositional approach to power is already implicit in what I call the 'new sociology of hegemonic masculinity', which emphasises the 'flexibility', 'situationality' and 'hybridity' of masculine strategies of domination. I have exemplified this non-oppositional understanding of hegemonic gender struggle by looking at the relationship between gay masculinities and the formation of a hegemonic bloc. Far from forming itself in total, direct and visible opposition to gay masculinities, hegemonic masculinity has redeployed and translated elements from gay cultures in order to respond to the legitimation crisis of patriarchy in post-1970s Western gender orders. It is the strategic negotiation with, not the total negation of, gay masculinities that enables the hegemonic bloc to articulate hybrid gender strategies capable of concealing the reality of gender domination.

Furthermore, Connell's analysis of gender on the level of the problematique of synthesis that I call 'subjectification' is as incomplete as is his analysis of 'gender structuration'. Just as Connell's attempt to synthesise 'structure' and 'practice' (Chapter III) is grounded on a problematic approach to 'history' (Chapter IV), his synthesisation of gender 'categories' and 'identities' (Chapter V) is made possible by a concept of 'power' that is equally problematic (Chapter VI). Connell's analysis of 'embodiment', explored in the next part, follows a similar pattern: it constitutes a systematic attempt to synthesise the subjective and the objective dimensions of bodies (Chapter VII) but it does so in a way that underplays and marginalizes the racialisation of gendered bodies (Chapter VIII).
Notes

1. Gramsci's (1971) notion of 'dual perspective' is articulated with reference to 'Machiavelli's Centaur: half-human and half-animal' (1971: 169-170). It addresses the relationship between force and consent, authority and hegemony, violence and civilization, coercion and persuasion or arms and religion. The idea of 'dual perspective' is a specific aspect of Gramsci's broader emphasis on 'synthesis'. In fact, despite widespread subjectivist interpretations of Gramsci (e.g. Laclau, 2000a: 48), the Prison Notebooks can be seen as a systematic attempt to reconcile a series of dichotomous oppositions, including base/superstructure, humans/nature, and masses/intellectuals, and to deal with corresponding theorectico-political problems that result from one-sided theorisations of such oppositions: 'economism', 'objectivism', and 'vanguardism' (see Finocchiaro, 1984; Demetriou, 1999, 2002).

2. It is true that, within the general framework of his theory of 'dual perspective', Gramsci (1971) often identified leadership with hegemony/ civil society/ consent and domination with dictatorship/ political society/ force (1971: 12-13, 56, 106, 169-170, 276). Here, however, I am concerned with a second, less known but equally important, meaning that Gramsci attached to the dialectical distinction leadership/ domination.

3. A good historical example of this process would be the leadership that the Leninist party exercised over the peasantry during the Russian revolution, something that enabled the Bolsheviks to achieve dominance over the emerging bourgeoisie but it also involved the suppression of some essential demands of the peasantry.

4. The words internal and external are used with reference to the 'historic bloc'.

5. The Italian Risorgimento is analysed in the third chapter of the Prison Notebooks (Gramsci, 1971: 52-120).

6. Gramsci (1971) understands common sense as a 'chaotic aggregate' of disparate and fragmentary conceptions of the world, as being 'strangely composite: it contains Stone Age elements and principles of a more advanced science, prejudices from all past phases of history at the local level and institutions of a future philosophy which will be that of a human race united the world over' (1971: 324; see also 419-425).

7. Some of the most forceful, most detailed and sophisticated studies that explore the relationship between Gramsci's idea of 'hegemony' and Connell's notion of 'hegemonic masculinity' do not mention, and most importantly do not appreciate, the impact that Machiavelli had on Gramsci. Hence, as I show in detail in the next section, such studies fail to grasp hegemony as 'flexibility' (e.g. Hearn, 2004; Donaldson, 1993). The same is also true of Connell's own discussions of Gramsci (e.g. Connell, 2002e; 1995; Carrigan, Connell and Lee, 1985). The centrality of Machiavelli is underplayed even in some neo-Gramscian analyses of hegemony but the idea of flexibility is central there (e.g. Hall, 1988).

8. The point that Connell uses the term hegemonic masculinity in an inconsistent way has been already made by Patricia Y. Martin (1998: 472-472). I want to make it clear, however, that this inconsistency is the product of a non-correspondence between his theoretical articulation and his empirical investigation of hegemonic masculinity.

9. Connell (1998b: 6; 1998d: 475-476) has recently recognized that 'the term [hegemonic masculinity] has come to stand for a fixed character type, something like a Type A personality- and almost always with negative connotations' and he takes 'some responsibility' for this tendency in the secondary literature. However, Connell does not explain how such interpretations have been made possible and how his own work may have contributed to these reifying tendencies.

10. The concept of hegemonic masculinity has become very popular very quickly. In what follows, I refer only to a few studies that employ the term. For a wider overview, see Donaldson (1993), Speer (2001), Jefferson (2002) and Hearn (2004).

11. My understanding of the discourse of 'hegemonic masculinity' in terms of these three ideas is inspired by J. K. Gibson-Graham's (1993: 12) analysis of capitalism's 'discursive forms of appearance', namely 'unity', 'singularity' and 'totality'. However, I do not mean to reduce 'hegemonic masculinity' to 'discourse'. My intention is to show how a large body of literature replaces the emphasis on social struggle with a simplistic discourse on 'hegemonic masculinity'.

12. See, for example, how Hearn's (2004) analysis of the concept of 'hegemonic masculinity' reinstates the idea of 'totality' via the same expression but in a rather different context: 'how exactly do the various dominant and dominating ways that men are- tough/aggressive/violent; respectable/corporate; controlling of resources; controlling of images; and so on- connect with each other?' (2004: 58, emphasis added). In this case, it is the internal composition of the 'totality' itself that is constructed as an important question.

13. See, respectively, the special issues on 'hegemonic masculinity' in Theoretical Criminology (2002, Volume 6, Number 1) and Feminism and Psychology (2001, Volume 11, Number 1). Some of the studies published in these issues, as well as other relevant analyses, are examined below.
14. ‘Gender regime of representation’ is a broader idea than Hanke’s ‘gender regime of television’ (1993: 186). I attempt to narrow the focus of analysis and make the arguments more specific through a primary emphasis on representations of masculinities in men’s magazines.

15. This is not to suggest that some practices or ‘elements’ are intrinsically gay while others not. By gay elements and practices I simply mean the ones that are usually associated with, and have been developed by, gay male communities, such as camp or drag.
CHAPTER SEVEN
CHAPTER SEVEN
The Body, Society and Social Embodiment

I. Introduction

The preceding analysis and critique of Connell's approach to gender on the levels of structuration and subjectification has systematically bracketed off 'the body' and its relation to gender processes of structural change and group formation. Putting aside the body temporarily has made it possible to explore Connell's critiques of 'categoricalism' and biological determinism, to show that social and historical reality cannot be deduced from biological 'facts', processes or determinations. However, to suggest that the body cannot serve as the foundation for the construction of a social theory of gender, that it cannot be understood as a 'base' upon which a 'superstructure' of social relations of gender is erected, is not to imply that the body has no place in such a theory, that it can be written off as the exclusive interest of biological reductionist analysis or that it can be reduced to a mere 'superstructural' epiphenomenon. On the contrary, Connell's systematic critique of biological determinism has been, from the outset, accompanied by an emphasis on the centrality and inescapability of 'the body' (see, especially, Connell, 1983f; 1987: 66-88; 1994a: 45-66; 2002a: 28-52). Furthermore, his theoretical and empirical interest in the body is structured not by 'a question of relevance' but by 'a question of synthesis': for Connell, the question is not whether 'the body' has a place in, or is relevant to, gender analysis but how this 'relevance' or 'place' can be theorised in such a way as to synthesise the objective and the subjective dimensions of the body and to transcend both the determinism associated with biological reductionist justifications of patriarchy and the relativism that characterises certain discursive constructionist approaches to the body. Consequently, if Connell's approach to gender is structured by
what I call a theoretico-political ‘problematique of synthesis’, this is nowhere more explicit than in his approach to the body.

As with the passage from ‘structuration’ to ‘subjectification’, Connell’s move from ‘subjectification’ to ‘embodiment’ is simultaneously a shift from one level of the ‘problematique of synthesis’ to another and a deepening into the process of subjectification itself. It is a shift in that it introduces a new and relatively distinct set of issues. It is a deepening into the process of subjectification in that, for Connell, the body is implicated in processes of group formation in complex and multifaceted ways. Indeed, Connell’s initial encounter with ‘the body’ was partly an aspect of his analysis of subjectification itself: as I argue below in detail, his critical reworking of Sartre’s (1976) theory of practice in the early 1980s aims to show that gender groupings are formed neither through total biological determination nor through total neglect of the body but through processes in which social-biological bodies (‘the practico-inert’) are actively ‘negated’, ‘transformed’ and ‘drawn into history’ (Connell, 1982a; 1987: 78-87).

Furthermore, in so far as ‘subjectification’ is itself a deepening into the process of ‘structuration’ (see the introduction in Chapter V), Connell’s analysis of gender on the level of ‘embodiment’ is inseparable from his approach to gender on the other two levels of the theoretico-political ‘problematique of synthesis’.

In this chapter, I introduce Connell’s approach to ‘social embodiment’ and I situate it in the context of relevant debates in sociology and gender studies. The analysis is developed in three straightforward steps: I begin with an examination of what Anne Witz (2000) has called the ‘corporeal turn in sociology’, emphasising that the emergence of an explicit sociological interest in the body since the 1980s has been accompanied by an emphasis on ‘synthesis’. But because this emphasis on synthesis is not a singular one (there are different conceptions of what needs to be synthesised), in the third section I proceed to
analyse two different articulations of the problem and their ‘logics of synthesis’ in the specific field of feminist philosophical criticism. Particularly, I compare the work of Elizabeth Grosz (1994) and Iris Marion Young (1990a; 1994; 2002) and I argue that while Gorsz’s understanding of ‘synthesis’ is centred on the body/mind distinction, Young’s work embodies a systematic attempt to synthesise not only body and mind but also body and practice/identity/group, linking the analysis of embodiment to subjectification processes in a direct way. In the last section, I introduce Connell’s synthetic approach to embodiment and I argue that his articulation of the problem in terms of nature/culture and body/practice shares Young’s interest in the embodiment/subjectification relationship. It is within this context that I introduce Connell’s key concepts, including ‘practical transcendence’, ‘negation’, ‘social embodiment’ and ‘body-reflexive practice’.

II. The corporeal turn in sociology: the body and synthesis

In the last two decades, there has been an increased interdisciplinary interest in ‘the body’. The body has become a primary focus of analysis in many research fields, including the history of ideas (Laquer, 1987), the cultural history of gender and sexuality (Epstein and Straub, 1991) and the social analysis of sport (Wacquant, 1995), technology (Haraway, 1990), health (Bordo, 1993) and HIV/AIDS (Yingling, 1997). In fact, recent theoretical and empirical work on the body in the humanities and the social sciences is so diverse and multifaceted that it resists a concise review. To specify certain features of this increased interest in the body, I focus on a number of influential studies in a specific field: theoretical sociology. Particularly, focusing on the work of Brian Turner (1984), Chris Shilling (1993) and Nick Crossley (1995; 2001), I argue that the turn towards the body has been characterised by an emphasis on ‘synthesis’.
Chris Shilling’s (1993) *The Body and Social Theory* is a good point of departure, not because it is the first study that signifies the ‘corporeal turn’ in sociology- Brian Turner’s (1984) *The Body and Society* was published a decade earlier- but because Shilling is at pains to stress that there is a continuity as well as a break between classical sociological theory and the new sociology of the body. For Shilling (1993), the body has not been totally absent from classical sociology in that ‘its concern with the structure and functioning of societies, and the nature of human action, has inevitably led it to deal with aspects of human embodiment’ (1993: 9). Thus, the body is implicated in Karl Marx’s (1867-93) analysis of capitalism, which addresses the assimilation of the body into capitalist technology. This paved the way for subsequent debates about the relationship between ‘nature’ and ‘society’, such as the debates about materialism in post-war Italian Marxism (see, Timpanaro, 1975). Yet, as Shilling notes, this ‘presence’ of the body in classical sociological theory was ‘implicit’, an ‘absent presence’, in that ‘the discipline has rarely focused on the body as an area of investigation in its own right’ (1993: 9, emphasis added). Subsequent sociological analysis reworked the legacy of classical sociology and gave the body a more central place in social analysis while producing what Shilling (1993: 41-99) calls a ‘dual approach to the body’: two one-sided and conflicting perspectives on the body, the ‘naturalistic’ and ‘social constructionist’. The former refers to a set of approaches that deal with the pre-social, natural or biological aspects of the body, such as ‘sociobiology’, while the later emphasises the social character of the body through an analysis of its social, historical and discursive construction, as in the work of Michel Foucault (1976).

Hence, for Shilling (1993), what distinguishes the new sociology of the body from previous work is not simply its ‘centring of the body’ (i.e. the constitution of the body as a subject of investigation in its own right) but its attempt to synthesise preceding one-sided theorisations and thus to overcome the problems associated with naturalistic and

social constructionist approaches to the body. To exemplify this turn towards synthesis, Shilling (1993: 100-174) focuses on the work of Brian Turner (1992), Robert Connell (1987), Peter Freund (1988), Pierre Bourdieu (1984) and Norbert Elias (1978a) and he argues that such studies have begun to produce something of a realignment between naturalistic and social constructionist approaches by taking seriously the body as a phenomenon that is simultaneously biological and social’ (1993: 100). For instance, in the work of Freund and Connell, Shilling (1993) finds a theorisation of the body as a ‘lived experience’ and as a biological organism, as an entity that is ‘unfinished’ at birth and becomes ‘a project’ ‘completed’ only through human labour’ (1993: 100-101, 125).

Despite his explicit and straightforward focus on synthesising opposing understandings of the body, Shilling’s (1993) conception of ‘synthesis’ is somehow ambiguous. While his major emphasis on ‘synthesis’ appears to be centred on the relationship between the ‘biological’ and the ‘social’ body, on what he calls ‘the nature/culture and biology/society divisions’ (1993: 29), he occasionally equates these divisions with the mind/body split (e.g. 1993: 14; 17) and he does so without explaining the difference or the relationship between these dualisms. The problem with equating different dualisms centred on the body (e.g. body/mind; biology/culture) is that it involves underplaying the specificity of each dualism (see, Howson and Inglis, 2001; more about this below). In this way, Shilling’s conception of synthesis points to a general feature of the new sociology of the body: the emphasis on synthesis is oriented not towards a single dualism but towards a cluster of dichotomies that involve either the opposition of the body to ‘something else’ (e.g. mind, society, culture) or the opposition of two distinct conceptions of the body- e.g. ‘what is done to the body’ and ‘what the body does’ (Crossley, 1995) or the body as an ‘object of social practice’ and an ‘agent in social practice’ (Connell, 2002a: 47).
Hence, as with the analysis of 'structuration' and 'subjectification', the concern with synthesis in the study of 'social embodiment' is to be understood not in terms of transcending a singular, pre-existing or essentialist, opposition but in terms of a series of questions generated as one articulates the dualism. In other words, the new sociology of the body is structured by an engagement with a multiplicity of dualisms. Furthermore, to analyse the 'synthetic turn' in the emerging sociology of the body one needs to begin not by examining the manner in which 'the dualism' is transcended ('the logic of synthesis') but by specifying the manner in which it is articulated. Within this context, the work of Turner (1984) and Crossley (1995; 2001) can be understood in terms of two different articulations of 'the problem', the former grounded on the 'nature/culture dualism' and the later on the 'body/mind dualism'.

In the last chapter of The Body and Society, Turner (1984: 215-235) rearticulates Karl Marx's 'social ontology' to emphasise the indivisibility of nature and humanity or nature and culture. According to Turner, Marx does not think of 'nature' as a 'thing-in-itself': while nature exists as an external reality, it is also appropriated and transformed by human labour and it is forced to serve human needs. It thus becomes 'a thing-for-man', 'an extension of man' or 'his inorganic body' (1984: 218). As nature becomes 'humanised', human practice becomes 'naturalised' in that humans are beings that have to transform their 'natural environment through hunting, cultivating crops, domesticating animals and producing the means of production in order to survive' (1984: 217). Hence, according to Turner, Marx's conception of the relationship between the natural and the human is 'essentially and critically historical' and practice-based (1984: 219). To illustrate the utility of Marx's dialectical understanding of the nature/culture relationship and its relevance to the study of human embodiment, Turner considers the example of disease. A disease like gout, he argues, is an objective reality that places limits and constraints on human practice: it 'has all the features of an uncontrolled invasion of the
body as a natural environment' (1984: 221). Yet, human practice appropriates gout and transforms it into culture: in certain historical moments (at least in the eighteenth century) gout in the foot is transferred to the personality ('the gouty individual') and it becomes the malady of the leisure class. Hence, for Turner (1984), 'a disease is a cultural paradox. It appears to be, so to speak, in nature but it is also inevitably and deeply social' (1984: 221).

If Turner's (1984) analysis of embodiment in the context of the nature/culture dialectic emphasises the centrality of the categories of 'collective social praxis' and 'historical process', Crossley's (1995; 2001) attempt to transcend the body/mind split centres on the notion of 'perception'. While Crossley's approach is multifaceted, one of his major objectives has been to transcend the dualism that contemporary sociology has inherited from Descartes (1968): the body/mind split. This dualism, according to Crossley (1995), reduces mind and body to two distinct and clearly differentiated entities, collapsing into object/subject dualism: a 'physical matter' or a material object that extends into space, akin to a gadget or a 'machine', on the one hand; and a 'thinking substance' or a mental subject that does not extend into space and does not obey the laws of physical determination, on the other (1995: 44; 2001: 10-11, emphasis added). To reconcile this opposition, Crossley turns to the work of the French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962; 1968). Therein, Crossley (1995) finds a dialectical understanding of the mind/body relationship centred largely on the concept of 'perception': perception is neither an inner representation of an outer world nor something that occurs solely in the mind. In so far as 'one always perceives from somewhere (e.g. above, to the side, at a distance, etc.)', perception is constituted through the 'articulation of body and world' (1995: 47). Hence, Merleau-Ponty grasps perception in terms of 'embodied practical involvement' rather than 'contemplation'. In his well-known example of a soccer player...
moving around the pitch, the player’s consciousness and the ontology of the soccer field are deeply intermingled with corporeal practice:

For the player in action the soccer field is not an ‘object’… The field itself is not given to him, but present as the immanent term of his practical intentions; the player becomes one with it and feels the direction of the goal for example, just as immediately as the vertical and horizontal planes of his own body. It would not be sufficient to say that consciousness inhabits this milieu. At this moment consciousness is nothing other than the dialectic of milieu and action. Each manoeuvre undertaken by the player modifies the character of the field and establishes new lines of force in which the action in turn unfolds and is accomplished, again altering the phenomenal field (Merleau-Ponty, 1965: 168-169; quoted in Howson and Inglis, 2001: 304).

Hence, as Crossley (1995) puts it, for Merleau-Ponty the body is ‘more than an object’ that can be seen and touched. It is also a ‘perceiving subject’ that sees and touches in that it is deeply involved in social practice and in the process of perception (1995: 47). It is this subject/object reversibility (the body as a visible-seer, a tangible-toucher, etc) that, Crossley argues, paves the way for transcending any form of mind/body, activity/passivity dualism (1995: 46).4

In this way, Turner (1984) and Crossley (1995) approach the body in the context of two interrelated but distinct oppositions. Hence, their synthetic approaches to ‘social embodiment’ diverge not because they propose different solutions to the same problem but because they articulate ‘the problem’ in different ways. As Alexandra Howson and David Inglis (2001) point out in their critique of Crossley’s approach, the analysis of the body in the context of the philosophical question of body/mind dualism draws attention away from a series of important sociological and political problems, most notably power relationships, collective struggles and the relationship between social structure and social practice (2001: 303, 306-308). Indeed, while Crossley’s (1995: 57-58; 1996a)
interpretation of Merleau-Ponty addresses questions of practice and experience in complex and detailed ways, his posing of the question appears to marginalise notions of social struggle, social structure and large-scale historical transformation. Hence, the interweaving of practice, body and perception in a soccer field can be analysed without reference to social structures outside the field, to historical conceptions of the body or to forms of social struggle\(^5\). On the other hand, Turner's posing of the question connects embodiment to issues that are intrinsically more social and historical and potentially more political: unlike the question of the relationship between an individual mind and a body, the focus on the nature/culture (or humanity) relationship links embodiment to collective social processes from the outset. It also makes it more likely to address the body's relationship to collective social practice (e.g. labour), social discourses, large-scale social processes and, hence, history and historical transformation.

In short, the emergence of a new sociology of the body has been accompanied by a systematic emphasis on 'synthesis'. But there has been no consensus as to what exactly needs to be synthesised in the study of social embodiment. Rather, sociologists of the body have articulated the problem of synthesis in many ways, some of which are potentially more political than others. With this important conclusion in mind, I now turn to feminist theorisations of embodiment and I explore two specific articulations of the problem and their logics of synthesis.

III. The synthetic turn in feminist corporeal analysis: two logics of synthesis

While mainstream sociological analysis of the body has largely neglected or marginalised questions of gender and sexuality\(^5\), feminist philosophers and social theorists have developed complex approaches to the relationship between gender, sexuality and the body. The idea of 'synthesis' has been central to these approaches but, as with
sociological theory, the focus has been not on a singular opposition but on a cluster of dichotomies involving, in one way or another, the body. Thus, Susan Bordo (1990; 1993; 1997) has emphasised the need for a synthesis that transcends the Cartesian understanding of bodies as mere functioning objects, empty of meaning, whose configuration we cannot radically alter, on the one hand, and the voluntarist rhetoric of ‘plasticity’, ‘choice’ and ‘self-determination’ that structures ‘postmodern conceptions of the body as a playground’, on the other (1997: 123-124; 1993: 245-275). While Bordo’s analysis centres on the voluntarism/determinism dichotomy, Moira Gatens’ (1983) philosophical critique of socialisation theory and political strategies of ‘re-socialisation’ argues for a move beyond a sex/gender dichotomy that reduces the body to a pre-social, neutral and passive entity. Finally, in her celebrated ‘Manifesto for Cyborgs’, Donna Haraway (1990) proposes a synthetic understanding of the body that aims to transcend a large number of interrelated dichotomies, including the human/animal and human-animal organism/machine oppositions (1990: 193).

The questions raised in these synthetic approaches are complex, multifaceted and diverse. In order to address a set of central issues in some detail, this section focuses on some of the writings of Australian philosopher Elizabeth Grosz (1994) and American political philosopher Iris Marion Young (1990a; 1994; 2002). The choice is not arbitrary. Both thinkers have authored influential papers on social embodiment and they have articulated and dealt with the question of synthesis in distinct ways. More than that, their interests, the questions they address, or fail to address, and the answers they propose pave the way for an understanding of the importance and specificity of Connell’s approach to social embodiment.

Volatile Bodies: mind/body dualism and sexual specificity
Grosz’s (1994) *Volatile Bodies* proposes a lucid and sophisticated approach to social embodiment structured by the idea of ‘synthesis’: by an attempt to think of the body and subjectivity ‘in terms quite other than those implied by various dualisms’ (1994: vii). By ‘dualism’, Grosz refers to ‘the assumption that there are two distinct, mutually exclusive and mutually exhaustive substances’ that occupy two clearly differentiated and self-contained spheres (1994: 6). As with Crossley’s Merleau-Pontian articulation of the problem, Grosz’s major emphasis is on the body/mind dualism. But for Grosz, this dualism is both politically damaging (a dimension that Crossley appears to miss) and philosophically problematic. On a political level, ‘dichotomous thinking necessarily hierarchizes and ranks the polarised terms so that one becomes the privileged term and the other its suppressed, subordinated, negative counterpart’ (1994: 1; see also, Jay, 1981). Thus, the body/mind distinction becomes the basis for ‘the opposition between male and female, where man and mind, woman and body, become representationally aligned’ (1994: 4, 10) and it is also frequently correlated with a series of other oppressive binary pairs, including reason/passion and public/private (1994: 3, 23). On a philosophical level, reducing mind and body to two distinct and unbridgeable substances makes it impossible to explain both the existence of other minds (‘solipsism’: the notorious problem of Cartesian dualism) and the total complexity of the body/mind relationship (the collapse of the one into the other; the negotiation of their borders, etc) (1994: 6-10).

To transcend the mind/body opposition, Grosz (1994) adopts a strategy of synthesis that is not novel in its logic but it is forceful and groundbreaking in its articulation and exemplification. As with Mouzelis (1995) and Archer’s (1995) synthetic approach to structuration, Grosz argues that the dualism of body and mind must not be replaced by a ‘monism’ that reduces the two to ‘merely different aspects of one and the same substance... like two sides of a coin’ (1994: 11). ‘Monism’ is analogous to what Archer (1995: 101-105) calls ‘central conflation’, the cornerstone of Giddens’ (1984) thesis of
'ontological inseparability' (see Chapter III), and it is as problematic as dualism: 'insofar as [mind and body are] understood as necessarily interlocked, there can be no question of their interaction' (Grosz, 1994: 13).

To circumvent both 'dualism' and 'monism', Grosz employs Lacan's notion of 'the mobius strip', the inverted three-dimensional figure eight:

Bodies and minds are not two distinct substances or two kinds of attributes of a single substance but somewhere in between these two alternatives. The Mobius strip has the advantage of showing the inflection of mind into body and body into mind, the ways in which, through a kind of twisting or inversion, one side becomes another. This model also provides a way of problematizing and rethinking the relations between the inside and the outside of the subject, its psychical interior and its corporeal exterior, by showing not their fundamental identity or reducibility but the torsion of the one into the other, the passage, vector or uncontrollable drift of the inside into the outside and the outside into the inside (Grosz, 1994: xii)

Thus, Grosz's 'logic of synthesis' is in some respects analogous to the idea of 'analytical dualism' in the theorization of structuration: it refuses to grasp the two sides of the opposition either as fully identical or as fully separate. Grosz treats body and mind as conceptually irreducible to one another precisely in order to make their complex interconnections visible.

It is the complexity of these interconnections that the major parts of Volatile Bodies explore. Therein, Grosz (1994: 27-183) draws on and reworks the writings of diverse thinkers, including Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan, Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, in order to show how the subject's 'corporeal exterior' is psychically constituted, experienced, rendered meaningful and lived by the subject and, inversely, how the subject's 'psychical interior' is produced, shaped and
transformed through processes of corporeal inscription. Grosz’s analysis is deep, enriched with lucid examples and theoretically sophisticated. For instance, in her analysis of Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology, Grosz, like Crossley (1995), explores his case studies on neurological disorders (e.g. ‘the phantom limb’, a case in which the patient still suffers a pain in a location where the limb once used to be, before its amputation) and his work on the reversibility of the flesh (e.g. in touching one’s own hand, the body is both subject and object) to show that experience and perception are not pure mental states but they are ‘always necessarily embodied’: they occur midway between mind and body ‘or across them, in their lived conjunction’ (1994: 94-95).

However, according to Grosz (1994), while the work of the aforementioned thinkers makes it possible to theorise the complexity of the body/mind relationship, ‘the body’ remains ‘neutral’ and ‘singular’ in this literature, underplaying the multiplicity of bodies in general and their sexual specificity in particular. To take again the example of Merleau-Ponty, Grosz argues that although he ‘provides a set of powerful insights and a broad methodological framework in which to rethink the body outside dualism, his work remains inadequate for understanding the differences between the sexes’ (1994: 109). Thus, as with Shannon Sullivan’s (1997) feminist critique of the Phenomenology of Perception, Grosz argues that Merleau-Ponty fails to acknowledge that bodies are always irreducibly sexually specific and necessarily interlocked with other particularities. For Grosz (1994), in studying the body/mind relationship, the specificity of bodies, ‘understood in its historical rather than simply its biological concreteness’, is too important to be ignored: ‘Indeed, there is no body as such: there are only bodies- male or female, black, brown, white, large or small- and the gradations in between’ (1994: 19).

The last chapter of Volatile Bodies aims to restore the sexual specificity of bodies by exploring the lived reality of male and female embodied existence. Grosz (1994: 187-
focuses on bodily fluids (including tears, saliva, excrement, nasal secretions, menstrual blood and semen) and she argues that such fluids show both the reality and the fragility of bodies: the fluids' visibility, tangibility and fluidity attests not only to the materiality of the body but also to its permeability: ‘its necessary dependence on an outside, its liability to collapse into this outside’ (1994: 193). Bodily fluids are always mediated by cultural representation and, especially in the case of sexual bodily fluids, this representation is always gendered. Thus, there is a cultural link between menstrual blood and dirt while semen, like tears, is understood as non-polluting (1994: 205-206). Hence, through an analysis of bodily fluids Grosz aims to highlight a dimension of embodiment that key male figures in their theorisation of the body/mind relationship have consistently neglected: that bodies and their fluids are sexually specific and their specificity is made meaningful in culturally and historically specific ways.

In the final analysis, Volatile Bodies raises two important questions about embodiment but it leaves these questions unsatisfactorily developed or addressed. Both questions are the outcome of Grosz's critique of the assumption of a 'neutral' or 'singular' body. The first is the question of sexual specificity: Grosz makes it clear that the body/mind relationship cannot be fully grasped without exploring the sexually specific character of bodies. Hence, 'sexual difference', as a culturally organised and historically mobile formation rather than a simple biological fact, becomes 'the question of our epoch' (1994: xi). However, for Grosz, the question of sexual difference is mainly a question of the relationship between sexed bodies and minds. Such a posing of the question places a major emphasis on the relationship between the body/mind opposition and 'sexual difference' but it draws attention away from other issues. Most notably, Grosz fails to connect the body/mind interrelationship and the issue of sexual difference to the formation of sexual/gender groupings, categories and identities. Hence, she marginalizes the question of the relationship between embodiment and subjectification or, in other
words, she articulates the question of synthesis in a way that privileges the relationship between sexed bodies and minds at the expense of the relationship between sexually specific bodies and the formation of social groupings. It is ‘sexed body/mind’ not ‘sexed body/group’ that is constituted as a problem in Grosz’s articulation of the question (1994: 208). As a result, questions of collective struggle and, ultimately, historical transformation, have no place in Grosz’s synthetic approach to embodiment.

The second important question raised in Volatile Bodies is ‘the question of multiplicity’ or the multiple specificity of bodies. For Grosz, sexed bodies are never merely sexed: ‘[b]odies can be represented or understood not as entities in themselves or simply a linear continuum with its polar extremes occupied by male and female bodies (with the various gradations of ‘intersexed’ individuals in between) but as a field, a two-dimensional continuum in which race (and possibly even class, caste, or religion) form body specifications’ (1994: 19). Hence, Grosz recognises that sexual difference is but one form of specificity among many, a single element in a network structured by a multiplicity of forces. As with the question of sexual specificity, the question of multiplicity is also underdeveloped in that Grosz does not systematically explore, empirically or theoretically, either other forms of specificity, such as race or age, or the connection between sexual specificity and these other forms.

In short, Grosz (1994) poses the problem of synthesis in terms of the relationship between mind and body and she emphasises that an adequate feminist understanding of this relationship has to take into account both sexual difference and other forms of social-biological specificities of bodies. However, while offering important insights into questions of sexual specificity, Grosz’s analysis of sexed bodies does not move beyond the body/mind relationship to analyse, for instance, the relationship between bodies and groups or bodies and identities. At this juncture, it is useful to turn to Young’s (1990a;
1994; 2002) theorisation of embodiment precisely because her articulation of the problem and her understanding of synthesis place a strong emphasis on the body/group relationship.

Gender as Seriality: lived bodies and groups

In a series of interlinked papers, Young (1990a; 1994; 2002) has developed a theorisation of social embodiment that I regard to be more political than Grosz’s (1994). While Young shares Grosz’s emphasis on the need to move beyond both the object/subject and the body/mind oppositions, her understanding of synthesis is also centred on a third opposition, which is absent from Volatile Bodies: the relationship between ‘women as a group’, one the one hand, and the ‘lived female body’, on the other (Young, 1994). To theorise the complex relationship of this third opposition involves finding ways of describing women as a group without collapsing into essentialism and biological determinism (treating bodies as the objective, ahistorical base on which a superstructure of groups arise) and without ignoring bodies altogether (underplaying the intractability and the specificity of female embodied existence). For Young, then, the body/mind opposition is only part of the problem. If the body/mind and object/subject oppositions can be reconciled through the concept of the ‘lived body’, then the lived body itself needs to be theorised in the context of its complex interrelationships with the formation of social groups, which is precisely what Young aims to achieve via the notion of ‘seriality’. Furthermore, unlike Grosz, Young articulates the question of synthesis on the level of embodiment as part and parcel of social and historical processes of subjectification, linking the body directly to group formation, collective political struggle and, by implication, large-scale historical transformation. In this section, I introduce Young’s articulation of the problem and her synthetic understanding of embodiment through an
analysis of some of her major papers on the subject, including ‘Throwing Like a Girl’
(Young, 1990a) and ‘Gender as Seriality’ (Young, 1994).

Young’s (1990a: 141-159) first essay on the body, ‘Throwing Like a Girl: A
Phenomenology of Feminine Body Comportment, Motility, and Spatiality’, has two
interrelated objectives, which are not dissimilar to Grosz’s (1994) objectives: firstly, to
reconcile a set of philosophical oppositions centred around the body (especially
body/world and subject/object but also body/mind) and, secondly, to show how the
specificity of the feminine body is implicated in these oppositions. In regards to the first
objective, Young, like Grosz (1994) and Crossley (1995), draws on Merleau-Ponty’s
(1962) Phenomenology of Perception to show that the body cannot be understood as a
mere object separated from mind and from the world. For Merleau-Ponty, according to
Young (1990a: 147-153), subjectivity and intentionality are not located solely in mind or
in consciousness. Their first locus is the body and its motility in that ‘there is a world for
a subject just insofar as the body has capacities by which it can approach, grasp, and
appropriate its surroundings in the direction of its intentions’ (1990a: 148). Through its
orientation toward and action upon its surroundings, through its openness upon the
world’s possibilities, the body acquires a ‘unifying and synthesizing function… [it]
organizes the surrounding space as a continuous extension of its own being’ (1990a:
149). Neither the ‘external world’ nor consciousness, intentionality or practice can be
understood as distinct from the body.

Young’s second major objective, which sets her analysis apart from Crossley’s (1995)
and parallels Grosz’s (1994) chapter on sexual fluids, is to show that the body/mind and
body/world interrelationships are not sex-neutral. Women comport themselves and move
differently from the way that men do. The specific modalities of feminine bodily
comportment ‘have their source… in neither anatomy nor physiology, and certainly not in
a mysterious feminine essence... [but] in the particular situation of women as conditioned by their sexist oppression in contemporary society' (Young, 1990a: 153).

Even though Young borrows the concept of 'situation' from Simone de Beauvoir (1974) rather than from Antonio Gramsci (1971), her understanding of this concept is similar to Connell's (1977a) Gramscian notion of 'situation', which emphasises the possibilities and constraints of a specific historical moment (see Chapter I). Thus, by 'situation', Young refers to the fact that, despite individual variation, in a 'given sociohistorical set of circumstances' women's experiences, opportunities and possibilities have 'a unity that can be described and made intelligible' (1990a: 142). Furthermore, since the body is always a 'body-in-situation' (Young, 2002: 415) and since women in contemporary societies find themselves in a specific situation, then the complex interrelationships of body/world, body/mind and subject/object manifest themselves in gender-specific ways. For instance, in sports like softball or volleyball the female body becomes subject and object in a distinctive way, which corresponds to the social-historical situation of being a woman:

Women tend to remain in one place more often than men do, neither jumping to reach nor running to approach the ball. Men more often move out toward a ball in flight and confront it with their own countermotion. Women tend to wait for and then react to its approach, rather than going forth to meet it. We frequently respond to the motion of a ball coming toward us as though it were coming at us and our immediate bodily impulse is to flee, duck, or otherwise protect ourselves from its flight... There is, I suggest, a double hesitation here. On the one hand, we often lack confidence that we have the capacity to do what must be done... The other side of this tentativeness is, I suggest, a fear of getting hurt, which is greater in women than in men (1990a: 146)

The 'fear of getting hurt' and the overall hesitation that structures female bodily comportment in the volleyball field is the outcome of women's specific situation. Women live under 'the threat of being seen' and under 'the threat of invasion of [their] body
space’, the most extreme form of such spatial and bodily invasions being ‘the threat of rape’ (1990a: 155). For Young, these threats and the power relationships that sustain them become, to borrow Bourdieu’s (2001: 56) expression, ‘somatised’ in the volleyball field: they account for the distance that women take from their own bodies, for women’s tendency to live their body as ‘a mere thing’, as something that needs to be protected, ‘as object as well as subject’ (Young, 1990a: 155).

Just as the subject/object interrelationship takes distinct forms in women’s situation, so too other conceptual oppositions centred on the body need to be analysed in the context of female specificity. In two subsequent papers, ‘Pregnant Embodiment’ (Young, 1990a: 160-174) and ‘Breasted Existence’ (Young, 1990a: 189-209), Young attempts to show that male and female ‘lived bodies’ produce ‘quite different experiences of being in the world’ (1990a: 189). For instance, through her analysis of the ‘lived pregnant body’, Young aims to challenge the assumption that the categories of ‘inner and outer, I and world’ can be understood in terms of ‘mutual exclusivity’ (1990a: 161). In Young’s words, ‘[p]regnancy challenges the integration of my body experience by rendering fluid the boundary between what is within, myself, and what is outside, separate…. In pregnancy I literally do not have a firm sense of where my body ends and the world begins (1990a: 163). Hence, Young’s analysis reinforces Grosz’s (1994) major conclusion: dualist conceptions of the body must be challenged without assuming a neutral or singular body. Both the subject/object and the body/world interrelationships take specific forms in the case of women’s bodies as they are lived in specific situations.

Despite their common emphasis on the need to transcend a set of philosophical oppositions, in ‘Gender as Seriality’ Young (1994) parts company with Grosz (1994) in some important respects. As the subtitle of the paper suggests, Young is here mainly focused on the question of ‘thinking about women as a social collective’. The ‘lived-
body' or the 'body-in-situation' explored in Young's earlier work is now implicated in a new opposition: lived-body/group. In exploring this relationship, Young attempts to theorise women as a 'collective' without either essentialising the category of 'women' (i.e. treating the body as an object that produces groups in a mechanical way) or ignoring bodies and their specificities altogether (i.e. treating the body as irrelevant to the formation of groups) (1994: 168, 178). Hence, 'Gender as Seriality' focuses on a question that neither Volatile Bodies nor Young's earlier work tackle directly or explicitly.

Young's understanding of the relationship between the body and group formation draws heavily on a concept that, as I argue in Chapter I, occupies a central position in Connell’s (1982a) early work on social class: the idea of 'seriality' articulated by Jean Paul Sartre (1976) in his Critique of Dialectical Reason. By ‘seriality’, Young (1994) refers to a social collective that is more spontaneous but less organised and less rule bound than ‘a group’: ‘unlike a group, which forms around actively shared objectives, a series is a social collective whose members are unified passively by the objects around which their actions are oriented...’ (1994: 169). Following Sartre, Young calls the objects that form the basis of serial unity ‘practico-inert objects’ (1994: 174). Using Sartre's theoretical lexicon, she states that ‘serialities' become 'groups' when people united by their relationships to practico-inert objects begin to articulate and pursue common objectives, to take action and, in the most developed cases, to 'institutionalise themselves by establishing meetings, leaders, decision-making structures, methods of acquiring and expending resources, and so on...’ (1994: 180). In this sense, social life and social struggle consist 'of constant ebbs and flows of groupings out of series; some groups remain and grow into institutions that produce new serialities, others disperse soon after they are born' (1994: 180).
Having drawn a distinction between 'serialities' and 'groups', Young (1994) argues that gender is best understood as a series: although women often do form 'groups', at 'its most unreflective and universal level, being a woman is a serial fact' (1994: 180). In engaging in everyday, habitual activities that are oriented towards the same 'practico-inert realities' (such as historically specific understandings of the body or sexual divisions of labour), women unintentionally achieve the type of 'social unity' that Sartre calls 'seriality': 'a blurry, shifting unity, an amorphous collective' defined by 'routine practices and habits' (1994: 173, 169). According to Young, understanding gender as a 'social series' has a number of virtues: it offers a way of thinking about women as a social collective 'without requiring that all women have common attributes or a common situation' and a way of defining membership in collectives without relying on self-identity or consciousness (1994: 168).

Within this context, Young (1994) grasps 'the body' as one of the major practico-inert realities that position individuals in the gender series. Far from being a 'physical or biological object', the body as a practico-inert reality, like 'the body' in Young's (1994) early phenomenological analyses, is always already a 'social object', a body-in-situation (1994: 174). As Young explains,

The female body as a practico-inert object toward which action is oriented is a rule-bound body, a body with understood meanings and possibilities. Menstruation, for example, is a regular biological event occurring in most female bodies within a certain age range. It is not this biological process alone, however, that locates individuals in the series of woman. Rather, the social rules of menstruation, along with the material objects associated with menstrual practices, constitute the activity within which the women live as serialised. One can say the same about biological events like pregnancy, child-birth, and lactation (1994: 174)
In the current historical situation, Young goes on to argue, social bodies and bodily practices are structured and made meaningful by enforced or normative heterosexuality (1994: 174; 2002: 222, 424). Vaginas, penises, as well as male-male or female-male sexual penetration, constitute practico-inert realities and become the basis of serialised existence not as physical objects or meaningless acts but as social-historical objects and practices structured by regimes of enforced heterosexuality (Young, 1994: 174-175).

Hence, if ‘Throwing Like a Girl’ challenges reductionist understandings of the subject/object and body/world relationships, ‘Gender as Seriality’ problematizes reductionist conceptions of the relationship between lived-bodies and groups. In Young’s understanding of seriality, the body-in-situation is neither the absolute determinant of group formation nor a negligible epiphenomenon. The lived-body, like any other ‘practico-inert object’, produces a passive serial unity that may or may not generate a self-conscious ‘group’ capable of articulating a collective identity and undertaking organised action. For instance, in Young’s (1994: 180-181) ‘chicken boycott’ example, the relationships between the body, serial unity and group action are complex and contingent, not mechanical. When some female Russian Jewish immigrants that live in the same neighbourhood in the Lower East Side of Manhattan at the turn of the twentieth century discover that a local merchant has manipulated the chicken market in order to make profit, they find themselves serialised by a set of complexly interrelated practico-inert realities: they live in the same neighbourhood, speak the same Russian-Yiddish, and are passively united in a marginal working-class series in the class structure of Manhattan and in a division of labour that connects female bodies to the purchase and preparation of food (1994: 181). As soon as one of the women calls three of the female neighbours together and tells them that they should boycott the butcher, and when the four of them begin to organise the boycott by going from apartment to apartment talking to other serialised female shoppers, the passive unity turns into a temporary grouping (a group-in-
fusion) with some shared experiences and the power of collective action. The boycott succeeds, the women ‘hold a street celebration and honour their leader, but then they quickly disperse back into the passive unity of the series’ (1994: 180). In this example, the female body-in-situation, as shaped by the division of labour, is implicated in the formation of a temporary grouping but it is not the total determinant or the only practico-inert object involved. This is why Young speaks of ‘groups of women’ that are ‘socially, historically and culturally specified than simply women’ (1994: 181). Hence, for Young, the body is implicated in group formation in a way roughly equivalent to the way in which, for Merleau-Ponty, the body is implicated in ‘perception’: it is inescapable and yet its involvement is always part of a broader network of relationships (for Merleau-Ponty, action, motility and sight; for Young, other practico-inert objects, like the division of labour).

Returning to the two questions about embodiment raised in Volatile Bodies, it is evident that Young is more successful in addressing Grosz’s (1994) first question (the question of ‘sexual specificity’) rather than the second (the question of ‘multiplicity’). With the regards to the first question, not only does Young treat bodies-in-situations as sexually specific bodies, but she also links the sexual specificity of lived-bodies to the formation of groups. It is the situational and historical sexual differentiation of bodies that constitutes the basis of serial unity and, potentially, group formation and mobilisation. With regards the second question, Young does not fail to see that bodies-in-situations are never ‘merely sexed’. As the chicken boycott example indicates, for Young, the body is lived as a practico-inert object in the context of multiple specificities: the bodies of the chicken boycotters are not only female; they are also ‘adult’ bodies, Russian Jewish immigrant bodies, bodies that speak the same language and occupy the same position in the class structure of Manhattan. However, despite the complexity of this example,
Young, like Grosz, has spent more time emphasising the sexual specificity of bodies and less time discussing other particularities and their connection to sexed bodies.

To summarise, the line that separates Grosz from Young is analogous to the line that separates Crossley from Turner. Even though Grosz is at pains to emphasise the centrality of sexual difference, her synthetic approach to embodiment shares Crossley’s exclusive focus on the Cartesian problem of the relationship between body and mind. Yet, the articulation of the problem of synthesis in terms of the body/mind relationship draws attention away from a set of more explicitly political interrelationships, most notably the relationship between bodies and groups. Hence, it is a more political articulation of, and approach to, ‘the problem’ that sets Young and Turner apart from Grosz and Crossley. Young’s focus on the lived-body/group relationship, like Turner’s analysis of the nature/culture opposition, links ‘the body’ to collective social practice and, by implication, to the possibility of structural transformation. More explicitly than Turner, Young’s later work theorises the lived-body in the context of its complex involvement in processes of group formation, linking embodiment to subjectification and structuration while retaining her initial emphasis on the body/world and subject/object interrelationships. This political articulation of the problem is also central in Connell’s understanding of ‘social embodiment’, to which I now turn.

IV. Body-reflexive practice and social embodiment

Connell’s work on the body has been interpreted and criticized from two major and opposing standpoints. On the one hand, in her analysis of a paper that was subsequently reprinted in *Masculinities* (Connell, 1995a), feminist sociologist Judith Stacey (1993) argues that Connell (1993b), like many other thinkers, subscribes to an excessively
'radical' social constructionism that leaves no space for any kind of biological influence on the social or the cultural. As she puts it in a passage worth quoting at length,

I have begun to wonder whether in his radical social constructionism, Connell, like most of my favourite feminist theorists and friends, does not protest a bit too much (and dangerously so) in his/our absolutist rejection of 'biological essentialism'... In the face of mounting evidence that what we inadequately term 'the social' and 'the biological' determinants of human behaviour are actually inextricable, it seems as wrong-headed to foreclose any space for considering biological influences on the cultural contours of masculinities as it is to embrace a determinist theory... Connell correctly stresses that violence and the warrior ideal are rarely a culture's exclusive forms of masculinity, and that, indeed, many cultures marginalise these forms. But why, I continue to wonder, does masculinity seem to hold a near cultural monopoly on this gender specialty? Can we so confidently exclude a role for testosterone in fostering the historic prevalence of cultural associations between masculinity and physical aggression? (Stacey, 1993: 716-717)

On the other hand, cultural theorist Alan Petersen (1998) argues that Connell's understanding of the body collapses into the other extreme. Particularly, he claims that certain statements in Connell's (1995a) Masculinities 'reveal acceptance', not of a 'radical social constructionism', but of the idea of an objective and immutable biological realm (i.e. 'sex') that is distinct from and beyond the influence of culture (i.e. 'gender'), and, by implication, beyond change. The specific materiality of the body is taken as a given. Thus, Connell [1995a] notes at one point that 'What is more or less constant, through [the] shifts of culture, is the anatomy and physiology of male bodies' [1995a: 43]... The body appears as a natural category unaffected by history and culture. Connell seems not to recognise that the very materialisation of men's bodies as biologically sexed bodies is effected through historically and socially specific discourses... Connell's account ignores the widely varying and shifting cultural constructions of manliness and of same-sex behaviour (Petersen, 1998: 116-117).
Hence, while Stacey sees Connell as ‘excessively constructionist’, Petersen argues that Connell fails to grasp the very idea of social and cultural construction altogether.

These two criticisms are important because they propose that Connell’s understanding of the body is trapped within one of the very binarisms that he has, explicitly and repeatedly, aspired to synthesise and transcend: essentialism/constructionism (e.g. Connell and Dowsett, 1992; Connell, 1994a). However, while Connell’s strategy of synthesis is not beyond criticism, I find these two critiques weak and unconvincing (or, in the case of Petersen, even misleading) mainly because they are not based on a careful reading of Masculinities and on a serious engagement with Connell’s other writings on the body. On the one hand, Stacey (1993) fails to see that, for Connell, doing away with ‘biological essentialism’ is not the same as ignoring ‘the biological’ altogether. Connell’s aim is to historicize and politicise ‘the biological’, to conceive of it as an ‘arena’ rather than as a fixed determinant of practice (1995a: 71). Hence, to say that ‘violence’ or ‘physical aggression’ cannot be understood in terms of a direct biological determination is not to suggest that such phenomena are disconnected from biology. Rather, for Connell, the connection between men and violence becomes a ‘biological fact’, tattooed on and embedded in the body, through historical practice, like years of participation in organised sports and muscle-building labour in gyms (Connell, 1987: 85). It is precisely for this reason that the static and reified understanding of the body that Petersen (1998) attributes to Connell (1995) does not represent the approach to embodiment developed in Masculinities. Thus, Petersen’s (1998: 116) direct quote from Masculinities (cited in the preceding paragraph), which is supposed to prove that Connell (1995: 43) sees the anatomy and physiology of male bodies as ‘constant’, is not a literal misquote but it comes from a section of the book where Connell introduces one of the arguments that he aims to challenge: the positivist understanding of the body.
It is evident, therefore, that a more careful and systematic analysis of Connell’s work is necessary in order to appreciate the complexity of his understanding of social embodiment. Following Shilling’s (1993: 107-114) interpretation of Connell’s (1987) work, in this section I argue that Connell, like the feminist thinkers and the theoretical sociologists whose work has been introduced in the preceding sections, has produced a theorisation of social embodiment characterised by a strong and systematic emphasis on ‘synthesis’. The essentialism/constructionism opposition introduced above is only one of the oppositions that Connell aspires to transcend. He also articulates the problem of synthesis on the level of embodiment in terms of a series of other conceptual oppositions that need to be transcended, including ‘the age-old antinomy of nature and culture’ (1977c: 10) or nature/society (1987: 73), the Cartesian body/mind split (1994a: 7; 1995a: 60), the sex/gender distinction (1994a: 8; 2002a: 30), the body/practice (1987: 64) and machine/landscape (1995a: 46-52; 2002a: 30-33) binarisms and the theoretical opposition of nativism/frame theory— which is roughly another name for essentialism/constructionism (1995b: 386; Connell and Dowsett, 1992: 50-64). However, despite their shared ground and their commonalities (the most obvious of which is that they all, in one way or another and directly or indirectly, implicate ‘the body’) these oppositions are neither interchangeable nor equally central in the development of Connell’s synthetic approach. For instance, while recognising that the body/mind split is a problematic opposition that needs to be reconciled (1994a: 7; 1995a: 60), Connell has spent little time challenging this opposition directly and explicitly, scrutinising its social and historical origins and developing ‘third terms’. Accordingly, Merleau-Ponty’s (1962; 1965; 1968) work on the body/mind inseparability and his synthetic concepts of ‘experience’ and ‘perception’, which have played a vital role in the development of Crossley’s (1995) and Grosz’s (1994) approaches, are absent from Connell’s major works on the body.
When Connell’s work on the body is approached historically, two of the aforementioned oppositions, and hence two interrelated articulations of the problem, appear to be central. The first is the opposition that attracts Turner’s (1984: 215-235) attention in the last chapter of *The Body and Society*: nature/culture. Connell deals with this ‘antinomy’ in an early paper on Freud (Connell, 1977c) and he articulates his most comprehensive synthesis ten years later, in *Gender and Power* (Connell, 1987: 66-88). ‘History’ and ‘social practice’ emerge as Connell’s ‘third terms’ in a synthetic approach that draws heavily on Sartre’s understanding of collective practice and its relationship to groups. It is in this context that Connell appears to share Young’s political understanding of, and approach to, synthesis on the level of embodiment. However, I argue that Connell’s general critique of the culture/nature opposition embodies an account of the relationship between bodies and groups that is more subtle (i.e. complex and with more mediating concepts) than Young’s. Connell’s second articulation of the problem, developed in the course of the 1990s and the early 2000s, is centred on what he calls the machine/landscape (or canvas) opposition (1994a; 1995a: 45-66; 2002a: 28-52). It is in this context that Connell develops the concepts of ‘reproductive arena’, ‘body-reflexive practice’ and ‘social embodiment’. As Connell’s move from the first to the second articulation is essentially historical, the exposition that follows takes the form of historical narrative.

**From Freud to Sartre, 1977-1987: Nature/culture, history and practical transformation**

On the year of the publication of *Ruling Class, Ruling Culture*, Connell (1997c) also publishes a paper on Sigmund Freud, where he identifies what he regards to be the major pitfalls but also the radical implications of Freudian psychoanalysis. Beginning with the pitfalls, Connell argues that, while Freud was a pioneer in seeing the subject as internally
differentiated and divided, 'he utterly failed to see society in the same light' (1997c: 11). Hence, resounding his contemporaneous attack on 'role theory' (Connell, 1979b), Connell suggests that Freud 'operated with a consensual model of society' that prevented him from theorising class and gender oppression (1977c: 11-12). This problem, combined with psychoanalysis' historical relationship to 'techniques of social control', generates a toxic theoretico-political mix that needs to be taken into account when engaging with Freud's work (1977c: 5). Yet, Connell (1977c) argues that this theoretico-political problem has not prevented intellectuals from recognising the radical implications of other dimensions of Freud's work: Hebert Marcuse's (1964) One Dimensional Man and Juliet Mitchell's (1975) Psychoanalysis and Feminism, testify that a critical reading and reconstruction of Freud's analyses can serve as a basis for understanding class and gender oppression.

Unlike Marcuse and Mitchell, however, Connell does not rework Freud's writings to articulate a comprehensive and systematic psychoanalytical understanding of oppression. Rather, he identifies a set of diverse Freudian insights that are not always directly connected to one another but they have important theoretical and political implications in the context of the 1970s. At least three of these insights have played an important role in the formation of Connell's social theory of gender. The first is the concept of 'cathexis' that, as I argue in Part II, has become one of Connell's major concepts of structural differentiation (1977c: 6; 1987: 111-117). The second is Freud's insight into 'personality formation' via the concepts of 'repression' and 'the unconscious', emphasising the complexity of the process and its conflict-ridden and precarious character (1977c: 6, 11). This has informed Connell's understanding of masculine identity formation in terms of internal complexities and contradictions (e.g. 1987: 191-237). The third insight, in Connell's view, is Freud's 'decomposing[ition] of the age-old antinomy of nature and culture' (1977c: 10). It is precisely this dimension of Connell's interpretation of Freud
that I regard as a major starting point in the development of his synthetic theorisation of ‘social embodiment’ (even though Connell himself has not explicitly linked his work on Freud to his analysis of the body).

According to Connell’s (1977c: 8-11; 15) interpretation, the ‘decomposition’ of the nature/culture antinomy occurs mainly in Freud’s late work and most explicitly in *Civilization and its Discontents* (Freud, 1929). This is a radical interpretation, and certainly more contested than the first two ‘Freudian insights’, because Freud is often understood as an ‘essentialist’ whose ‘drive theory’ of sexuality is based on an absolute opposition between ‘the natural’ (instinctual drive) and ‘the cultural’ (social repression) (e.g. Epstein, 1987: 12-16). And yet Connell (1977c) argues that in Freud ‘the instinctual drive’ (what Freud also called ‘the impulse’ or ‘unconquerable nature’) and ‘culture’ (or ‘society’ or ‘civilization’) are neither external to each other nor purely antithetical. To begin with, ‘sexual drives’ do not have an ahistorical, immutable biological basis. They are culturally and historically produced through the very process in which ‘psychic life’ is formed. Connell (1977c: 9) gradually comes to identify the sexual drive or ‘the natural’ with ‘psychic life’ and he argues that, in Freud, the mediation of ‘the social’ and ‘psychic life’ is achieved through the concept of ‘repression’. Repression is a social pressure that does not stand outside ‘psychic life’. It is constitutive of psychic life and, hence, it becomes continuous with it: ‘[T]he structure of the adult personality—naively presupposed in most libertarian thought—is formed by this pressure, principally by the way it is experienced by the young child in the family. The formation of the superego as part of the psychic constitution of the person is itself a social mechanism’ (1977c: 9). But if ‘nature’, understood as the psychic make-up of the subject, is thereby rendered social, so, conversely, the social is brought within the sphere of nature. Civilization is not seen as something external to the events and processes of psychic life: it is seen as a product and extension of them... [In *Civilization and its Discontents*] Freud has
shifted from a position that makes civilization the cause of neurosis, to one... that sees civilization as continuous with neurosis, as part of the same structure' (1977c: 10).

This emphasis on the continuity of the natural and the cultural, Connell suggests, indicates that Freud replaces the dualism in question 'by the concept of a historical process' (1977c: 10). The key concepts of psychoanalysis, like the 'Oedipus complex' and 'repression', can now be understood as 'no abstract consequence of human relation in general, but taking definite form and intensity in specifiable historical contexts' (1977c: 10).

Even though Connell's synthetic reading of Freud may be ultimately based on a moot definitional shift (from the category of 'the natural' to the category of 'psychic life') and, as a result, it does not implicate 'the body' explicitly, this early paper is crucial for understanding Connell's overall approach to social embodiment: it introduces not only the broader context within which the question of embodiment is posed but also the key concept in Connell's logic of synthesis: 'historical process'. It implies that, in so far as 'nature' and 'culture' are not distinct but continuous, the body cannot be understood as a mere natural, ahistorical object. Indeed, in a subsequent paper entitled 'Men's Bodies', which also bears the stamp of psychoanalysis and it was written in 1979 and first published in Which Way is Up?, Connell (1983f) rearticulates his understanding of the relationship between nature and culture and reiterates the centrality of historicity but now with an emphasis on 'the body' itself.

'Men's Bodies' has two interrelated objectives. Firstly, to show that the body is inescapable, that it is deeply implicated in the social practices of masculinity; and, secondly, to show that such practices are, in turn, constitutive of the symbolic and material reality of bodies and, hence, that 'the body' is deeply social and historical. With regards to the first objective, Connell (1983f: 17-26) discusses how the male body is
implicated in practices of sport, work, sexuality and fatherhood. These practices are not only central to the construction of masculinity but they also show its ‘bodily embedding’: in certain kinds of sport and heavy manual labour, for instance, masculinity is produced through a specific combination of bodily force and skill, ‘[f]orce meaning the irresistible occupation of space; skill, meaning the ability to operate on space or the objects in it (including other bodies)’ (1983f: 18). Hence, [t]o be an adult male is distinctly to occupy space, to have a physical presence in the world’ (1983f: 19). Yet, and this brings me the paper’s second objective, Connell reference to ‘physical presence’ must not be taken ‘as a reference to a fixed point, a biological given’ (1983f: 30). For Connell, the body is a social and historical fact, ‘constantly in process, constantly being constituted in actions and relations, constantly implicated in historical change’ (1983f: 30), and it is precisely through practice that this sociality and historicity are constituted. To extend the previous example, force and skill in practices of sport and labour do not only implicate but they also form the body: ‘[t]hey become statements embedded in the body, not just in a mental body-image but in the very feel and texture of the body, its attitudes, its muscular tensions, its surfaces... This is... one of the main ways in which the superiority of men becomes ‘naturalised’, i.e. seen as part of the order of nature, an amazingly tenacious belief’ (1983f: 28). Similarly, in fatherhood practices, the action of the body is extended ‘not just in space but also in generational time’ (1983f: 25).

Hence, while Connell’s (1977c) early paper on Freud centres on the nature/culture (psychic life/civilization) antinomy, ‘Men’s Bodies’ shifts emphasis to the relationship between the body and social practice, emphasising both the inescapability and sociality of bodies. Both papers move towards a synthesis via an emphasis on ‘historicity’ but they do not examine the question of sexual difference or what has been Young’s (1994) major focus: the relationship between bodies and groups. Connell (1982a) addresses these questions in a later paper, ‘Class, gender and Sartre’s theory of practice’, where he
outlines an approach that is subsequently rearticulated and further developed in *Gender and Power* (1987: 66-88).

As I emphasise in the conclusion to Chapter I, 'Class, gender and Sartre's theory of practice' constitutes a turning point in the development of Connell’s social theory: it is one of Connell’s most systematic analyses of social class, where he attempts to move beyond structuralism and voluntarism (Connell, 1982a: 67-74); and, at the same time, it is one of his first systematic theorizations of gender relations, where he attempts to transcend both biological essentialism and social constructionism (Connell, 1982a: 74-76). As regards his theorisation of embodiment, in this paper it becomes evident that Connell’s approach to the body is structured by a strategy or logic of synthesis developed through his engagement in debates pertaining to class analysis. Particularly, for Connell, the relationship between social practice and bodies is comparable to the relationship between social practice and class structures or situations: social practice is not mechanically determined by bodies/structures but neither does it ignore them. It responds to them, transforms them and draws them into history. Although the two logics of synthesis are comparable, Connell develops a set of specific concepts in his synthetic theorisation of social embodiment. Drawing on Sartre's understanding of class (see Chapter I), and foreshadowing Young’s (1994) approach, Connell (1982a; 1987) refers to the 'the body' as the 'practico-inert field'. But while Young connects collective practice to the 'practico-inert' through the general notions of 'series' and 'groups', Connell employs two more specific concepts ('negation' and 'active transformation') which address some more subtle dimensions of the body/practice and body/groups relationships.

Connell (1982a), like Young (1994), begins with an analysis of gender on the level of the 'practico-inert'. The 'practico-inert field' encompasses bodily reality, including sexual
difference, and, as in Connell's 'generative' approach to social class, it specifies
constraints and possibilities:

the biological differentiation is a passively-suffered condition. Men cannot bear children,
infants require suckling, etc. To these conditions correspond a limited range of practices,
and their consequences, that have some of the characteristics Sartre assigns to the
practico-inert. At this level, 'women' and 'men' are social categories with some of the
characteristics of seriality, an array of parallel situations in which action is defined by an
external (in this case biological) logic (Connell, 1982a: 75).

While Connell's language ('passively suffered', 'external biological logic') may be seen
as essentialising and de-historising 'the practico-inert', and hence opening spaces for
criticisms like Petersen's (1998), Connell does not treat the 'practico-inert' as an
ahistorical determinant or basis of social practice and group formation. The body,
practice deals with the 'practico-inert' and, in dealing with it, it draws it into society and
history: "[d]ealing with is not a neutral term. What practice produces is not what it begun
with' (1987: 78). More than that, what practice 'begins with' is inescapable and
recalcitrant but it is not a natural object: the body does not become an agent 'from pure
nature, from some standpoint outside society' (1987: 83).

Connell's denaturalisation and historicisation of the 'practico-inert' and his centralization
of the categories of 'practice' and 'history' begins with the concept of 'negation'.
Negation is a response to the practico-inert, like class practice is a response to historical
situations. While Young (1994) tends to treat the relationship between the 'practico-inert'
and practice/group in terms of correspondence, Connell grasps this relationship in terms
of distortion and contradiction and it is this complex form of non-correspondence that he
calls 'negation'. In its most common form, Connell notes with reference to Gayle Rubin
(1975), negation takes the form of exaggerating some bodily differences and suppressing
other differences as well as similarities. In extreme cases, negation may involve a partial neglect or bypassing of the 'practico-inert', generating real contradictions. For instance, the practices of boys and girls in early adolescence contradict their biological stature: 'though usually bigger and stronger than the boys in their school classes, [girls] must be made passive and fearful in relation to males' (Connell, 1982a 75). Hence, it is through negation, not 'causation' (Connell, 1987: 78) or 'reduction' (Connell, 1996b: 159), that practices relate to bodies.

With the concept of 'negation', Connell addresses the ways in which the body as a 'practico-inert object' is implicated both in 'group formation' and in 'group domination'- two mutually reinforcing processes that run parallel to the concepts of 'gender contestation' and 'gender differentiation' developed in Chapter V. They refer to the active and the passive dimensions of subjectification respectively, showing how 'the body' is implicated in these processes. On the one hand, Connell (1987), like Young (1994), suggests that the formation of groups and the articulation of group interests are not disconnected from the reality of bodies. But for Connell, as emphasised already, this connection is one of 'negation', not pure correspondence:

To construct the social category of 'man' or 'woman', with a common identity and interest requires negation of the serial dispersion characteristic of the array of parallel situations constructed by the biological categories. This is done in practices that create and assert the solidarity of the sex (or group within it)...

For instance, the solidarity of 'women', as a personal identity and as a group capable of collective practice, negates both differences among women and the similarities that exist between the male and female bodies. 'Women' are not a mechanical outcome of the practico-inert and it is this non-mechanical connection that makes it possible to have
different groups of women with different social interests and different bases for social solidarity. Hence, it is through the concept of ‘negation’ that Connell establishes a social connection between bodies and collective identities.

It is via a similar logic that Connell links ‘negation’ to gender domination. In his critique of discourses of ‘natural difference’, Connell argues that such discourses are ideologies that function to naturalise social domination by converting average differences into absolute differences (1987: 70). Hence, the idea that ‘men are stronger than women’ negates the major pattern of difference that occurs within sexes rather than between them (1987: 80). Hence, it conceals the fact that a large number of women are physically stronger than many men. Furthermore, discourses of difference, and practices that exaggerate difference (e.g. dress and adornment), are ‘part of a continuing effort to sustain the social definition of gender, an effort that is necessary precisely because the biological logic, and the inert practice that responds to it, cannot sustain the gender categories (1987: 81). Hence, ‘negation’ becomes not only the basis for group solidarity but also the basis for articulating oppressive discourses on ‘natural difference’ and, hence, for ‘gender domination’. It is for this reason that Connell’s synthetic approach to embodiment is inextricably linked to his synthetic theorization of subjectification.

Connell’s concept of ‘negation’ is also closely connected to a second idea: ‘practical transformation’. By ‘practical transformation of the body’, Connell refers to social processes through which the body is transformed and drawn into history. Connell provides two kinds of examples of practical transformation. Firstly, bodies are actively transformed to exaggerate difference. In the context of masculinity, the active transformation of the body can be exemplified with reference to gymnastics and bodybuilding. Such practices have material effects on the body in that they literally transform the realm of the ‘practico-inert’: the systematic building of mascles both
negates (exaggerates) differences and, through the resulting transformations, it brings about new forms of differentiation. Once again, by exaggerating average differences, social practice reinforces dominant ideologies: it makes the power of men appear natural. But, as Connell sarcastically asks, ‘if difference is so natural why does it need to be marked so heavily?’ (1987: 80). Connell’s answer to this question is similar to Bourdieu’s (2001) explanation of ‘the paradox of doxa- the fact that the order of the world as we find it... can so often be perceived as acceptable and even natural’ (2001: 1).

By accentuating certain differences and ‘scotomizing’ certain similarities, transformative practices of negation embed social relations of domination in the ‘order of nature’ and hence naturalize and legitimate these relations (Connell, 1987: 85; Bourdieu, 2001: 23). In doing so, social practice generates categories that, far from being the mechanical outcome of bodies, are aspects of a logic of social domination that transforms bodies themselves. If seen from a different standpoint, ‘practical transformation’ can also become the basis for social solidarity: the female Jewish and Palestinian peace activists studied by Tova Benski (2004) in ‘Women in Black’ achieve unity not only by a ‘creative use of the body’ but by a whole refashioning of bodily movement and posture. Hence, far from being distinct from practices of ‘negation’, transformative practices link negations (and hence dialectical processes of group domination/differentiation and group formation/contestation) to historical process and social struggle by transforming the realm of the practico-inert.

The second set of examples of ‘practical transformation’ offered by Connell concerns cases where bodies are transformed in ‘social situations that produce bodily effects’ (1987: 86). The transformation of the body in these cases is more passive but it also challenges the idea that bodies are immutable. Such situations include labour and patterns of health and illness. These are gender-derandomised phenomena that implicate bodies in direct ways. Just as the class system produces malnutrition for working class children, so
too the sexual division of labour produces specific effects on men’s and women’s bodies (see also, 2002a: 49). Connell’s (2001) later work on health shows that the health system, like other institutions, has a ‘gender regime’. For instance, in countries like Australia there are specific connections between the consumption of nicotine and alcohol and masculinities, and between certain kinds of industrial accidents and working class men (2001: 145-146). Similarly, ‘there are higher rates of repetition strain injury among women, who are the majority of keyboard workers’ (1999a: 454). In both sets of examples of ‘practical transformation’, the transformation of bodies shows that the ‘practico-inert’ is not ‘fixed’ but it is implicated in social processes and becomes an aspect of historical development.

Through the notions of ‘negation’ and ‘practical transformation’, Connell addresses both the body/group and the culture/nature interrelationships. The idea of ‘negation’ suggests that group solidarity, difference and domination are not mechanical outcomes of bodies but neither do they ignore them. They are produced through practices that exaggerate or distort the practico-inert. Such practice transform, denaturalise and historicize the ‘practico-inert’ itself. Hence, for Connell, it is inappropriate to grasp ‘the body’ within the context of the nature/culture opposition. ‘History’ and ‘social practice’ emerge as Connell’s ‘third terms’ in an approach that paves the way for the development of the concepts of ‘body-reflexive practice’ and ‘social embodiment’ in Connell’s later work on the body.

**Machine/landscape: the body as object and agent in social practice**

In Connell’s (1995a; 2002a) later work on masculinities, the concepts of ‘negation’ and ‘transformation’ are rearticulated to challenge both biological essentialism (which reduces the body to a *machine* that produces gender difference) and discursive
constructionism (which reduces the body to a passive landscape on which meaning is imprinted). For Connell, what is needed is not a ‘compromise’ between essentialism and constructionism but a synthesis centred on historicity and struggle: what essentialism conceives of as fixed ‘natural difference’ and what constructionism reduces to ‘pure passivity’ is now shown to be an aspect of historical process (social embodiment) and social struggle (reproductive arena). Connell emphasises that the body is simultaneously an agent in social practice (inescapable) and an object of social practice (transformable). Through social practice, bodies are drawn into history and transformed without ceasing to be intractable objects whose materiality and agency cannot be ignored.

If Connell’s analysis of gender on the level of ‘structuration’ relies on the concept of ‘onto-formative’ social practice (Chapter III), and if his analysis of ‘subjectification’ is grounded on the idea of ‘performative’ social practice (Chapter V), his work on embodiment explores a third dimension of social practice: ‘body-reflexive practice’.

Connell emphasises that, although gender is ‘a social practice that constantly refers to bodies’, it is not a practice reduced to the body (Connell, 1995a: 71; 1996b: 159). Gay and heterosexual masculinities, for example, are different configurations of gender practice, but they are not the products of different kinds of body (Connell, 1995a: 58). Yet they call into play specific bodily capacities and they sexualise specific parts of the body. Hence, they constantly refer back to ‘the body’, developing body shapes and modes of bodily comportment specific to groups. Hence, homosexuality becomes a ‘bodily fact’ (1995a: 58). Again, groups are shown to be constructed in relation to bodies but they are irreducible to them because ‘in relation to’ does not mean total determination. The practices that generate groups are thus ‘body-reflexive’ rather than ‘body-determined’ (Connell, 1995a: 59-64; 1996b: 159-160).
In *Masculinities*, Connell (1995a: 60-62) illustrates the idea of 'body-reflexive practice' by recounting the story of a young man's first anal experience. Don, according to Connell, realised that he enjoys anal stimulation through the experience of being 'finger-fucked' by his girlfriend. He then began to fantasise about having anal sex with a man and to pursue homosexual encounters. For Connell, this story shows both the centrality and inescapability of the 'practico-inert' but also the fact that bodies do not determine gender practices in a mechanical way. On the one hand, Don's fantasy of a homosexual relation is generated through a concrete bodily experience. This shows the *agency* of the body, the fact that the body is implicated in social practice and that its materiality cannot be ignored: 'the body's response then had a directing influence on Don's sexual conduct. 'Agency' does not seem too strong a word for what Don's sphincter, prostate gland and erectile tissues here managed between them' (1995a: 61). On the other hand, Don's subsequent practices are not determined by this 'agency' of his body because this agency is not independent of the realm of 'the social'. As Connell put it,

> There is nothing about sphincter relaxation and prostate stimulation that demands a relationship with a man. A woman can do the job perfectly well. It is the social equation between anal penetration and a male partner that provides the structure of Don's bodily fantasy. Anal sex is a key symbol of Western male homosexuality... (1995a: 62).

'Body-reflexive practice' is thus something that begins with the body, responds to the body but it is also mediated by social relations and symbolism. The connection between Don's practices and a specific social identity is social and cultural not mechanical.

Having established that 'practice' implicates the body in complex ways and that bodies have agency, Connell goes on to explore the *effects* of practice. As in his analysis of the 'onto-formative' dimensions of practice and his early concept of 'practical transformation', he argues that body-reflexive practices have historical consequences:
they constitute a world that has a biological dimension" (Connell, 1994a: 15). The concrete bodily reality that practices constitute is both symbolic and material. The material dimension is often under-theorised in recent poststructuralist analyses of the body, particularly those that focus exclusively on discourses, and 'emphasize the 'signifier' to the point where the 'signified' practically vanishes' (2002a: 38). Thus, by 'social construction of the body', Connell does not simply refer to 'discursive construction', as in the case of Thomas Laquer (1990). Rather, practice has concrete physical effects on the body: 'some changes are familiar: lengthening expectation of life, as a result of social changes; also a rising average height and weight (as nutrition and child health care improve), and changing patterns of disease...' (Connell, 2002a: 50). Hence, the body becomes an aspect of historical process and social struggle, an object that is subject to historical transformation (2002a: 47). It is precisely this process in which bodies are 'both agents and objects', 'in which society is embodied and bodies are drawn into history', that Connell calls 'social embodiment' (2002a: 47). Social embodiment involves 'long circuits of practice', not isolated acts.

Connell’s historicization and denaturalisation of the body culminates in his concept of ‘reproductive arena’. Connell (2002a: 35) argues that while Grosz’s (1994) concept of ‘sexual difference’ tends to collapse the ‘practico-inert’ into a dichotomy of male/female, the notion of ‘arena’ refers to a historical process, not to a fixed dimorphic structure or a set of biological determinants understood as a ‘base’ (1995a: 71). Hence, the idea of ‘reproductive arena’, which is an advanced version of what Connell (1987) initially termed ‘practico-inert’, is grounded on a critique of the concept of ‘natural difference’ and the belief in an immutable male/female dichotomy: the assumption that ‘there are two types of bodies, male and female, which are sharply distinct from each other- indeed, opposed to each other’, an opposition that is assumed to be the basis of identity and social practice (1999a: 449-450). For Connell, discourses of ‘sexual dimorphism’, including the
discourses of sociobiology, are ideological formations that serve to legitimate oppressive
gender orders and that are not supported by empirical evidence: 'even in reproductive
biology, human bodies are not strictly dimorphic. There is a complex group of intersex
categories, such as people with extra or missing or damaged chromosomes' (1999a: 453).
Not only do such discourses, like practices of negation, amplify basic reproductive
differences but they also rely on a mechanical, socially un-mediated understanding of the
connection between these differences and social practice.

To move from the discourse of 'natural difference' to the idea of 'reproductive arena'
involves both a recognition of the historical character of 'reproductive difference' and a
socially and historically mediated understanding of the relationship between
'reproductive difference' and practice/groups. The reproductive arena is a bodily site
where something social happens: 'among the things that happen is the creation of the
cultural categories of 'men' and 'women' (1995a: 71). But such categories and the social
practices that correspond to them need have nothing biologically to do with reproduction:
'for instance, the gender patterns in the computing world' (1995a: 73; 1994a: 14). Hence,
the connection between the reproductive arena and social groups/social practice is social
and cultural, not mechanical. Furthermore, to say that 'the state organizational practices
are structured in relation to the reproductive arena' (e.g. the overwhelming majority of
top office-holders are men) is not to suggest that there is some inevitable connection
between the arena and gender practices. It is a social process, which includes 'the gender
configuring of recruitment and promotion', that accounts for this patterning and for the
link with the reproductive arena (1995a: 73; see also 1990a). Being socially-mediated, the
effect of long circuits of social practice, this 'link' is changeable: subject to social
struggle and historical transformation.
Hence, the ‘reproductive arena’ can also be understood as a site of social struggles, equivalent to Susan Bordo’s (1993: 245-275) metaphor of ‘the body as battleground’: a site where dominant definitions of sexy bodies or healthy bodies are worked out in struggles in the realm of representation, regimes of health care and in practices like body transformation and rearrangement. Similarly, for Connell (2002a), social struggles about abortion are aspects of the social and historical shaping of the reproductive arena. As he puts it,

The reproductive arena is not fixed, it can be re-shaped by social processes. Indeed it constantly is being reshaped; there is a social struggle over this as well as other aspects of gender. For instance, the fertility of a woman’s body means something different where contraception is effective and small families are planned, from what it means where women are designated lifelong breeders and nurturers- barefoot, pregnant and in the kitchen as the saying goes. There is a social conflict over the potential meaning of women’s fertility. ‘Right-to-Life’ militants are not just attempting to outlaw abortion: they seek to push the whole reproductive arena into the pattern they call ‘the traditional family’ (2002a: 52)

Such struggles can lead to oppressive situations and to interpersonal and institutionalised violence, but they can also lead towards more egalitarian gender orders. Even the patterns of collective violence among men, Connell (1994a: 17) argues, can open possibilities for progress in gender relations: ‘the two global wars this century produced important transitions in women’s employment, disturbed gender ideology, and accelerated the making of homosexual communities’ (1994a: 17). But this was largely an unintended effect of social practice. In the current Western gender order, Connell (1985b) emphasises, the social connection between men and violence, including domestic violence and violence against homosexuals, is something that needs to be, and can be, dismantled.
It follows, then, that bodies are implicated in social struggles and social struggles implicate bodies. The forms of gender politics described at the end of Chapter V are thus not disembodied. Indeed, in *Masculinities*, Connell (1995: 225-243) argues that political struggles for the transformation of gender orders need to center not only on structures and institutions but also on bodies themselves: "[a] politics of social justice needs to change body-reflexive practice, not by losing agency but by extending it... Rather than the disembodiment involved in role reform, this requires *re-embodiment* for men, a search for different ways of using, feeling and showing male bodies" (1995a: 233). In the current Western gender order, re-embodiment for men involves body-reflexive practices that center on gender justice and the expansion of pleasure (e.g. child-care) and a move away from the violent gender practices of war and competitive sport. This is a form of politics that can produce not only new gender structures but also new bodies, shifting the 'reproductive arena'. It will, for example, minimize the bodily effects associated with industrial accidents, the damage of bodies in sports and the bodily effects of domestic violence and violence against sexual minorities. It can also reduce ‘alcoholism, road trauma and other toxic consequences of contemporary masculinities’ (Connell, 2000b: 66; 177-195).

**V. Conclusion**

While some studies on the sociology and feminist philosophy of the body have emphasised the inseparability of body and mind (e.g. Crossley and Grosz), Connell, like Young, poses the question of synthesis on the level of embodiment in terms of transcending the nature/culture, body/practice and body/group oppositions. He replaces these dualisms not with a concept of mechanical, one-way determination, but with mediating concepts centred on *history, social practice* and *social struggle*. In Freud, he finds an analysis of psychic life in which 'the social' and 'the natural' are interwoven...
dimensions of the same historical processes. In Sartre, he finds a theorisation of group formation in which categories and identities are formed through negations of the 'practico-inert', which is itself transformed and constantly re-constituted through social practice. Groups are not the product of ahistorical, biological differentiations but they are constituted through negations of the practico-inert. This paves the way for understanding practice as body-reflexive and bodies as arenas constituted and re-constituted in historical processes of 'social embodiment'.

Returning to Grosz's (1994) questions of the 'multiplicity' and 'sexual specificity' of bodies, it is evident that Connell's understanding of 'reproductive arena' is not based on a fixed notion of sexual difference. He grasps sexual differentiations as historical formations, as products of long circuits of practices of negation and transformation. Like Grosz and Young, while he acknowledges that sexual differentiation (in the various forms it can take) is not the only form of specificity, he has paid little attention to exploring other particularities and their connection to the 'reproductive arena'. Connell's under-theorization of the 'racialisation' of the reproductive arena can be understood as a third gap in his 'problematique of synthesis', as another space for theoretical expansion (see chapt.eight).
Notes

1. The studies cited in the main text are only a few examples and they are not necessarily representative of the field as a whole. A comprehensive review of diverse literature on the body can be found in Featherstone and Turner's (1995) introductory essay in the first issue of the Journal Body and Society, whose launching in 1995 testifies this increased interest in the body.

2. While Turner (1984) uses Marx's theoretical vocabulary and articulates the distinction in terms of 'nature/human', he consistently equates this distinction with the 'nature/culture' one (e.g. 1984: 215, 230, 232).

3. Crossley (1994; 1995; 1996a; 1996b; 2001) has written widely on the sociology of the body and his interests are diverse. In this chapter, I deal exclusively with his Merleau-Ponty inspired critique of the body/mind distinction (especially, 1995), leaving aside both his work on Foucault (Crossley, 1994; 1996b) and Bourdieu (Crossley, 2001: 91-160) and his analysis of intersubjectivity (Crossley, 1996a). This selective exposition of his ideas is justified because the objective of this section is to offer examples of different articulations of 'the problem of dualism' rather than to develop a comprehensive account of Crossley's work on the body.

4. Merleau-Ponty's approach to the body is more complex and I will return to it in the next section, when exploring Elizabeth Grosz's (1994) 'corporeal feminism' and Iris Marion Young's (1990a; 1994) understanding of the body.

5. This is not to suggest that Crossley evades questions of historicity and power altogether. He does address such questions but not primarily in the context of his Merleau-Pontian articulation of the problem in terms of mind/body. To incorporate history and power, Crossley (1996b; 2001) is forced to explore other problematic oppositions. This is implicitly acknowledged in his comparative study of embodiment in Foucault and Merleau-Ponty, where it becomes evident that Merleau-Ponty's emphasis on the body/mind distinction draws attention away from long-term historical transformations and political struggles (see, especially, 1996b: 102-104).

6. There are exceptions to this tendency. Shilling (1993: 107-114), for example, incorporates into his synthetic understanding of the body an analysis of Connell's (1987) theorisation of 'the gendered body' while Crossley (2001: 157-158) emphasises the importance of Young's (1990a) analysis of 'feminine body comportment'. Yet, gender and sexuality are still not a constant point of reference in their analysis.

7. 'Throwing Like a Girl' and 'Pregnant Embodiment' were initially published in 1980 (Human Studies) and 1984 (Journal of medicine and philosophy) respectively. These and other essays are reprinted in Young (1990a). The page numbers in the main text are from Young (1990a).

8. For similar critiques, see Douglas (1996) and Ditz (1996). Ditz (1996) offers a possible explanation for the opposing interpretations of Stacey (1993) and Petersen (1998): that Connell's approach to the body is vague and, hence, open to conflicting interpretations. As he puts it, 'the status of 'bodily difference' in [Connell's (1995a) book Masculinities] is unclear. Some passages suggest that he still assumes that male and female bodies are unproblematic givens, existing as a kind of substrate upon which the processes of cultural elaboration works. One might, instead, want to say- as Connell at times appears to do- that the creation of sexed bodies, in the sense of the sorting of bodies into two and only two categories, is itself a symbolic act, a consequence of complex social and cultural practices' (1996: 170). This comes close to how Connell himself articulates the problem, when he identifies the opposing tendencies that need to be synthesised, but because Ditz does not engage with Connell's key synthetic concepts, most notably 'body-reflexive practice' and 'reproductive arena' (1995a: 59-64; 71-75), he does not offer an account of Connell's 'logic of synthesis'.

9. The quoted sentence occurs in the following context, where Connell argues against the possibility of a positivist science of masculinity: 'There is no masculine entity whose occurrences in all societies we can generalise about. The things designated by the term in different cases are logically incommensurable. Positivism has one line of escape from this difficulty. What is more or less constant, through the shifts of culture, is the anatomy and physiology of male bodies. We could pursue a science of men, defining 'masculinity' as the character of anyone who possessed a penis, a Y chromosome and a certain supply of testosterone. A recent French book about masculinity, one of the better popular books about men, is simply called XY. This is, perhaps, what is ultimately implied by the idea of 'men's studies'. This solves the logical problem, but it is not likely to lead to a science worth having. It is unmanageably vague: what action of any man in the world would not be an instance of masculinity?

10. In the context of theoretical debates on sexuality, Connell's argument would sound more radical in the 1980s and the early 1990s (rather than in 1977) because it is in these two decades, with the emergence
of a 'social constructionist theory of sexuality', that Freud, along with nineteenth century sexologists (most notably, Havelock Ellis and Krafft-Ebing), came to be known as an exemplar of a 'naturalistic' and 'biological essentialist' understanding of sexuality (see Epstein, 1987). Yet, social constructionists that have undertaken a systematic analysis of Freud’s writings, most notably Jeffrey Weeks (e.g. 1989: 152-156), have refused to equate both Freud with nineteenth century sexologists and the idea of 'sexual drive' with that of a natural, biological instinct: ‘For in Freud... the tendency is to see sexuality not as a pre-given essence but as a drive that is constructed in the process of the human animal’ (1989: 153).
CHAPTER EIGHT
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The Space of Race

I. Introduction

The concept of ‘reproductive arena’ occupies a position in Connell’s ‘logic of synthesis’ on the level of embodiment that is equivalent to the position occupied by the notions of ‘historicity’ and ‘hegemonic struggle’ in his analyses of ‘structuration’ and ‘subjectification’ respectively: it aims to transcend both the subjectivism associated with discursive constructionism and the objectivism that characterizes biological determinism and to replace the opposition with notions of social struggle and historical process. In chapters IV and VI, I argued that Connell’s synthetic ideas of ‘historicity’ and ‘hegemonic masculinity’ transcend certain oppositions (structure/practice; category/identity) but, in doing so, they also open ‘spaces of expansion’ (concerning ‘concrete historical analysis’ and ‘non-oppositional struggles’, respectively). Similarly, in this chapter I argue that Connell’s theorization of gender on the level of ‘social embodiment’ can be enriched through a ‘racialization’ of his concepts of ‘body-reflexive practice’, ‘negation’ and ‘reproductive arena’. Hence, another ‘space’ of theoretico-political expansion.

It has been argued that Connell’s work neglects ‘race’ and ‘ethnicity’ and their relationship to gender. In her review of G&P, Candace West (1989) goes as far as to suggest that this neglect may lead ‘many readers to dismiss [Connell’s] contribution as a ‘white social theory of gender’ (1989: 1489). But the relationship between Connell’s work on gender and the concept of ‘race’ is more complex than this. In his later work, and partly because of criticisms like West’s, Connell (2000a; 2002g; 2003c) emphasizes...
the centrality of the relationship between gender, bodies and imperialism— an emphasis that was already present, in rudimentary forms, in G&P (1987: 155-158) and in Masculinities (1995a: 187-188; 242). In what follows, I argue that what Connell under-theorizes is not the ‘racialization’ of gender and ‘social embodiment’ in general but the ‘internal’ racialization of the local gender orders he has empirically examined: the gender orders of English-speaking countries, mainly the United States and Australia. While Connell’s social theory of gender is largely a Eurocentric one (drawing heavily on Western feminism and gay theory), his theorisation of ‘racialization’ is centred on the relationship between ‘the metropole’ and ‘the periphery’ without addressing processes of racialization within the metropole itself. Having argued that Connell tends to collapse racialization into an internal/external opposition, I proceed to argue that phenomenological understandings of ‘racial embodiment’ can help built ‘race’ into Connell’s key concepts of social embodiment, including ‘negation’ and ‘body-reflexive practice’.

II. From the ‘internalist discourse’ to ‘Southern theory’

In his analysis of the emergence of sociology as a discipline, Connell (1997b) argues that sociology emerged in the final two decades of the 19th century and the first decade of the 20th century in the major cities of Europe and in the United States. In its origins, sociology reflected the interests of the empire and the social relations of imperialism (1997b: 1522). Hence, the concepts of ‘race’, ‘progress’ and ‘social evolution’ and discourses of ‘racial hierarchies’ were central in the formation of sociology because the discipline as a whole was based on the idea of a global difference between the primitive and the advanced (1997b: 1521-1522). Yet, for Connell, after the early 20th century there was a shift, an ‘epistemological break’: ‘where the old sociology had focused on difference between the metropole and the primitive, the new sociology focused on
difference within the metropole' (1997b: 1536). Thus, with the retrospective creation of a ‘classical cannon’ (Karl Marx, Max Weber and Emile Durkheim as founding fathers), the internal problems of the metropole became the intellectual center of sociology. The new ‘science of modernity’ had nothing to say about the global power of the societies it addressed and race relations were pushed to the margin (1997b: 1545; 2002g: 1, 3).

Contemporary sociology, including ‘post-modern’ analysis and rational choice and structuration theories, has continued ‘the internalist focus’ adopted with the creation of ‘the classical cannon’ (Connell, 2002g; 2000b: 291). For instance, Foucault’s (1977) analysis of punishment is internal to ‘Western’ history: ‘atrocious exemplary punishment, which Foucault suggests was replaced by the disciplinary regimes of the prison and criminology, remained normal in nineteenth and twentieth-century colonialism- witness frontier killings in Australia such as the Myall Creek massacre, and British killings in India from the ‘Mutiny’ to Amritsar’ (Connell, 2002g: 2). The same applies to Foucault’s (1976) History of Sexuality and to other studies focused on the ‘making of the modern homosexual’ in that they rely on material taken exclusively from British (Weeks, 1977), European (Trumbach, 1989a) or American (Chauncey, 1994) history. Similarly, for Connell, ‘when we read Lyotards’ (1984) characterizations of modernity in terms of the enlightenment project, and postmodernity in terms of incredulity towards grand narratives, we are still listening to an internalist account of Western culture’ (2002g: 3).

Many theories of ‘race’ and metropolitan understandings of colonialism have also followed this Eurocentric pattern (Connell, 2002g) and the same applies to the sociology of the body (Connell, 2003c: 7) and gender and sexuality (Connell, 2000a: 60; 2003a: 256). For Connell (2002g), even Edward Said’s (1978) analysis of Western ‘orientalism’ is ‘focused within the metropole and its representations of the colonial other’ (Connell, 2002g: 2). Similarly, in Lenin’s (1933) understanding of imperialism, which influenced
the emergence of 'underdevelopment theory' (e.g. Frank, 1967), the driving force of the empire is 'the internal crisis tendencies' of capitalist economy in the metropole (Connell, 2002g: 8, emphasis added). With regards to the sociology of the body, Connell (2002g: 7) argues that Turner's (1984) work is focused exclusively on the metropole. This is also what characterizes the rest of the literature reviewed in the preceding chapter: Young's (1990a) work on feminine bodily comportment and motility is structured by a focus on women's 'situation' in specific parts of the world (for instance, in countries where women engage in sports like volleyball) while Grosz's (1994) concept of the 'mobius strip' is not only centered on a key question of Western philosophy (which is also Crossley's (1996a) primary focus) but it culminates in an analysis of conceptions 'bodily fluids' that are in no way trans-cultural.

For Connell (2002g), to move beyond this 'internalist' discourse involves 'refocusing sociology outside the metropole' (2002g: 7, emphasis added):

> When metropolitan sociology speaks of 'society' or 'modernity' it is typically thinking of about 600 million people. There are, however, about 6000 million people... Global society is not metropolitan society globalized. The other 90% of the world's population stand in different relationship to global processes (2002g: 5).

It this global perspective that is central to Connell's (2002g) 'Southern Approach' and enables him to rearticulate his understanding of the relationship between gender structures, gender groupings and bodies from 'the point of view of the colonized' (2002g: 10-11). But Connell (2003c) makes it clear that there is not 'a single 'southern' viewpoint' (2003c: 2). Rather, because the world outside 'the metropole' is immensely diverse, 'ranging from rich colonies of settlement like Australia to areas of mass poverty like Bangla Desh', there is a multiplicity of 'southern standpoints' (2003c: 3). What
unites these standpoints is their capability 'to shake the dominance of metropolitan thought and start new agendas' (2003c: 2).

In a series of essays produced in the late 1990s and the early 2000s, Connell’s ‘Southern Approach’, and the overall critique of the ‘internalist discourse’ that lies behind this approach, become the implicit basis for grasping the relationship between masculinities, bodies and globalization processes in a manner that stresses the multiplicity of bodies and that places a central emphasis on questions of race and ethnicity (Connell, 1998a; 2000b; 2001b; 2003c). It is in this context that Connell’s Southern challenge to the ‘synthetic turn’ in metropolitan sociology and feminist philosophy of the body becomes visible. In these papers, Connell renews his understanding of the relationship between local and global gender orders (introduced in Chapter III) from the point of view of ‘the racialization of global society’ (2000a: 61). In doing so, he also intends to move beyond the ‘ethographic moment’ in masculinity research, a ‘moment’ in which ‘the specific and the local is in focus’, and to ‘think about gender relations on the scale of world society’ (2000b: 9, 32). Throughout the papers, Connell refers to ‘world society’ by employing the very concepts that he and his collaborators used to refer to ‘schools’ in MD and in OD: ‘site’ ‘setting’ or ‘arena’ (e.g. Kessler, Ashenden, Connell and Dowsett, 1982a: 1, 11; Connell, 1998: 14, 16, 18; 2000b: 62; 2003b: 4). But while ‘the school’ was largely a disembodied and de-racialized arena (I will return to this below), global society is understood as an arena of gender formation that is deeply racialized and embodied (2003c: 7; 2000b: 61).
In introducing Connell’s understanding of gender, I have followed a logic deepening (the passage from ‘structuration’, to ‘subjectification’, to ‘embodiment’). I now invert this logic and I explore how Connell’s ‘Southern’ understanding of racialization and global embodiment moves from bodies, to groups, to structures. This is another way of emphasizing the interconnectedness of the dimensions that I have so far treated as relatively distinct.

III. Globalization, Imperialism and masculinities: bodies, groups, structures

Connell’s ‘Southern’ approach to masculinities and globalization implicates questions of ‘embodiment’ from the outset. For Connell (1998a), imperialism can be understood in terms of three historical phases: colonial conquest and settlement; the stabilization of colonial societies; and political de-colonization and economic neocolonialism (1998a: 8, 12-16). Each of these phases ‘was gendered and embodied’ through practices of violence, sexuality, labour and migration (2003c: 7; 1998a: 8). Colonial conquest re-enforced the social connection between male bodies and violence: it was carried out by gender-segregated forces (the sailors, soldiers and governors of the early colonialism were with very few exceptions men) and it involved ‘extensive sexual exploitation of indigenous women’ (1998a: 13; 2003c: 7). The creation and gradual stabilization of colonial economies was also an embodied process. It involved, for example, the ‘movement of bodies’:

Men provided the main labour force and their bodies were deployed by large scale labour migration. With slavery, this meant forced migration from one colonized region to another. With settler colonies it meant ‘free’ migration from the metropole (2000b: 60).
A direct outcome of this process was the creation of new hierarchies of bodies, new systems of classifying bodies and policing the boundaries between them: ‘race was- and to a large extent still is- understood as a hierarchy of bodies’ (2000b: 61). For male bodies, the black/white hierarchical distinction, when articulated through the body/mind discourse, becomes coextensive with ‘the same polarity usually drawn between the ‘feminine’ and the ‘masculine’ in white discourse and consciousness (Segal, 1990: 180).’ Hence, black men, like white women, are seen as ‘mere bodies’. It follows, then, that the struggle for de-colonization implicates not only the materiality of bodies, as in the wars of independence where bodies are the main targets, but also the meaning of bodies: ‘if we follow the argument of Fanon (1968), there is as much a psychological as a military struggle, in which the submission to the colonizer’s hierarchy of bodies must be broken’ (Connell, 2003c: 7). For Connell, in neo-liberal regimes this hierarchy of bodies has often been re-established and reinforced through electronic media, which circulate images of idealized white bodies globally (2003c: 7; 2000b: 51).

While the historical formation of global society is a racialized and embodied process, the relocation of bodies, their symbolic sexualization, their racialization and hierarchical structuring do not define patterns of group formation in mechanical ways. Rather, the ‘global society created by imperialism becomes an arena of gender formation and gender politics’ (Connell, 2000b: 62, emphasis added). As with the arena of schools, global society is an arena of social struggle, where groups are formed in embodied and racialized processes of ‘differentiation’ and ‘contestation’ (see Chapter V). Connell’s analysis shows how these complex processes work in what he calls ‘two very different settings’: the periphery and the metropole (2000b: 50).

In the periphery, ‘differentiation’ often took the form of discursive categorization by the colonizers:
The colonizers distinguished ‘more manly’ from ‘less manly’ groups among their subjects. In British India, for instance, Bengali men were supposed effeminate while Pathans and Sikhs were regarded as strong and warlike. Similar distinctions were made in South African between the ‘Hottentots’ and Zulus. Within the imperial ‘poetics of war’, the conqueror was virile, while the colonized were dirty, sexualized and effeminate or childlike. In many colonial situations indigenous men were called ‘boys’ by the colonizers (Connell, 2000b: 48-49).

While Connell does not connect such categorizations to the concept of ‘negation’, Chris Shilling (1993) has pointed out that Connell’s (1987) idea of ‘negation’ can be used to explain racist domination: ‘biological similarities are suppressed, and physical differences are highlighted and used to support racist classificatory systems’ (1990: 109). For instance, in the case of the definition of colonized men as ‘effeminate’ or ‘child-like’, by exaggerating certain differences such discourses provided a contrast that worked to define dominant forms of adult masculinity within the metropole. The definition of particular groups of colonized men as ‘hypermascuine’ is also connected to the formation of hegemonic masculinity in the metropole: ‘in the United States, the African-American population has become a recruiting ground for exemplars of heroic masculinity in sports, especially boxers, footballers, and basketballers’ (2000b 62).

But discursive categorization and racist ‘differentiation’ do not determine the formation of groups in mechanical ways. In certain cases, colonized masculine identities emerged through ‘contestation’ of the power of the colonizers. As Connell notes with reference to Robert Morrell’s (1996) historical analysis, ‘this is clear in the region of Natal in South Africa, where sustained resistance to colonization by the Zulu kingdom was a key to the mobilization of ethnic-national masculine identities in the twentieth century’ (Connell, 2000b: 48; 1998a: 13 see also Morrell, 2001). In other cases there are complex forms of ‘hybridization’ where Western categorizations and local concepts are negotiated in
specific settings (Connell, 2000b: 65). This is well documented in studies that deal with the global and the transnational dimensions of sexual identities. For example, Dennis Altman’s (1997) analysis of the relationship between globalization and ‘western gay identity’ shows that, while Western categories have had a strong impact on the formation of sexual identities and subcultures in other regions of the world, the overall picture is irreducible to a linear and uninterrupted process of ‘Westernization’.

The making of masculinities in the periphery is also shaped by the ‘institutional contexts of practice’ (2000a: 44), including global mass media, which circulate Western definitions of authoritative masculinity, and the global shaping of the labour market, which has specific effects on the making of masculinities in local settings. This ‘institutional shaping’ is part of a process that begun with early colonial conquest and settlement and which Connell (1998a: 11) calls ‘the export of institutions’:

[This] process begun long before electronic media existed... the colonial and postcolonial world saw the installation in the periphery, on a very large scale, of a range of institutions on the North Atlantic model: armies, states, bureaucracies, corporations, capital markets, labour markets, schools, law courts, transport systems. These are gendered institutions and their functioning has directly reconstituted masculinities in the periphery (Connell, 1998a: 11)

Such institutions call into existence specific patterns of gender practice. For instance, ‘certain patterns of collective violence are embedded in the organization and culture of a Western-style army, which are different from the patterns of pre-colonial violence’ (1998a: 11). Yet, the outcome of these embodied processes is not the complete displacement of local patterns and ‘photocopies of European masculinities’ (1998a: 11) but complex negotiations and articulations that take specific forms in different settings.
Notes

1. For a debate concerning Connell’s (1997b) interpretation, see Collins (1997).

2. For Connell, ‘the standpoint of the least advantaged’ is related to the concept of objectivity: ‘If you wish to teach about ethnicity and race relations, for instance, a more comprehensive and deeper understanding is possible if you construct your curriculum from the point of view of the subordinated ethnic groups than if you work from the point of view of the dominant one. ‘Racism’ is qualitatively a better organizing concept than natural inferiority...’ (1993a: 39). For Connell’s approach to ‘epistemology’, his belief in the possibility of ‘objective truth’, his vehement attack on ‘relativism’ and his approach to ‘feminist standpoint theory’, see Connell (1992; 1993a: 30-42).

3. Connell’s analysis of the relationship between gender and global processes was already central in his history of the formation of modern ‘hegemonic masculinity’ in Gender and Power and in Masculinities (Connell, 1987: 150-158; 1995a: 185-203). Even though Connell begins to use systematically the concept of ‘world or global gender order’ in the late 1990s (esp. Connell, 1998a), his conception of the relationship between local and global gender orders and his understanding of processes of ‘gender racialization’ are formed together in his analysis of gender and imperialism, initially in a paper entitled ‘The Big Picture’ (Connell, 1993b).

4. For Connell (2000b: 9, 23-33), the ‘ethnographic moment’ in masculinity research is not metropolitan or Eurocentric. It is simply characterized by an emphasis on ‘the construction of masculinity in a specific setting’, which is an important corrective to ‘abstractions of role theory’. The studies that Connell includes into this trend in empirical research deal with the construction of masculinities in locales as diverse as India, Papua New Guinea, Africa, Australia and the United States. Hence, this moment in masculinity research is not a side-effect of what Connell (1997b) calls the ‘internalist discourse’.

5. As Lynne Segal (1990) explains, the ‘homology of the ‘black’ and the ‘feminine’ here is hardly surprising. Both groups share the experience of social subordination and cultural devaluation... and... the colonial stereotype of the Black man existed precisely to provide the essential contrast with ‘white manliness’, ‘true’ manliness’ (1990: 180-181).

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