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Public and Private Parents:  
The Gendered Division of Labour and Australian Paid Parental Leave Policy

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This thesis has not been submitted for examination at this or any other university
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Abstract

Since the 1970s, the gendered division of household labour has been an important issue for both academic disciplines and policy-makers. This thesis considers the gendered division of labour in relation to Australian family policy, arguing that policy has a particular significance to the production of gendered familial relations in liberal societies. Specifically, this thesis considers paid parental leave policy and its implications for the gendered division of childcare labour in Australian heterosexual households. In doing so, it contributes to scholarly discussions about the ways various approaches to family policy might enable or impede progress toward a more equitable division of childcare in Australia. Drawing from critical theory, feminist studies of liberalism and Raewyn Connell's work on masculinity, I provide analysis of *The Coalition’s Policy for Paid Parental Leave* (LNP 2013) and of historical Australian family policy, considering the ways this has failed to recognise the shared responsibility of childcare labour. I argue that Australian family policy has worked to enshrine childcare responsibilities onto women and mothers. And that this history and contemporary policy framework implicitly privileges and excludes certain men. I argue that this is exemplary of the way gender hierarchies are reaffirmed by policy and the way paid parental leave policies can work to reinforce the gendered division of childcare labour. Centrally, I am interested in the power relations that are implicit in historical and contemporary Australian family policy's positioning of women and men, mothers and fathers, and in the broader question of what good policy might look like in this area.
Introduction: Gender, Labour and Australian Politics

This thesis is about family policy and the gendered division of childcare in Australia. With this thesis, I contribute analysis of recent Australian family policy to discussions in sociology and gender and cultural studies about the ways policy might enable or impede a more equitable distribution of childcare responsibilities between women and men in heterosexual households. I establish a new conceptual framework through which policy’s assumptions about gender and labour and its historical precedents in liberal discourses of family and citizenship and in Australian family policy history can be examined. I argue that policy has a particular ability to act on populations and influence the way labour is gendered and distributed in liberal societies. I argue that Australian family policy has worked to enshrine childcare responsibilities onto women and mothers. And that this history and contemporary policy framework implicitly privileges and excludes certain men. Centrally, I argue that the failure of Australian family policy to recognise the shared responsibility of childcare in heterosexual households acts to reaffirm gendered divisions of childcare and domestic labour in Australia. This is a question of gender justice for men as well as women.

In support of these arguments I offer a case study of what had been, until May 2015, the latest contribution to the Australian paid parental leave landscape, The Coalition’s Policy for Paid Parental Leave (LNP 2013). I have limited my analysis to this recent policy for two reasons. First, in an effort to offer as contemporary an evaluation as possible of the relationship between paid parental leave policy, as a particular instrument of family policy, and the gendered division of childcare in Australia. Second, because it is a policy rich in gendered ideas and deserving of close analysis.

I would like to flag this thesis’ focus on the distribution of labour in heterosexual households and on policy as an instrument through which this can be made more equitable. Jean Carabine (1996, pp.32-3) is critical of the lack of sexuality in analyses of social policy, arguing that policy analysts' failure to account for non-
heterosexual families reinforces traditional discourses on the family and limits the possibility of future change. I do not wish my analysis to contribute to such suppression of queer voices. Rather, I am primarily interested in the ways labour continues to be divided, and inequitably divided at that, on this basis of gender in heterosexual households in a way that it does not in non-heterosexual households. Further, though any single policy is but one factor contributing to the production of normative families and gender relations, the concerns of this thesis are framed to some extent by the contemporary policy landscape, in which the focus of paid parental leave policies problematically assumes a family organised around a heterosexual, cisgender couple.

Though I will return to this in the conclusion, it is important to note now that the policy analysed by my thesis is a failed policy. That is to say that the policy was never passed into law and has since been abandoned by its proponents. Nevertheless, it is necessary to recognise the value of analysis of failed policy. This thesis follows other gender and cultural studies research providing analysis of failed policy, which has proven useful for both thinking about the norms and values represented in those attempts and the question of why they failed. In 2015, for instance, cultural theorist Josephine Caust analysed the Australian Labor Government’s 2013 cultural policy, Creative Australia recognising that, following Labor’s defeat at the 2013 election, it was unlikely the policy would ever take effect. Though Caust (2015, p.179) notes the “limited tenure” of Creative Australia, she argues that it nevertheless shifted conversations being had about cultural policy toward an embrace of a broader definition of culture and reconsideration of how the arts is funded. She also notes the possibility that the Coalition Government may come to embrace aspects of Creative Australia (p.179). As we will see in the conclusion, analysis of failed policy attempts is useful for understanding the development of ongoing conversations about the intervention of the state into public and private life, through paid parental leave and family policy.

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1 See Abbie Goldberg, Julianna Smith and Maureen Perry-Jenkins’ (2012) study of the
In combination with an analysis of Australian family policy history, my thesis’ analysis of one such, albeit failed, policy, *The Coalition’s Policy for Paid Parental Leave* (LNP 2013), nevertheless develops an understanding of how the Abbott Coalition Government have understood gender and labour. Specifically, my analysis of the policy is an important exploration of contemporary governmental approaches to the Australian family and workplace, the ways childcare is gendered in these approaches, and how gender and labour are managed and administered by the Australian state. In spite of the policy’s failure, it remains important to locate trends in Australian family policy that hinder a more equitable distribution of childcare labour in heterosexual households in order to suggest how policy might better address these problems in future.

*The Coalition’s Policy for Paid Parental Leave* (LNP, 2013)

In August 2013, three weeks into their federal election campaign, the then-federal opposition leader Tony Abbott unveiled the Coalition’s paid parental leave policy. *The Coalition’s Policy for Paid Parental Leave* (LNP 2013) is a 14 page document, published in the Coalition’s 2013 election campaign and policy guide *Our Plan: Real Solutions for all Australians* (LNP 2013). The policy document outlines the Coalition’s plan to: provide 26 weeks paid leave from work upon the birth of a child, paid at recipients’ actual wage up to $150,000 per annum; include and make corresponding superannuation contributions for these 26 weeks; allow two of these 26 weeks to be dedicated to paternity leave; guarantee recipients’ eligibility for the scheme using the existing work test for paid parental leave; pay recipients directly and not via their employer; and fund the scheme with a levy on big business (LNP 2013, pp.4-6).

The policy received immediate criticism for its costings from the Labor party, the media and from Coalition members themselves. Then-federal Families Minister Jenny Macklin argued that “a levy on big businesses would be passed onto household budgets” (Griffiths 2013a). The policy’s wage replacement mechanism was also criticised for being unfair in its disproportionate distribution of payments to higher income earners (Macklin 2014; Wade 2013; Cassidy 2013). After the Coalition’s success at the 2013 election, the policy continued to be
criticised. The Coalition failed to push the savings measures it had designated in its 2014 budget through federal parliament and the policy was dismissed as unaffordable (Massola & Bourke 2014; Griffiths 2013b). The policy was also criticised across this period for the perceived lack of support it had from Coalition members (Griffiths 2013c; Bourke 2014; Hutchins & Wood 2014).

Importantly, however, the policy was not widely critiqued for its disproportionate focus on women as primary carers and intended recipients of the payment. Such a critique is one I wish to offer in this thesis, along with an exploration of the implications of this policy’s disproportionate focus on women for the gendered division of childcare labour in Australia.

In a move widely understood as a bow to the pressure of these criticisms, Prime Minister Tony Abbott reduced the salary level threshold of The Coalition’s Policy for Paid Parental Leave (LNP 2013) from $150,000 to $100,000 in December 2014 (Balogh, Crowe & Karvelas 2014; Cavill 2014; Griffiths 2014d). And then, in February 2015 the Prime Minister announced the shelving of the policy altogether (Australian Financial Review, 2015). The shelving of the policy was attributed, by Abbott himself, to budgetary restrictions. Of the policy’s failure Abbott said, “what’s desirable is not always doable – especially when times are tough and budgets are tight” (Taylor 2015). It was also thought that the policy’s failure came in response to the release of the Productivity Commission’s (2015) inquiry report into childcare and early learning. Amongst other things, the report recommended an increase in focus and expenditure for childcare subsidies (Productivity Commission 2015). In keeping with these recommendations, after abandoning the paid parental leave policy, the Prime Minister announced that the Coalition would indeed direct their attention toward childcare subsidies (Boyce 2015).

Then, in May 2015, the Government announced a $3.5 billion increase in childcare subsidies as part of its 2015 budget. With regard to paid parental leave, the only change specified was an amendment to the existing scheme, the
Parental Leave Pay Act 2010, whereby recipients would no longer receive parental leave payments from their employers and the state.\(^2\)

Gender, Labour and the Second Shift
Examination of paid parental leave policy invokes questions related to the gendered division of childcare that have been pursued in discussions in the fields of sociology, gender and cultural studies and family studies about the gendered division of labour more broadly. My analysis of The Coalition’s Policy for Paid Parental Leave (LNP 2013) contributes to these discussions.

The gendered division of labour was researched in sociologist Arlie Hochschild's (with Anne Machung) (1986) well-known The Second Shift: Working Parents and the Revolution at Home. The book (Hochschild 1986) shed light on the inequity of divisions of household labour in Western, industrialised nations, that left women performing the majority of tasks, including childcare, in heterosexual households. In a new afterword to the book, published in 2012, Hochschild (2012, p.263) explains how the idea of a second shift came about in “the stalled gender revolution of the 1980s”. By “stalled gender revolution”, Hochschild (p.263) refers to the promise of the revolution of the twentieth-century family that saw the “movement of millions of women into paid jobs”. Its stalling refers to the revolution’s failure to combat expectations that women would continue to perform the majority of unpaid, household labour. In effect, she argued, the gains made in increasing women’s access to paid employment were undermined by the second shift they were required to do at home (p.263).

Even in analyses critical of Hochschild’s (1986) claim that women perform more total paid and unpaid work hours than men, it is still recognised that the presence of children increases women’s performance of unpaid labour more than it does men’s. In their comparative study of women’s and men’s total work hours in the United States and Australia, Liana Sayer et al. (2009, p.541) offer

\(^2\) This amendment was subject to negative publicity after Tony Abbott and other senior Coalition ministers accused the women that had otherwise been accessing leave payments from their employers and the state as “double-dipping” (Riordan 2015).
one such critique of Hochschild's (1986) claim but conclude that, though women perform no more total hours of work than men, women continue to perform more childcare work than men.

Women's performance of the majority of household labour is not just an historical phenomenon. More recently, sociologists Michael Bittman and Judy Wajcman (2004, p.173) have also taken up Hochschild's (2012, p.263) understanding of the “stalled gender revolution”. They found that, whilst women have been moving increasingly into the paid workforce and are more and more occupying this traditional male role, men have not been correspondingly moving into domestic labour. Bittman and Wajcman (2004, p.173) argue that there remains a “second shift” for women and mothers in particular in the twenty-first century. Bittman and Wajcman (p.189) conclude that unpaid work, particularly childcare, continues to be predominantly “women’s work” and, importantly, note how the pervasiveness of this gendered division in childcare disadvantages women. They argue that, given the lesser value accorded to domestic work in societies where greater value is accorded to paid work, the gendered division of child care “has social costs for women” (p.189). Such costs include equity in earnings and leisure time (p.189).

More recently still, Sarah Friedman (2015) has appropriated Hochschild’s (2012) concept of a “stalled revolution” to account for the stalling of men’s movement into traditionally feminine roles like childcare. She argues that there continue to be barriers to men’s take up of traditionally female responsibilities and that these barriers are not so much structural as they “are about cultural definitions of masculinity” (Friedman 2015, p.147). Friedman (p.147) explains that hegemonic gender norms set expectations for appropriate behaviours for men and women. She laments, however, that there is little cultural discourse challenging these norms and redefining them such that something like childcare labour is deemed more appropriate a male behaviour (p.147).

In Australia, journalist Annabel Crabb (2014, p.21) notes that as of 2011, census data indicates that just three per cent of Australian heterosexual households
with young children (under the age of 15) “have a mum who works full-time, and a dad who is at home or works part-time”. This compared to the 60 per cent of heterosexual households with young children that “have a dad who works full-time, and a mum who works part-time or not at all” (p.21). Crabb (2014) understands the displacement of responsibilities like childcare onto a partner (usually onto women in the case of heterosexual couples) as having “a wife”. Referring to the displacement of childcare onto women and their continuing performance of the majority of household labour, Crabb (p.29) succinctly states that “women who work full-time are not only statistically less likely to have a wife; they’re still fairly likely to be a wife”.

Policy plays an important role in the reproduction of cultural expectations for appropriate male behaviour in relation to the home and the workplace. Graeme Russell (1994) picks up on this recognition of women’s disproportionate performance of household labour in the Australian context and, importantly, recognises how policy is implicated in the way childcare labour is gendered. He argues that due to this inequity women’s careers are compromised by the increased likelihood that they won’t work long and impressive hours and will take time off from work to care for in-need children (Russell 1994). Like Bittman and Wajcman (2004), Russell (1994) also argues that women’s leisure time suffers as a consequence of this inequity and that women are put under additional emotional strain by it. He (1994) states that “cultural expectation that fathers should be the primary breadwinners” and the failure of “policy makers to emphasise genuine shared responsibility for children” impede progress toward an increase in fathers’ participation in childcare labour and a therefore more equitable division of domestic labour between men and women. Policies that regularly assume, explicitly or implicitly, mothers’ primary responsibility for childcare, often frame a good father as a father that is supportive of and helpful to the mother rather one that is equally committed to and involved in the labour of childcare. Russell (1994) argues that this neglect for fathers reduces “the possibility of fathers sharing the responsibilities for parenting” and that, for there to be a more equitable division of childcare labour, there must first be a presumption that mothers and fathers could be equally responsible for this kind
of labour. Though I will return to this in chapter 1, it is appropriate that I note here that whilst policy intervention is an important step toward achieving more equitable divisions of labour in heterosexual households, it has its limitations.

My thesis takes up Russell's contention that the representation of men and fathers in policy can inhibit possibilities of fathers assuming more responsibility for the care of children. This is the case both in terms of its symbolic effects and the ways that policy can directly influence the actions of the populations it names. My thesis examines *The Coalition’s Policy for Paid Parental Leave* and asks whether or not Russell's 1994 arguments hold true of paid parental leave policy two decades on. It analyses the representation of women and men, mothers and fathers in what was, until May 2015, the most recent addition to the Australian family policy landscape, examining the discourses through which gender and labour are configured by the policy. In doing so, I am interested in the power relations that are implicit in the policy's positioning of women and men, mothers and fathers and in the broader question of what good policy might look like in this area.

**Chapter Overview**

In chapter 1, I argue that policy is a vehicle through which hegemonic power can be exercised. To support this argument, this first chapter considers Stephen Ball's (1993) conception of policy as both text and discourse and the way discourses exercise power through policy texts. In consideration of how best to identify the ways power is implicit in policy discourses, I look to method and feminist Critical Policy Analysis (CPA) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). To consider the kind of power exercised through policy, specifically *The Coalition’s Policy for Paid Parental Leave* (LNP 2013), I turn to Raewyn Connell’s (1987) articulation of systems of male dominance over women and over one another: hegemonic masculinity.

In chapter 2, I argue that liberal family and citizenship discourses foster the maintenance of male hegemony. I explore these discourses and the ways they are
implicit in the history of Australian family policy, with a view to historicise and contextualise my chapter 3 analysis of *The Coalition’s Policy for Paid Parental Leave* (LNP 2013). To do this, I first draw from Carole Pateman (1989) and Wendy Brown (1995) to consider discourses on the liberal family and citizen. I identify the ways these discourses privilege a certain organization of the heterosexual household, promoting particular formations and performances of masculinity, and subordinating others. Drawing from Deborah Brennan’s (2009) history of family policy in Australia, I argue that these discourses have been invoked throughout Australian family policy history and are implicit in the way Australian family policies have worked to gender labour over the past century.

In chapter 3, I utilise the analytical framework established in chapters 1 and 2 to critically interrogate *The Coalition’s Policy for Paid Parental Leave* (LNP 2013). I consider the way gender hierarchies are reaffirmed by paid parental leave policy and how this particular instrument of family policy can work to reinforce the gendered division of childcare labour and inhibit progress toward equity in this area (LNP 2013). Using feminist CPA and CDA, I identify rhetorical devices in the policy that work to reaffirm the public and private split. I argue that the policy’s displacement of childcare responsibilities onto women and its re-inscription of parenthood onto women’s bodies, serve to reposition women in the private, domestic sphere. I argue that the policy reasserts men’s dominance of the public, paid-work sphere by delegitimising women’s careers and undermining their position in full-time, paid labour. I then examine the omission of men and fathers from the policy and argue that it works to exclude primary parenting masculinities and men from the private sphere. Finally, I consider how masculinity is positioned in the gender relations privileged by the policy and argue that the policy acts to reposition men as supporters and providers belonging in the public sphere.

In the conclusion, I consider where the Australian family policy landscape is at now and the implications of policy shifts toward childcare subsidy. I argue that, whilst childcare subsidies do not implicitly reinforce a liberal organisation of heterosexual households, they do fail to challenge existing inequalities in the
distribution of domestic labour. Recognising the temporal limitations of an Honours thesis, I consider the ways my own research would benefit from further study such that I might engage with Tony Bennett’s (1998) call for a more pragmatic study of policy and offer considered policy alternatives as well as critique. I take up Bennett’s (1998) contention that policy analyses should work to offer not only a critique, but also something in the way of a solution or recommendation for future policies and consider how my own critique highlights the problematic elements of policy that would need to be attended to in consideration and development of alternatives. I suggest that further research and development of alternatives to the Coalition’s policy could take a comparative focus and examine the approaches of other states or consider the way the distribution of childcare labour is negotiated in heterosexual households.
Chapter 1: Policy, Critical Theory and Hegemony

In this first chapter of my thesis I argue that policy is an important object for gender and cultural studies. Drawing from Stephen Ball's (1993) conception of policy as both text and discourse, I consider the way discourses exercise power through policy texts. I will then consider feminist Critical Policy Analysis (CPA) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as methodological approaches to examining how discourses exercise power through policy texts. Finally, I will look to Raewyn Connell and her concepts of hierarchical multiple masculinities to consider how male hegemony is reproduced through The Coalition's Policy for Paid Parental Leave (LNP 2013).

Policy as an Object for Gender and Cultural Studies

Ball (1993) conceives of policy as both text and discourse. His conception is useful when considering what policy is and how it has the capacity to be a conduit for power and assumptions about human relations and values (Ball 1993). It prompts consideration of why study of policy is important and how such studies might be undertaken (Ball 1993). Ball (1993, p.11) conceives of policy as text to signify what Trevor Gale (1999, p.394) terms its “writerly” and “readerly” aspects. That is to say that the published policy document, or text, does not emerge from or enter into a vacuum. Rather, policy documents are sites of both “the politics of policy production and the politics of policy interpretation” (p.394). Policy texts are representations encoded in the policy-making process, including the governmental compromises, ideological conflicts, and power struggles that this process entails (Ball 1993, p.11). Once published and distributed, the policy text is not concrete either. Just as it emerged from power relations, it enters into power relations as well (p.11). They are representations that are decoded as they enter into patterns of inequality, such as class, race or

3 Miriam Henry (1993) has problematised Ball’s (1993) dichotomy of policy as text and policy as discourse. She argues that “text and discourse clearly operate in relation rather than in opposition to each other and need to be theorised as such” (Henry 1993, p.102). There is value in this critique, however Ball’s (1993) dichotomy remains a useful analytical distinction as I work to understand the ways discourse exercise power through policy and policy texts as a particular conduit for power.
gender relations, and are interpreted and/or taken up differently by readers or actors differently positioned in such relations (pp.11-12).

Policies yield a particular power in the world. They are “textual interventions into practice” (Ball 1993, p.12). I suggest that their practical capacities make them distinct from other representational texts (films, television, video games) in terms of the significance of their constitutive force. Policy texts matter because they are texts that can be “acted on” (Beilharz 1987, p.394). Policy can be legitimised in law, and as such is experienced differently by populations because it can be enforced.

Practically and rhetorically, policy discourses exercise power by constructing truths (Ball 1993, p.14). These truths are constructed through discursive enabling and limitation of the terms by which policies are produced and interpreted. Drawing from Michel Foucault’s (1972, p.49) understanding of the way discourse constitutes the objects about which they speak, Ball (1993, p.14) suggests that discourses are about “what can be said, and thought...who can speak, when, where and with what authority”. Discourses order and combine statements in different ways and displace and exclude statements or subjects in other ways (p.14). These truths then, are the “concepts and vocabulary” that discourse makes available to its users (p.15). Policy discourses exercise power by tacitly defining the terms of the debate.

An understanding of policy as discourse and recognition of the ways discourses are implicit in policy texts, prompts consideration of dominant discourses implicit in policy (Ball 1993, p.15). Understanding that these dominant discourses are able to exercise power through policy (via rhetoric, governmental redistribution of funding and interests, and law) comes part of the way to appreciating the importance of studying policy, or at least why I have deemed studying The Coalition’s Policy for Paid Parental Leave (LNP 2013) important. Tony Bennett (1998, p.4) also argues for the importance of studying cultural policy in cultural studies. Bennett (p.4) argues that cultural policies are significant to the way governments relate to culture in modern societies and that
consideration of policy is therefore important to understand the ways culture is managed and administered. He argues that consideration of cultural policies is important when seeking to understand “the role cultural policies play as parts of a distinctive configuration of the relations between government and culture” (p.4). In keeping with this, I argue that consideration of family policy enables a significant contribution to be made to understandings of the way governments relate to gender and labour. I suggest that analysis of policies like The Coalition’s Policy for Paid Parental Leave (LNP 2013) should be undertaken to further understandings of how gender, and specifically the gendering of care-work, is managed and administered.

Whilst my project values policy analysis due to its capacity to gain a more in-depth understanding of how labour is gendered, policy analysis is also valuable in its capacity to contribute to policy debate and future design. Bennett (1998, p.4) argues that the study of policy is important as it has the potential to cultivate relationships with policy-makers. Such acknowledgment of this particularly practical aspect of policy analysis is echoed in much justification for Critical Policy Analysis (CPA). Sarah Diem et al. (2014, p.1075) argue that a common rationale for engagement in CPA is activism and the bridging of research to practice. Diem et al. (p.1078) term this “activist research” and explain that informing the work of policy makers and influencing policy is a key justification for the importance of policy analysis. In my conclusion, I will return to the question of doing policy analysis in gender and cultural studies as an approach aimed at influencing policy debate and future design.

Critical Approaches to Policy Analysis
In consideration of how best to identify the dominant discourses exercised through policy texts, I turn now to method and Feminist Critical Policy Analysis (CPA) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approaches. In the previous paragraph I introduced the term Critical Policy Analysis (CPA). To explain this further, CPA emphasises consideration of the role of power in making policy (Diem et al. 2014, p.1076). The application of critical theory to policy analysis,
and the focus on power it engenders, is valuable to a policy analysis like mine which is primarily concerned with uncovering the pervasiveness of dominant discourses in the Coalition’s paid parental leave policy. Specifically, Diem et al. (p.1072) posit that CPA tends to focus on: policy rhetoric; the historical contexts from which policies emerge; the distribution of power in policy; social stratification and the broader effect policies have on systems of privilege and inequality; and the resistance of policies by members of non-dominant groups. Of these, my own analysis of the Coalition’s policy will focus particularly on its rhetoric, the historical context from which the policy emerged and its relationship to systems of power, privilege and inequality. My analysis will also focus on the broader effect the policy had on systems of privilege and inequality, and the resistance of the policy from members of non-dominant groups. However, as the Coalition’s policy was never put into practice, my analysis of these two elements is limited to the policy's rhetorical effect on systems of privilege and inequality and the resistance of it following its announcement, rather than its implementation.

In addition to work collected under the term CPA, I will also draw from work characterised by scholars as Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). In describing CPA, Diem et al. (2014, p.1073) explain that it often draws from other critical theory and, in particular, from CDA. Working from Ball’s (1993) understanding of policy as discourse, and of discourses as implicit in policy text, it follows that my engagement with CPA should draw from CDA too. My analysis is concerned with how dominant discourses, implicit in family policy, are gendered and implicate what Michelle M. Lazar (2007, p.141) terms, “hierarchically gendered social orders”. To do this, I draw primarily from the feminist CDA approach.

Adapted from traditional critical discourse analyses, circulated by the likes of Norman Fairclough (1992), that serve to expose the role of language and discourse in the production, reproduction, and maintenance of social power, Lazar’s (2007, p.145) feminist CDA examines the ways language and discourse function to produce, reproduce, and maintain the gendered social order. That is to say, the order that systematically privileges men and disempowers women:
patriarchy. Lazar (p.145) describes CDA’s commitment to the exposure of the mechanisms through which oppressive social structures are sustained as “emancipatory” and “analytical activism”. Amongst other justifications made for a feminist CDA — including the subtlety and consensus unique to women’s subordination; the dominance of straight white men in the field of CDA; and the importance of group visibility — Lazar (pp.143-7) is particularly taken with the implications of feminist CDA for social change and argues that CDA offers a platform from which feminism “can produce a rich and powerful political critique for action”. Catherine Marshall (1997, p.ix) is also concerned with the practical impact of a feminist intervention. A feminist critical policy analysis, she argues, works to uncover systems of gendered oppression and/or marginalisation at play in policy documents and, from there, works to inform future policies and the way they account for and relate to women, girls, and other marginalised groups (p.ix).

Of particular importance to my project are the discursive strategies that work to consolidate patriarchal dominance that are identified by feminist CDA and CPA. These include omission, exclusion, and silence. Feminist critical policy analyst, Wanda S. Pillow (1997, pp.139-142) asks what silences in policies tell us. In her own work, she argues that policies designed to address teen pregnancy assume that teen pregnancy is a women’s issue and responsibility (p.143). The displacement of responsibility onto women and the omission of men from policies addressing teen pregnancy, she argues, highlights the effects of male power and dominance on policy (p.143). Pillow (p.143) also contends that teen pregnancy policy's focus on biological, mechanical, and risk-orientated sex education omits consideration of topics addressing young women’s sexuality such as gendered media sexualisation, social expectations of behavior, and desire and pleasure. Such omissions demonstrate the normative assumptions upon which these policies are based. These silences prompt Pillow (p.147) to ask, “who is the policy set up to really benefit and what hegemonic power relations operate in this process?” Similarly, such silences and the omission of particular

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4 Patriarchy is the “system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress or exploit women” (Walby 1990, p.214).
masculinities from *The Coalition’s Policy for Paid Parental Leave* (LNP 2013) prompt me to ask: “what masculinities are likely to benefit from this policy and what kind of power relations are working, through policy, to omit or benefit certain formations of gender?”

In her work on Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) promotional materials, Nicole Charles (2014, p.9) is also concerned by silences and the inclusion and exclusion of certain masculinities. She (pp.10-11) finds that these promotional materials ignore issues of anal HPV transmission and men who have sex with men, and eschew the terms ‘males’, ‘young men’ and ‘boys’. She (p.11) argues that these omissions are representative of the reinforcement of dominant hetero-norms. Charles (p.9) uses feminist CDA to identify the strategies used to exclude homosexual masculinities from HPV awareness campaigns, which include “vague and obscure language” and “explicit heterosexual references that enable the inclusion of particular desirable male subjects and exclusion of those who do not conform to these hegemonic ways of being”. Such reinforcement of dominant masculinities and omission of others, Charles (p.13) points out, could affect how the marginalised and omitted see themselves and construct their own identities in relation to the world around them as well as those individuals’ access to appropriate sex education. Charles’ (2014) study exemplifies how CDA can be used to identify silence and omission as discursive strategies with which dominant and gendered social orders are maintained and reinforced. The emphasis on interrogating the supposed neutrality of policy is something I attempt to emulate below, considering the discursive strategies through which *The Coalition’s Policy for Paid Parental Leave* (LNP 2013) omits certain masculinities, reinforces the dominance of others and privileges a certain organisation of heterosexual families.

Men, Masculinity and Paid Parental Leave Policy

In consideration of the kind of power exercised through *The Coalition’s Policy for Paid Parental Leave* (LNP 2013), I turn to Raewyn Connell. In her well-known book, *Gender and Power: Society, the Person, and Sexual Politics*, Connell (1987, p.183) characterises the gender order as hierarchical in terms of men’s
dominance of women but also in terms of some men’s dominance of other men. Here, Connell (p.183) defines the ideology through which this dominance of women and other men is maintained as ‘hegemonic masculinity’. In doing so she adapts Antonio Gramsci’s (cited in Connell, p.184) characterisation of ‘hegemony’ as the “social ascendancy achieved in a play of social forces that extends beyond contests of brute power into the organisation of private life and cultural processes”.

In 2005, Connell and James Messerschmidt revisited the concept of hegemonic masculinity in relation to criticisms it received and explained the embodiment of hegemonic masculinity. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005, p.838) argue that the ambiguity of hegemonic embodiment is an important aspect of the concept. Hegemonic patterns of masculinity are context specific and subject to change. Importantly, so too are other patterns of masculinity. Connell and Messerschmidt (p. 852) note that hegemonic masculinity is always open to contestation and acknowledge the possibility of the democratisation of gender relations. They recognise that projects — like women’s and LGBTQI rights movements — are already undertaking this work (p.852). Such an understanding of hegemonic masculinity, as contextually specific and open to change and renegotiation, is one I adopt in consideration of how policy works to shape masculinities but also how it could work to challenge and revise them.

When considering the way hegemonic power might work through policy, it is important to understand the way hegemony is enforced. Connell (1987, p.184) stipulates that the ascendancy of men in the gender order is not achieved on the basis of force, though the use of force is not incompatible with hegemony. Rather, men’s dominance is embedded in things like everyday practices, mass media, religious and state institutions, and, importantly, policies. The hegemony of men,  

5 Connell’s original conception of hegemonic masculinity in Gender and Power (1987) garnered much criticism (see Holter 2003; Demetriou 2001; Whitehead 2002; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). In response to this, Connell, with James Messerschmidt, reformulated the concept in ‘Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept’ (2005).

6 In response to critique of the concept’s failure to demonstrate what embodiment of hegemony looked like (Wetherell and Edley 1999).
embedded as it is in these cultural processes, implies consent from the dominated (p.185). When the hegemony of men is embedded in the policy of democratically elected governments, there is also an implication of consent from the electorate, by virtue of government mandate.

Connell (1987, p.185) proceeds to clarify that hegemonic masculinity and the hegemonic man will unlikely resemble actual powerful and dominant men and will instead serve as ideals that sustain those men’s power. They will also operate as ideals and norms to which a large proportion of men will strive to conform (p.185). Connell (p.185; 2005, p.79-80) explains that the appeal of hegemonic masculinity lies in the benefit most men gain from the subordination of women (“the patriarchal dividend”) but that a great many men reap these benefits whilst maintaining relationships with women marked by compromise and even respect rather than “naked domination or an uncontested display of authority”. These masculinities, that benefit from the patriarchal dividend but are not hegemonic, are what Connell (p.79) terms “complicit”. That is to say they are complicit in the maintenance of male hegemony without embodying all hegemonic qualities.

Connell (1987, p.184) is keen to emphasise that hegemony does not engender complete cultural dominance and the obliteration of alternatives. Rather, hegemony is achieved within a constant state of negotiation in which these alternatives are subordinated. Connell (2005) expands on such consideration of this state of negotiation, the subordination of alternative masculinities, and the ways hegemonic masculinities relate to these alternatives in *Masculinities*. In terms of subordination, Connell (2005, p.78) explains that, with hegemonic masculinity the articulation of an ascendency of men over women, masculinities that can easily be assimilated with femininity must be oppressed to maintain male hegemony. Connell (p.78) terms these masculinities “subordinate”. Subordinate masculinities are subsequently positioned at the bottom of the hierarchy of masculinities and suffer for their deviation from the masculine/hegemonic ideal of any given context (pp.78-79). The subordination of masculinities that can easily be assimilated with femininity, particularly those
that take-up traditionally feminine responsibilities like childcare, is central to my thesis' examination of the representations of men in the Coalition’s policy (LNP 2013) and is something I return to in chapter 2.

Connells’ theorisation of hegemonic masculinity is useful when considering the way power is exercised through policy and why family policies might work to reinforce certain gender norms and values. Her theorisation of hegemony as open to challenge and renegotiation is particularly important as I consider the positive impact policy could have on the gendered distribution of labour in heterosexual households.

However, it is important to recognise that, even with a paid parental leave policy that is perfectly gender neutral in its rhetoric and equally distributive of the leave payment to women and men, the division of childcare labour may remain inequitable and gendered. Andrea Doucet (2004) identifies the way men’s participation of childcare remains gendered even in the case of stay-at-home dads. Doucet (2004) explains that stay-at-home dads’ participation in childcare is conducted in a manner that “builds on traditional male interests” and that many of these fathers involve themselves disproportionately in children’s extracurricular activities in leadership positions, in contrast to their contribution to other forms of domestic labour. Lyn Craig (2006, p.264) explains that, even with men's increasing participation in childcare labour, the distribution of childcare tasks remains gendered. In particular, Craig (p.264) notes that whilst fathers perform the majority of the “enjoyable” tasks, such as playing or reading with children, mothers continue to perform the majority or more traditional and laborious care tasks, such as cleaning and feeding.

In acknowledging literature on the gendered distribution of childcare tasks, I recognise that any single policy is but one intervention into a complex cultural landscape characterised by deeply-held and historically-based gendered values and patterns of behavior. In that sense, significant change would require consideration of both governmental approaches to gender and of the everyday cultures of institutions such as the family and workplaces. Nonetheless, policies
do perform important work toward achieving a more equitable division of childcare labour. They have public symbolic force and are significant in fostering the conditions in which couples are able to negotiate the distribution of household tasks. That is to say that a more gender neutral policy, that is encouraging of men’s equal participation in childcare labour, remains an important goal.

In this first chapter I have examined the capacity of discourses to exercise hegemonic power through policy texts. I have explored the way hegemonic power can function through policy to privilege and omit certain behaviours of masculinity and secure the patriarchal dividend. The patriarchal dividend is also secured in the reproduction of the gendered division of childcare labour. The question of how the displacement of childcare responsibilities onto women, to the exclusion of men, works to secure the patriarchal dividend, maintain male hegemony and is implicit in the historical Australian policy landscape, is one I will now address in chapter 2.
Chapter Two: Liberal Family Discourses and Australian Family Policy

In this second chapter, I argue that liberal family and citizenship discourses foster the maintenance of male hegemony. I explore these discourses and the ways they are implicit in the history of Australian family policy, with a view to historicise and contextualise my chapter 3 analysis of *The Coalition’s Policy for Paid Parental Leave* (LNP 2013). To do this, I first consider discourses on the liberal family and citizen, identifying the ways these discourses privilege a certain organization of the heterosexual household, promoting particular formations and performances of masculinity, and subordinating others. I argue that these discourses have been invoked throughout Australian family policy history and are implicit in the ways Australian family policies have worked to gender labour over the past century.

**The Liberal Family: Public and Private Spheres**

Liberal philosophies and societies have been historically gendered and characterised as split into two related spheres. Carole Pateman (1989, p.3) contends that, “civil society is divided into two contrasting spheres of social life... [the] public or private”. Pateman (p.3) goes on to qualify each sphere. The public, she writes, is the realm of the economy and the state (p.3). The private is that of the “domestic, familial and sexual relations” (p.3). Via restrictions in representational democracy and the division of labour under capitalism, the public sphere has been gendered masculine and the private sphere has been gendered feminine (p.4). The liberal heterosexual couple, then, has been historically characterised as “the male wage-worker/female domestic-worker couple” (Connell 1998, p.41).

Womanhood, and women’s bodies, are positioned in this private, domestic sphere because they “represent all that is excluded from the public sphere” (Pateman 1989, p.4). Women’s positioning in the private sphere and exclusion from the public is justified in classical liberal discourses by their supposed “lack of capacities necessary” for public life (p.4). By “capacities”, Pateman (p.4) refers
to the patriarchal understanding of men’s capacity to “reason, sublimate their passions, develop a sense of justice and so uphold the universal, civil law”. In terms of women’s lack of these capacities, Pateman (p.4) is referring to patriarchal understanding of women as unable to “transcend their bodily natures and sexual passions” and subsequent inability to develop a political morality. Specifically, it is women’s ability to give birth that relegates them from the public sphere. Women’s procreative capacities render their bodies “subject to uncontrollable natural processes and passions” and therefore unfit for public life (p.44).

Such consideration of liberal societies, as characterised by the public/male and private/female spheres, prompts further consideration of how men and women “conduct gendered lives” (Connell 1995, p.71). Connell (2000, p.26) argues that gender is organized around human reproduction. Though human reproduction encompasses “sexual arousal… intercourse, childbirth… bodily sex difference and similarity”, what is particularly pertinent to this thesis is how gender differences are organized around human reproduction in terms of childcare and the impact of this on the gendered division of childcare labour in Australia (p.26).

When considering the way gender is organised in relation to childcare in liberal societies, we should note, as Connell (2005, p.371) does, that this division of separate spheres is not symbolically neutral. Indeed, the private (feminised) sphere is subordinate to the public (masculinised) sphere. Women, therefore, experience structural subordination in the gender order.

This structural subordination is what Wendy Brown (1995, p.156) terms the naturalized encumbrance of the domestic sphere. In liberal societies historically, a woman’s right to be treated as an individual and as a citizen is undermined by her association with the family and economic dependence (p.160). In her analysis of the “gendered characteristics of liberal freedom”, Brown (pp.148-155) argues that the citizen, to which individualism and autonomy is assigned within the liberal state, is gendered masculine and that the freedom of the liberal citizen (i.e. of men) is predicated on the encumbrance of women. By
“encumbrance”, Brown (p.156) explains that liberty, in the liberal state, is premised upon the displacement of “assigned activities, responsibilities, and emotional attributes” onto women. The liberal citizen can only be free to exercise their citizenship and move freely in the public sphere when they aren’t encumbered by private demands, such as household responsibilities, child-rearing and care-work. The maintenance of men’s dominance in the public, paid-work sphere is abetted by the relegation of women to the subordinate private sphere and the displacement of domestic responsibilities, like childcare, onto women.

Men benefit from the subordination of the private/female sphere to the public/male sphere and reap what Connell (1987, p.185) terms, the “patriarchal dividend”. I explained in chapter 1 that the gender order and the hierarchy of multiple masculinities are premised on the maintenance of male hegemony and domination of women and femininity (p.183). Hegemonic masculinity depends then, upon a pattern of behaviours that work to ensure that the subordination of the private (feminised) sphere to the public (masculinised) sphere is sustained. Similarly and specifically in terms of the public and private spheres, Pateman (1989, p.45) explains that “civil individuals have a fraternal bond because, as men, they share a common interest in upholding the contract which legitimizes their masculine patriarchal right”. In what Pateman (pp.44-45) labels “the fraternal social contract”, men are bound by the collective benefit they receive from the relegation of women to the private sphere and thus share a common interest in maintaining their hegemony this way. In relation to childcare, men are bound by the collective benefit they receive from the displacement of childcare responsibilities onto women.

The “fraternal social contract” has consequences for paid parental leave policy (Pateman 1989, p.45). Gillian Pascall (1997, p.10) argues that mainstream approaches to social policy do not afford women citizenship and instead marginalise them. Similarly, Ruth Lister (2003, p.180) argues that paid parental leave policy can work to reinforce “dependency and gendered roles in a way which... is unhelpful to women, children and family life”. In policies like The
Coalition’s Policy for Paid Parental Leave (LNP 2013) then, the “fraternal social contract” could be exercised through a disproportionate focus on women as mothers and emphasis on their role in the home, ensuring that men continue to benefit from women’s disproportionate performance of childcare labour.

Connell (2005, p.372) argues that male hegemony in the public sphere has been threatened by the movement of women into the workforce since the 1980s. She (p.372) contends that this threat has engendered broad political anxiety about the relationship between the labour market and the family and that, consequently, state agencies themselves have become arenas for gender politics. Work/life balance issues have gradually become central to political discussion (p.372). Connell’s (p. 372) argument here invokes discourses on masculinity in crisis. Michael Kimmel (1992, p.121) explains that, at different historical junctures, societies have experienced public confusion about what it means to be a “real man”, framing dominant understandings of masculinity as under threat, or subject to crisis. John MacInnes (2001, p.311) argues that masculinity serves to defend the patriarchal order against perceived threats, like the movement of women into the male dominated public sphere for example, and has therefore always been in crisis or subject to contestation. I am interested in how The Coalition’s Policy for Paid Parental Leave (LNP 2013) represents a response to increased rates of women’s workforce participation and the threat this poses to masculine privilege in the public sphere.

Thus, whilst emerging family and workplace policies appear gender neutral, Connell (2005, p.375) finds them to be expressions of these anxieties and provisions “for the domestic responsibilities of women”. Connell (p.378-9) identifies a particular trend in family-friendly flexible hours and maternity policies, arguing that these policies promote the connection of women with the domestic sphere and child-rearing. Problematically, the question for many such policies is: how can workplaces provide conditions for women, rather than parents, to continue to undertake primary responsibility for childcare? The gender-coding of these policies is particularly explicit in conservative government’s promotion of maternity leave provisions (p.379). These policies do
more than promote the connection of women to the private sphere, they work to re-inscribe “maternity on women’s bodies as the defining feature of womanhood” (p.379).

Connell (2005) contends that such family and workplace policies, acting to reaffirm the significance of the male breadwinner to hegemonic masculinity, are conservative reactions to women’s liberation from the private sphere. In addition to this, I posit that these policies, specifically The Coalition’s Policy for Paid Parental Leave Policy (LNP 2013), work to hamper men’s entrance into the private sphere and, therefore, efforts to make the division of childcare labour more equitable in heterosexual households.

The capacity of policy to hamper men’s assumption of greater childcare responsibility is something I flagged in my introduction. Lister (2003, p.142) also argues that the gendered division of domestic labour and caring responsibilities can be shaped by government policy. She (p.142) contends that men’s participation in childcare is impeded by parental leave policies that enshrine women and mothers as natural caregivers of children. Importantly however, policy also has the capacity to foster increases in men’s participation in childcare. Lister (2003, p.142) points to the success of Icelandic policy that designates three months leave specifically for fathers. The roll out of this policy, she notes, coincided with a 65 per cent increase in the take up rate of paternity leave and contributed to shifts in the association of childcare with fatherhood (p.142).

Policies like The Coalition’s Policy for Paid Parental Leave (LNP 2013) then, have the capacity to shape how labour is gendered in Australian and it is therefore imperative that it not enshrine women and mothers as natural caregivers to the exclusion of men and fathers.

Liberal Discourses and Australia Family Policy History
The values implicit in liberal citizenship discourses, derived from a long history of philosophical treatises on the state and government, have underpinned much
of the history of Australian family policy. Whilst Australian paid parental leave policies can be traced back to the introduction of paid maternity leave to public servants by the Whitlam Government in 1973 (and I will return to this later), liberal family and citizenship discourses can be located in a broader history of financial relationships between the state and families in Australia. It is important to examine the ways such discourses have underpinned historical Australian family policy, to historicise and contextualise those identified in chapter 3’s analysis of The Coalition’s Policy for Paid Parental Leave (LNP 2013). In doing so we can better understand the ways gender and labour have been and continue to be understood and administered by Australian policy.

As I explained earlier in this chapter, in liberal discourse the public sphere is gendered masculine. Thus, the capacity to earn and, therefore, the responsibility to provide financially (to bring home the bread) for a family is gendered male. This is colloquially referred to as the male breadwinner. Bettina Cass (1998, p.41) explains that the male breadwinner exists when “a man is the only, or the primary, breadwinner in a couple family; a married woman or mother is either fully supported as a home-based, non-market carer or partially supported as a secondary earner”. Ray Broomhill and Rhonda Sharp (2005, p.123) contend that the male breadwinner remains a dominant, though diversifying (with women’s ever increasing participation in the workforce) component of the modern Australian gender order.

Australian state investment in the male breadwinner archetype can be traced back to the Harvester Judgment of 1907 in which the then-Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Court (the now-Australian Industrial Relations Commission) determined that every Australian labourer should receive a wage sufficient to support himself, his wife and his children (Brennan 2009, pp. 2-3). Deborah Brennan (p.3) writes that this became known as the “family wage”. The “family wage” captured then-contemporary assumptions of women’s, and the private sphere’s, economic dependency upon men and ensured the stability of such assumptions until they began to be challenged in the 1960s and 70s (discussed below)(p.3). Brennan (p.1) writes that the normative strength of the
male breadwinner has critically shaped Australian policies and debates on family support. As I will unpack in chapter 3’s analysis of *The Coalition's Policy for Paid Parental Leave* (LNP 2013), male breadwinner discourses, and assumptions of men's responsibility to provide for and support women and families, are implicit even in this most recent addition to the Australian family policy landscape, over a century since the introduction of the “family wage” (Brennan 2009, p.3).

The early twentieth century also saw the introduction of the first government payment to citizens upon the birth of a new child. Introduced in 1912, the Maternity Allowance was a non-means tested payment paid out to new mothers (ACTU 2009). The introduction of this payment was justified as an instrument to decrease the infant mortality rate in Australia. The introduction of this allowance established a trend in Australian family policy to frame maternity payments as the right of *all* mothers and not a workplace entitlement available *only* to working mothers. This implicitly delegitimises women's careers and works to position them in the private sphere. The allowance implies that women are deserving of the payment because they perform important work in the private sphere as mothers, rather than the public sphere as employees.

It was not until 1973 that government payments received upon the birth of a child were conceived as a workplace entitlement. The Whitlam Labor Government’s provision of paid maternity leave to public service employees in 1973 marked the introduction of Australia’s first state funded paid parental leave scheme (ACTU 2009). However, even with this shift toward recognition of women’s position in the public sphere, this policy nevertheless introduced the liberal attribution of primary parenting (private sphere) responsibilities to women in Australian paid parental leave policy rhetoric. This is evident in its being a “maternity” payment, rather than a “parental” payment (ALP 1973). The *Australian Public Service Maternity Leave Act 1973* entitled female public servants to twelve weeks paid leave and a maximum fifty-two weeks total leave following the birth of their child (ACTU 2009). According to Brennan (2009, p.4), this act came at the time of second wave feminism and when the assumed dependency of women on their husbands characteristic of the notion of ‘Family
Wage’ was being challenged. Women were gaining recognition as workers and employees and participation of married women in the workforce had increased to 33 per cent by 1971 (Whitehouse, in Brennan 2009, p.4). Equal pay for equal work had been established in law in 1969 and throughout the 1970s women’s participation in unions increased (Brennan 2009, p.3; O’Neill and Johns 2009).

In 1978 then-federal Health Minister John Howard abolished the aforementioned Maternity Allowance, arguing that increased health care spending and family tax benefits had made the allowance redundant (O’Neill and Johns 2009). Marjorie O’Neill and Robyn Johns (2009) concur that the original purpose of the allowance (to aid families with the financial strain of a new child and to lower the infant mortality rate) had been made obsolete by the minimal amount of the payment and by the other benefit schemes made available relating to hospital expenses.

The displacement of childcare labour onto women in Australian family policy was reinforced when, in 1979, the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) sought to extend the Whitlam Government’s public service maternity leave provisions to mothers in the private sector (O’Neill & Johns, 2009). Having taken the issue to the Australian Industrial Relations Commission (AIRC), this extension of maternity leave to the private sector was granted in the form of the Maternity Leave Test Case7 1979 (ACTU 2009). This test case awarded all pregnant workers six weeks compulsory leave following the birth of their child and twelve months total leave, introduced safe job provisions in which the pregnant worker could be temporarily transferred to a safer job in the latter stages of their pregnancy and granted access to special leave should their pregnancy terminate in a way other than birth (ACTU 2009). However, all of the leave granted to mothers by this 1979 test case, including the six weeks compulsory leave, was to be unpaid (ACTU 2009).

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7 A test case is a “case that sets a precedent for other cases involving the same question of law” (Oxford Dictionaries 2015).
The focus on women in Australian family policy was expanded further still to accommodate adoptive mothers when, in 1985, the ACTU sought to yet again expand the provisions of maternity leave in Australia and secure provisions for leave from the workforce following the adoption of a child (ACTU 2009). This resulted in the Adoption Leave Test Case 1985 (ACTU 2009). This test case granted up to fifty-two weeks unpaid leave to mothers upon the adoption of a child (ACTU 2009).

Fathers were first factored into the parental leave equation in Australia in 1990. Again, the ACTU approached the AIRC calling for the extension of parental leave provisions to fathers (ACTU 2009). This resulted in the Parental Leave Test Case 1990 (ACTU 2009). This successful test case granted fathers one week unpaid leave upon the birth or adoption of their child and entitled either mother or father to fifty-one weeks unpaid leave following the birth or adoption of their child (ACTU 2009). Importantly, the Parental Leave Test Case 1990 set a precedent, whereby fathers are offered a comparably small portion of the parental leave offered to mothers, which continues to be reproduced in Australian paid parental leave policies today.

In the Social Security Legislation Amendment (Family Measures Act 1995), the Keating Government legislated the reintroduction of a Maternity Allowance type payment (O’Neill and Johns 2009). This payment was granted to families that had already qualified for the means-tested Parenting Allowance 1995* upon the birth of a new child and provided families with a lump some equivalent to six weeks parenting allowance (O’Neill and Johns 2009). The reintroduction of this kind of payment was justified by the Keating Government as assistance to “parents who want to stay home with their children” (Keating, cited in O’Neill and Johns 2009). However, the reintroduction of policies designating allowances

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* 1995 also saw the introduction of the Keating Government’s Parenting Allowance (O’Neill and Johns 2009). Daniels (cited in O’Neill and Johns 2009) describes this payment as a fortnightly payment offered to families subject to an income test.
like these demonstrates the pervasiveness of discomfort with state compensation of women as workers rather than as mothers within Australian family and paid parental leave policies.

In 2004, John Howard’s Coalition Government reinvested in the values represented in twentieth century Maternity Allowance, and indeed in conservative liberal discourses, introducing the Baby Bonus (O’Neill and Johns 2009). The Baby Bonus was to be a one-off payment made by the Commonwealth to new mothers upon the birth of their child (O’Neill and Johns 2009). The Howard Government was also keen to profess that state investment in something like a baby bonus rather than a scheme of paid maternity leave was preferable as it did not discriminate against stay-at-home mothers (Baird, cited in O’Neill and Johns 2009). The relationship between gender and work was centre-stage in such claims.

The current paid parental leave scheme was introduced by the Gillard Labor Government in 2010. This scheme marked Australia’s first state funded, paid leave scheme offered to parents upon the birth of a child. The Parental Leave Pay Act 2010 offers primary carers (though the legislation does specify that this will usually be the “birth mother”) 28 weeks leave at the national minimum wage to individuals/couples earning less than a combined $150,000 AUD per annum following the birth or adoption of their child (DHS 2014). The scheme also provides what it terms “Dad and Partner Pay”, allowing fathers and partners two weeks leave at the national minimum wage following the birth or adoption of a child (DHS 2014). Even this contemporary paid parental leave policy demonstrates prevailing attitudes toward women and mothers as the assumed and normative primary carer consistent with those relied upon in Australian family policy history. Also consistent with the invocation of the public/private, male/female split in broader Australian family policy is the policy’s rendering of the role and responsibility of “dads” to bond with a new child unimportant by offering them a comparatively minimal period of leave (DHS 2014).
When *The Coalition’s Policy for Paid Parental Leave* (LNP 2013) was announced, it entered an existing family policy field in which historical liberal discourses on the family and citizenship continued to frame state interventions. In addition to Labor’s existing paid parental leave policy, this field included Family Tax Benefits A and B (DHS 2015). Whilst Family Tax Benefit A was a means-tested family benefit distributed based on total household income, Family Tax Benefit B was a benefit tested only against the income of a household’s secondary earner (Craig 2010, p.31). Both work to disincentivise participation of secondary earners in the workforce. This is the case for women in particular as they are disproportionately the secondary earner in heterosexual households (p.31). Rebecca Brown (2011) argues that this is an “income trap” for women. These two benefits work to discourage secondary and primarily female earner’s participation in the workforce as they are both either scaled back or withdrawn once a household’s collective income (in the case of Benefit A) or its secondary earner’s income (in the case of Benefit B) begin to increase (Brown 2011). Though these benefits were scrapped in the Coalition’s May 2015 Budget, they were a significant part of the gendered policy landscape into which *The Coalition’s Policy for Paid Parental Leave* (LNP 2013) entered in 2013.

In this second chapter, I have argued that liberal family and citizenship discourses foster the maintenance of male hegemony. I explored these discourses and the ways they are implicit in historical Australian family policy, with a view to historicise and contextualise chapter 3’s analysis of *The Coalition’s Policy for Paid Parental Leave* (LNP 2013). To do this, I first considered discourses on the liberal family and citizen, arguing that such discourses privilege an organization of the heterosexual household whereby women perform the majority of household and childcare labour. I argued that these discourses promote liberal, supporting and breadwinning masculinities subordinating primary parenting masculinities. These gendered patterns of promotion and subordination have been evident throughout Australian family policy history and are visible in a range of policy interventions related to families, paid labour and childcare, such as maternity leave and baby bonuses. Across this history I have shown a general discomfort with the recognition and
subsequent payment of women as workers rather than mothers, that has policy origins in the *Harvester* Judgement of 1907. This is of course tightly imbricated with a pervasive neglect and dismissal of fathers as primary parents in Australian family policy.

In chapter 2 I have established an understanding of the ways gender and labour have been historically understood in Australian family policy, and am now able to turn to *The Coalition’s Policy for Paid Parental Leave* (LNP 2013). I want to ask: “does contemporary Australian family policy perpetuate these historical understandings, challenge them or introduce new understandings of gender and labour to the Australian policy landscape?” In chapter 3 I seek to answer these questions.
Chapter 3: The Coalition’s Policy for Paid Parental Leave (LNP, 2013)

When then-federal opposition leader Tony Abbott announced the Coalition’s paid parental leave policy in 2013, he did so against a backdrop of a long documented history of his own, highly publicised, sexism. Abbott was widely accused of having a “women problem” when he announced his policy (Szego 2015). His “women problem”, in media discourses, signifies a series of political incidents in which Abbott has demonstrated or has been associated with sexist attitudes toward women. These include his remarking that women were less suitable for leadership positions than men for “physiological reasons”, his suggestion that abortion was “the easy way out” and of his being the focus of then-Prime Minister Julia Gillard’s now famous “misogyny” speech (Price 2013). Eva Cox (2013) argues that in response to this the Coalition’s 2013 election campaign was marked by an increasing emphasis on Abbott’s woman-friendliness, and their paid parental leave scheme had an important role to play in this. In promoting the policy, Abbott contended that, under the Coalition’s scheme, “if you are a mother... you will be better off”, and that “every working woman would be better off” (Kelly 2013). He exclaimed that “if we want families to have more kids, if we want women to have a fair-dinkum choice to have a family... and to have a career, we need a policy like this” (Kelly 2013). So closely was he tied to the policy that it became known as “Tony Abbott’s signature paid parental leave scheme” (Kirk 2014). After his success at the 2013 election, Abbott continued to promote himself as a champion for women, notably appointing himself to the position of Minister for Women, though, importantly, making this appointment after establishing a cabinet with only one female colleague (Price 2013). Whilst Abbott’s history with women, the promotion of the policy, his having only one woman in his ministry and his self-appointment to the role of Minister for Women have implications for women’s political representation in Australia and could themselves be subject to further critical interrogation, they are not the primary concern of this thesis. Nonetheless, it is important to recognise here this broader and recent context as providing some cultural context for the significant focus given to The Coalition’s Policy for Paid Parental Leave (LNP 2013). Even if members of the Australian public never read
the document itself, it has nevertheless been the basis for broader addresses made to them, about contemporary Australian families, labour, and gender relations.

Drawing from the analytical framework established in chapter 1 and chapter 2, in this third and final chapter I critically analyse The Coalition’s Policy for Paid Parental Leave (LNP 2013). I argue that the policy’s displacement of childcare responsibilities onto women and its re-inscription of parenthood onto women’s bodies, serve to reposition women in the private, domestic sphere. I then argue that the policy reasserts men’s dominance of the public, paid-work sphere by delegitimising women’s careers and undermining their position in full-time, paid labour. I then examine the omission of men and fathers from the policy and argue that it works to exclude primary parenting masculinities and men from the private sphere. Finally, I consider how masculinity is positioned in the gender relations privileged by the policy and argue that the policy acts to reposition men as supporters and providers belonging in the public sphere.

**Mothers: Women, Work, Breastfeeding and Choice**

In chapter 2 I explained that the liberal heterosexual household has been historically characterised as the male wage-worker/female domestic-worker couple and that the gendered division of these spheres has not been symbolically neutral (Connell 2005, p.371). Rather, the private (feminised) sphere is subordinated to the public (masculinised) sphere (p.371). I also explained that the liberal citizen is supposed to be inherently masculine as their liberty is premised upon the displacement of “assigned activities, responsibilities, and emotional attributes” onto women (Brown 1995, pp.148-155). The liberal citizen is only free to exercise their citizenship and fully participate in the public sphere when they aren’t encumbered by domestic labour, child-rearing and care-work. The collective benefit that men receive from the relegation of women to the private sphere, I explained, is what Carole Pateman (1989, pp.44-45) labels “the fraternal social contract”, and what Raewyn Connell (1987, p.185) describes as “the patriarchal dividend”.

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The way elements of this policy work to reinforce the public/private divide and secure the patriarchal dividend is evident in its repositioning of women in the private sphere and displacement of childcare responsibilities onto them. This is obvious throughout the policy. In spite of the title — *The Coalition’s Policy for Paid Parental Leave* (LNP 2013, p.2) — its first sentence reads: "The Coalition will deliver a genuine paid parental leave scheme to give mothers... leave". The assumption that women and mothers will be the primary carers of children and recipients of the leave payment is rife throughout the rest of the policy. In fact, on page 2 alone, the policy proceeds to explain that it exists to help “women” as many families cannot afford to forgo the loss of a “mother’s” income upon the arrival of a child (p.2). Further, it states that, “under the Coalition’s scheme, mothers will be provided with 26 weeks of paid parental leave” (p.2). On this same page it is claimed that paid parental leave will help to increase “women’s” participation in the workforce, that “women” will receive their actual wage over the 26 week period and that “women” will benefit from the policy’s inclusion of superannuation (p.2).

The enshrining of women as the primary carers of children and intended recipients of the payment continues throughout the policy. On page 3 it is purported that the policy will provide “financial support to mothers while they are outside the paid workforce... bonding with their newborns” (LNP 2013, p.3). On page 4 the financial benefits to “women” are restated, as is the policy’s intent to “provide mothers with 26 weeks paid parental leave at their actual wage”. Page 6 declares that “a primary objective of the Coalition’s scheme is to support women” (p.6). And on the following page it is explained that the financial structuring of the policy will allow more “women” to be eligible and for “women” to receive higher payments than previous policies made available to them (p.7). Further along on page 7 it is suggested that critics of the Coalition’s policy “don’t take supporting women... seriously” (p.7). Even the graph on page 8, designed to compare payouts received under the Coalition’s scheme to Labor’s existing scheme, depicts a comparison of women’s salaries only (p.8).
In chapter 2 I noted Connell’s (2005, 378-9) identification of a trend in family-friendly flexible work hours and maternity policies, in liberal societies, to promote the connection of women with the domestic sphere and childcare. In doing so, I explained that such policies act to reaffirm a public/private, male/female split threatened by women’s movement into the workforce. In this case, the Coalition’s policy is direct in its association of women with the family in quotes such as "supporting women and families seriously", and, "[helping] women take enough time out of the workforce to establish a family" (LNP 2013, pp.3-7). The terms “women” and “mothers” are continually conflated (LNP 2013).

Flexible working hours and maternity leave policies, according to Connell (2005, p.379), do more than promote the connection of women to the private sphere; they work to re-inscribe “maternity on women’s bodies as the defining feature of womanhood”. Connell (2000, p.26) argues that gender, though not exclusively defined by it, is commonly understood as connected to human reproduction. What is particularly pertinent to this thesis is how assumptions about gender are made in relation to the division of reproductive labour in heterosexual couples, such that childcare is understood primarily as a woman’s responsibility.

In chapter 2 I noted Pateman’s (1989, p.4) claim that it is women’s ability to give birth that relegates them from the public sphere (p.44). Women’s ability to give birth is implicit in the way the Coalition’s policy works to re-inscribe parenthood and the private sphere onto women’s bodies through its discussion of breastfeeding. The policy informs readers that the six-month, post-birth period to which the policy would apply had been established in accordance with the Australian National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) and World Health Organisation’s (WHO) recommendations for the "optimal" period throughout which a baby should be breastfed and to therefore "support women to have the best chance to breastfeed" (LNP 2013, p.6). Such statements signify

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9 This invokes a broader politics of gender in the medical establishment. Though my thesis’ primary focus is the problematic conception of gender in Australian family policy, there is nevertheless much to be said about the normative
a governmental preference for how babies are fed and by whom. The association of breastfeeding with "women" fails to recognise women who either cannot or do not breastfeed as well as men who bottle-feed (irrespective of the bottle’s containing pumped breast-milk or formula). This statement is indicative of an ideological conception of child-rearing as bound to women and the female body to the exclusion of men and fathers.

The Coalition’s policy works to reinforce the public/private divide and protect the patriarchal dividend not simply through its repositioning of women in the private sphere, but also in its representation of women and mothers’ participation in the public sphere. This is particularly evident in the policy’s deployment of choice rhetoric.

A rhetoric of choice, or what Elspeth Probyn (1990, p.154) has referred to as a discourse or ideology of “choiceoisie”, communicates both new traditionalism and post-feminism. Probyn (p.152) explains that “choice” articulates new traditionalism by reproducing the status-quo and legitimacy of women’s place in the home, reminding women that the home, motherhood and family “are always already there” to be chosen. In new traditionalism, the home is the “natural choice” (p.152). In post-feminism, choice is articulated as “the possibility of choosing between the home or the career, the family or the successful job” (pp.152-153). Probyn (p.153) writes that, in post-feminism, this choice is made against a backdrop of a ticking biological clock, the implication being that, whilst there is a choice, the choice of a career and successful job jeopardise a woman’s chance to have the home and family. Choice, articulated through either new traditionalism or post-feminism, implies that the career is not as natural or legitimate a choice as the home and the family. Discourses of choice have become a public language to talk about women and, more problematically, work to shape the way women talk and think about themselves (p.154).

assumptions around gender, implicit in medical discourses that inform policy in this way. See Bibi Hølge-Hazelton and Kirsti Maltarud’s (2009) critique of the supposed gender-neutrality of medical knowledge and practice.
Choice rhetoric is particularly prevalent in *The Coalition's Policy for Paid Parental Leave* (LNP 2013) and works to undermine the legitimacy of women’s membership within the public sphere. Statements such as, “ensuring that women, particularly those with children, are able to participate as fully as they choose in the workforce” and “give women a more realistic choice if they want to combine work with family”, imply that a career is or should be a choice for women in a way that it is not for men (pp.2-3). That is, men are rarely asked to choose between a career and primary responsibilities: the figure of the “working mum” has no equivalent in the “working dad”, since he is presumed already and always to be working. By suggesting that a career should be a choice for women, the policy reinforces this idea that women’s primary responsibility is to the private sphere. It implies that their positions within the public sphere are secondary.

In a similar vein, the policy also works to dismiss women’s willingness to participate in the workforce. In one instance, the policy promotes itself on its capacity to “allow women to have children at the time they prefer, rather than being forced to put it off for financial reasons” (LNP 2013, p.3). Later on, the policy states that “26 per cent of previously employed Australian women return to work within six months of giving birth, often against their own preference” (p.8). In these instances the policy undermines women’s will to participate in paid-work. It passes off women’s participation in paid-work and the decision to return to the paid-workforce as financial necessities. In both instances it is presumed that, were there not the financial imperative to work or return to work, women would wish to remain in the private, familial sphere. Whilst this might be true of many women who work or return to work, it is important to note that the same is not presumed of men. Women’s participation in the public sphere is undermined by the presumption that women’s, rather than men’s, participation is based on financial necessity and is not important to the construction of their identities.

Whilst the policy’s discussion of breastfeeding works to re-inscribe primary parenting responsibilities onto women to the exclusion of men and to therefore
reposition women in the private sphere, it also works to characterise the public sphere and women's participation in it. Following its stipulations of the bases upon which fathers may be nominated as the primary recipients of the leave payment, the policy's reminder that “a primary objective of the Coalition's scheme is to support women to have to best chance to breastfeed... while maintaining a connection to the workplace” implies that breastfeeding is to be done whilst receiving the leave payment and located within the home (LNP 2013, p.6). Again, when critiquing Labor's existing scheme for not supporting “women to breastfeed and bond with their child for the recommended minimum period of six months”, the policy implies that breastfeeding will be done within the home (p.8). By framing breastfeeding as an activity that is fostered by a leave payment that allows breastfeeding women to be at home for the recommended period of time a baby should be breastfed, the policy characterises the public sphere as a breastfeeding-free zone. This contributes to a broader politics of public breastfeeding in Australia. Alison Bartlett (2014) argues that, in spite of its legality across federal and state jurisdictions, women still suffer from indirect discrimination and cultural stigma when breastfeeding in public. In relation to the workplace, Bartlett (2014) explains that this indirect discrimination is manifest when "breaks are not allowed or managers are unwilling to negotiate them, or simply that an all-day work commitment makes it impossible to find a break for feeding or expressing milk". The framing of breastfeeding thus deflects attention away from and minimises the responsibility of the public sphere to be more accommodating and contributes to broader discourses of suppression surrounding public breastfeeding in Australia.

**Fathers: Silence, Paternity and Breadwinning**

Chapter 1 showed how Critical Policy Analysis (CPA) invites us to explore silences and consider what is marginalised or absent from policy. In doing so we should critically interrogate how and why some voices aren’t represented (Diem et al. 2014, p.1077). In my introduction I discussed Graeme Russell’s (1994) argument that the neglect of fathers from family policy is an impediment toward men's assumption of a more central parenting role and more equitable divisions in childcare. Such neglect is evident in *The Coalition's Policy for Paid Parental
Leave (LNP 2013) and its omission and marginalisation of certain kinds of fathers and parenting masculinities, particularly primary parenting masculinities. The assumption that mothers will be primarily responsible for childcare denotes silences around fathers and the delegitimisation of men more centrally involved in childcare.

In fact, fathers are not mentioned until page five of the policy, when it is explained that they “will be eligible for two out of the 26 weeks for dedicated paternity leave... so that fathers can help mothers” (LNP 2013, p.5). This fifth page also explains that the scheme will allow for fathers to be nominated as the primary carer and recipient of the payment (p.5). Importantly, however, it is then clarified that nominated fathers will receive payouts reflective of “the lower of his actual wage or the mother’s actual wage... to ensure there is not a perverse incentive to send a mother back to work early” in a bid to access the higher wage fathers are more likely to earn (p.5). The policy’s specification that it will offer mother’s full replacement of their wage but will only offer fathers replacement of the lower of theirs or the mother’s wages demonstrates the little value accorded to fathers by the policy. Moreover, the implication that it would be perverse to send a mother back to work early, in spite of the policy seeing fit to offer fathers a comparatively minimal leave period of “two weeks” before they are “sent back” to work, is indicative of just how little men’s assumption of a more central parenting role is valued by the policy and the state.

The concluding statement to this brief section afforded to “paternity leave” is perhaps the most poignant example of the way the policy works to discourage men's assumption of the primary parenting role as it implies that men's assumption of this role robs women (LNP 2013, pp.5-6). Immediately following its stipulation that fathers will be paid the lesser of the two wages “to ensure there is not a perverse incentive to send a mother back to work early”, the policy concludes its section on paternity leave by stating that one of its primary objectives is to “support women to have the best chance to breastfeed and bond with their infant for the six-month period” (LNP 2013, pp.5-6). The clarification here acts to remind audiences that, though men are able to be nominated as
primary carers and recipients of the leave payment, their nomination undermines the policy’s objective and support of women generally.

The general omission of men and fathers from the policy, and their marginalisation as mere support figures entitled to only two of the 26 weeks offered to mothers, is indicative of the way hegemonic power operates through, and is reaffirmed by, policy as governmental instrument. Connell (2005, p.78) explains that as hegemony is the representation of an ascendancy of men over women, masculinities that can easily be assimilated with femininity must be oppressed in order to maintain male hegemony. Thus primary parenting masculinities that subsume traditionally feminine responsibilities (and are therefore easily assimilated with femininity) become subordinate. Their omission from this policy can be understood as symptomatic of hegemonic attempts to reaffirm the power of conventional masculinities.

Nicole Charles (2014, p.9) explains that discourses operate through exclusions and omissions, enabling the “exclusion of those who do not conform to... hegemonic ways of being”. She (p.9) cites the “techniques of avoidance” and “explicit heterosexual references”, in her own analysis of the ways Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) promotional discourses omit certain masculinities. Both are evident in the Coalition’s policy. The policy’s explicit referencing of women and mothers as the intended recipients of the leave payment and the avoidance of men and fathers is demonstrative of its silencing of primary parenting masculinities. This silencing is indicative of the way policy discourses construct truths by limiting the terms of reference and action (Ball 1993, p.14). That is to say that the omission of these masculinities from this policy works to construct truths about primary caring as the domain of women and mothers rather than men and fathers.

Connell (2005) contends that family-friendly policies can act to reaffirm the significance of the male breadwinner to hegemonic masculinity. Charles (2014, p.9) argues that discourses embedded in policy enable the “inclusion of particularly desirable male subjects”. The male subjects privileged in and
constituted through *The Coalition’s Policy for Paid Parental Leave* (LNP 2013) are indicative of the influence of liberal citizenship discourses implicit within the policy. The policy primarily includes and privileges the supportive, breadwinning and public sphere male archetype. This is evident in language like “fathers can help mothers” (p.5). It is implicit in statements like, “recognising that male average weekly earnings are higher… than female earnings” and, “take supporting women… seriously” (pp.5-7).

In this third chapter of my thesis I have drawn from the analytical framework established in chapters 1 and 2 to critically analyse *The Coalition’s Policy for Paid Parental Leave* (LNP 2013). I looked first to the policy’s displacement of childcare responsibilities onto women and its re-inscription of parenthood onto women’s bodies and argued that it served to reposition women in the private, domestic sphere. I then examined the way the policy undermines women’s participation in the workforce and argued that it served to reassure men’s dominance of the public sphere by deligitimising women’s participation in it. I then looked to the omission of men and fathers from the policy and argued that it served to exclude primary parenting masculinities from the private sphere and thus reaffirm the public/private, male/female split. I concluded my analysis by looking to the supportive and breadwinning masculinities privileged by the policy and argued that their inclusion served to honour these masculinities and men’s occupation of the public sphere.

Close analysis of contemporary family policy offers a valuable insight into dominant contemporary Australian understandings of gender and labour. As policy has the practical capacity to manage and administer populations in relation to stated norms, directing their conduct in ways that other forms of representational texts can do so only indirectly, close analysis of contemporary policy offers not only an insight into current understandings, but also how governments seeks to shape the world in particular ways. Even with the failure of *The Coalition’s Policy for Paid Parental Leave* (LNP 2013), it remains important to conduct these analyses and locate trends in Australian family policy that limit the terms of debate and continue to hinder a more equitable division of domestic
childcare labour in heterosexual households. In particular, by locating these contemporary trends (in enacted or failed policies) we are better positioned to suggest how policy might better address these challenges in future. It is to the future of Australian family policy that I now turn.
Conclusion: Pragmatics and The Future of Australian Family Policy

In chapter 1 I flagged that I would return to consider the value of policy analysis in the conclusion, in particular where the central policy in question is no longer being pursued. Even in such cases, I suggest that policy analysis is useful for its ability to uncover dominant discourses often implicit in the broader culture and more specifically to examine how the state seeks to intervene in the everyday lives of the populations it governs. As I noted in chapter 1, even where our central objects are no longer central to governmental plans, our analysis remains valuable in relation to ongoing debates about family, gender, and labour, and to questions of policy design.

Having analysed The Coalition's Policy for Paid Parental Leave (LNP 2013) and critiqued the salience of liberal citizenship discourses throughout it, I can now ask, “what is the value of my critique?” Tony Bennett (1998, p.34) writes that “cultural studies is urged to find a way of answering the bureaucrat’s question – ‘What can you do for us?’” To answer this question, and to understand what feminist cultural studies and the policy analyses it generates can contribute to the development of future policy, it is important to note the relationship between the university and the state that it critiques. Tom O'Regan (1992, p.418) argues that cultural criticism (cultural studies) and cultural policy (the state) are different forms of text, but that they are often inter-dependent and borrow from one another’s discourses. Bennett (1998, p.20) reminds his readers that cultural studies is primarily located in tertiary education institutions and that its agendas are, in-part, shaped by the state institutions it critiques. He suggests it is important cultural studies recognise that both it and cultural policy are “the articulations between two branches of government, each... deeply involved in the management of culture” (p.6). Cultural studies, therefore, given its connection with state finances and bureaucratic structures, cannot simply critique the state as if from outside it. Its critiques should also be attuned to the need for governmental reform, taking into consideration the limitations within which policy and policy-makers operate, and offering comment on how future policy might be developed such that it is likely to be more just and equal in its effects.
Thus Bennett (1996, pp.307-308) writes of a “need for intellectual work to be conducted in a manner such that, in both its substance and its style, it can be calculated to influence or service the conduct of identifiable agents within the region of culture concerned”. That is to say that there are very real practical implications of policy analysis and that policy analyses should work to offer not only a critique, but also something in the way of a solution or recommendation for future policies.

Bennett is not alone in his acknowledgment of the practical implications of policy analysis. According to Sarah Diem et al. (2014, p.1078), “critical policy analysis opens up a space for activism”. Diem et al. (p.1084) argue that Critical Policy Analysis (CPA) is a way of taking a stand against policies that might work to advantage some groups and disadvantage others, and to influence future policy-making accordingly. Diem et al. (p.1078) identify “informing the work of policy-makers as a key purpose for conducting critical policy analysis”. CPA is a way to bring different perspectives to bear on the policy-making process (p.1078). Importantly, Diem et al. (p.1078) also conclude that CPA should speak the language of policy-makers and bring to the policy-making process not only critique, but recommendation of alternatives that might work better for groups that have otherwise been marginalised by policy. Gilbert Rodman (2015, p.55) shares a similar view, arguing that cultural studies should be both pedagogical and “an interventionist project”. He (pp.57-58) argues that cultural studies should not merely be “reactive” but also “proactive”. The analyses cultural studies practitioners generate should be more than a response to the agendas “crafted by powerful institutions”; they should engage productively with them (p.57).

Though the landscape has changed over the course of my research, the primary prerogative of this thesis has been to critically interrogate what had been the most recent contribution to this landscape and, albeit prospective, instrument in Australian family and workplace policy, *The Coalition’s Policy for Paid Parental Leave* (LNP 2013). To do this I sought to establish a conceptual framework
through which I could examine the policy’s assumptions about gender and labour and its historical precedents in liberal discourses of family and citizenship and in Australian family policy history. It is important I note the temporal limitations of an Honours thesis and that in achieving these two primary goals, I have had limited opportunity to heed Bennett’s call for more pragmatic analysis and consider and develop comprehensive policy alternatives. Though I will go on in this conclusion to introduce the idea of comparative analysis with foreign policy as a means by which policy alternatives could be considered, ultimately full consideration and development of policy alternative or even a closer analysis of how childcare is negotiated in the home would benefit from further study.

In order to move my own thesis beyond what has thus far been a critique of The Coalition’s Policy for Paid Parental Leave (LNP 2013), it is important that I look to how the Australian paid parental leave and family policy landscapes have changed since the introduction of the Coalition’s policy in 2013 and over the course of my research. By appreciating the current landscape I can ascertain what problematic elements of the Coalition’s policy have not been rectified in more recent policies and offer suggestions for future policy accordingly.

As I noted in the introduction of my thesis, in February 2015, Prime Minister Tony Abbott announced the shelving of The Coalition’s Policy for Paid Parental Leave (LNP 2013). Instead, he announced that the Coalition would direct their attention toward childcare as the most effective means to lessen pressures on household budgets and increase participation of women in the Australian workforce (Australian Financial Review 2015; Boyce 2015). Thus, since 2010, the only legislated Australian federal policy for paid parental leave has been the former Labor Government’s Parental Leave Pay Act 2010.

To recap, Parental Leave Pay Act 2010 offers primary carers (though the legislation does specify that this will usually be the “birth mother”) 28 weeks leave at the national minimum wage to individuals/couples earning less than a combined $150,000 AUD (DHS 2014). The scheme also provides what it terms “Dad and Partner Pay”, allowing fathers and — in an important deviation from
the coalition’s policy — partners (male or female) two weeks leave at the national minimum wage following the birth or adoption of their child (DHS, 2014).

Since Abbott announced the shelving of the Coalition’s parental leave policy and the intention of his government to shift their focus to childcare subsidies in February 2015 they have done just that. In the May 2015 budget the Coalition Government announced a $3.5 billion increase in childcare subsidies as part of its 2015 budget. In terms of paid parental leave, the only change specified was an amendment to the existing scheme whereby recipients would no longer receive parental leave payments from their employers and the state. Thus, with this minor amendment, the current legislation for paid parental leave in Australia remains the Parental Leave Pay Act 2010.

In terms of the problematic elements of the Coalition’s policy that remain prevalent in current Australian paid parental leave and family policy, it is important to note that the same liberal discourses implicit in The Coalition’s Policy for Paid Parental Leave (LNP 2013) are implicit in Parental Leave Pay Act 2010. As I noted in chapter 2, the Parental Leave Pay Act 2010 reproduces the liberal discourses of gender and labour that are entrenched in Australian family policy and prevail in the Coalition’s policy. This is evident in its assumptions that women and mothers will be the primary carers and recipients of the leave payment and in the comparatively minimal period of leave offered to fathers.

Importantly, the Australian family policy landscape has changed with regard to the childcare subsidies introduced in the May 2015 budget. Whilst these subsidies do little to reinforce the liberal public/private split by repositioning women in the private sphere (like Australian paid parental leave policies have done), they also do little to reposition men in the private sphere. Graeme Russell (1994) argues that the gendered division of childcare and household labour in Australia will become more equitable when policy-makers recognise the genuine shared responsibility of childcare labour and cease assuming that mothers will be the primary carers of children. Along with Russell (1994), I argue that the
expectation, implicit in Australian family policy, that fathers exist primarily to support mothers in childcare is a major impediment to increasing the participation of fathers in domestic labour and closing the gap between men’s and women’s performance of unpaid household labour. These childcare subsidies, therefore, fail to both challenge the positioning of men in the public sphere and take up the opportunity to increase men’s participation in domestic labour, easing the burden of the “second shift” on women (Hochschild 1986).

The exclusion of men and fathers from paid parental leave policy, and the subsequent failure to encourage a more equitable division of domestic and childcare labour in heterosexual households has been my primary criticism of The Coalition’s Policy for Paid Parental Leave (LNP 2013) and of Australian family policy more broadly. In terms of an indication of what could work better for Australian family policy, further research could take a comparative focus and examine the approaches of the Norwegian state.

Norway’s introduction of a paternity quota in 1993 and its gender neutral paid parental leave scheme work to challenge gendered assumptions around the performance of childcare and domestic labour (Naz 2010, p.313). The paternity quota, and the non-transferability of it to mothers, in particular, “sends a signal to employers that fathers need to prioritize child care and... create[s] the norm that fathers can and should take time off to care for their children” (Rosegard cited in Naz 2010, p.320). Ghazala Naz (p.314), in her study of paid parental leave policy in Norway, finds that the longer the paternity quota, the more involved fathers become in the ongoing care of children and in other forms of domestic labour.

An adoption of these approaches in Australian paid parental leave policy would work to improve its detrimental representation of men and fathers. The adoption of a gender neutral paid parental leave policy would, for a start, remove the discursive focus on women and mothers that repositions women in the private and domestic sphere, and excludes men and fathers. This would address the impediment Russell (1994) identifies in the failure of Australian family
policies to recognise the shared responsibility of childcare labour. The installation of a use-it-or-lose-it type paternity quota could, as it has in Norway, shift cultural expectations that men serve primarily as supports and breadwinners.

Gillian Pascall and Jane Lewis (2004, p.384) share my position, arguing that policy approaches that promote a sharing of care work between men and women are an important step toward reducing women’s disproportionate performance of care-work in heterosexual households. They argue that paid parental leave, in particular, that is shared equally between mothers and fathers, “will begin to challenge traditional parenting roles” as they have been seen to do so in countries like Norway and Sweden (p.384). Importantly, however, they also note that such policy approaches are only part of the “jigsaw” (p.384). As I explained in chapter 1, the intervention policy is able to make in the distribution of childcare work and patterns of masculinity in relation to fatherhood has its limitations. Andrea Doucet (2004) and Lyn Craig (2006) demonstrate that while policy does contribute to the reorganisation of individuals’ everyday conduct, other factors inform the gendered division of household labour in heterosexual families. Further research on Australian policy approaches to families and paternity leave might take up this comparative focus, alongside work like that of Andrea Doucet (2004) which considers how domestic labour and childcare is divided within the everyday spaces of households.

Therefore, to achieve a more pragmatic analysis of policy that offers both critique and consideration of alternatives, a comparative policy analysis like this is one possible approach that could be taken up with further study. So too would be the consideration of the limitations of policy and an examination of how couples negotiate labour and gender within heterosexual households. That said, this critique remains an important first step to better future policy, highlighting problematic assumptions about gender inequality, including their historical bases, that would need to be attended to in the development of future alternatives, asking: “what are the conditions in which couples would be able to negotiate the equitable distribution of childcare?”
This thesis is an important investigation of the relationship between Australian policy and the gendered division of childcare labour. In this thesis I have established a conceptual framework through which policy’s assumptions about gender and labour and its historical precedents in liberal discourses of family and citizenship and in Australian family policy history can be examined. My critical interrogation of The Coalition's Policy for Paid Parental Leave (LNP 2013) has highlighted its problematic displacement of childcare responsibility onto women and mothers and focus on men and fathers as supports and breadwinners to the exclusion of those playing a more central parenting role. My intervention has offered a contemporary evaluation of the ways Australian family policy reproduces gendered assumptions about the division of childcare labour to discussions being had in the fields of sociology and gender and cultural studies.
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