FAMILY, WORK AND GENDER IN A NONMETROPOLITAN COMMUNITY

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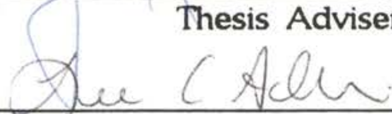

Dean of the Graduate College

PREFACE

This study began because I was both fascinated and frustrated by the question of how wives and husbands who both work figure out who does what housework and who cares for children. My interest in this topic was academic, as a researcher and instructor, but also very personal, as a working wife and mother.

The site I chose for my research was "Wheatlands" (a pseudonym), Oklahoma. I chose to focus on one town because I believed that community dynamics shape family choices in many ways. Wheatlands, with a population of approximately 5,000, was small enough that many of the dynamics affecting the family decisions were easily observable. Town residents were friendly, often willing to drop whatever they were doing to talk on the spur of the moment. The community newspaper, The Wheatlands Daily Record, one of the few small town daily newspapers left in the state, served as a window into the inner workings of the community, with its extensive local reporting and pictures. Also, Wheatlands was within easy driving distance, an essential factor for reasons of cost and time, since I received no funding for this research.

In retrospect, the choice of geographic location was also probably shaped by my smalltown Iowa upbringing. I wanted to know what was

happening in small towns rather than in metropolitan areas. I suspected that while many of the economic and cultural dynamics would be the same, the lives of nonmetropolitan community residents would be shaped in somewhat different ways. In some respects, my hunches were confirmed, though there were also a goodly number of surprises in store for me as I observed, listened to and thought about what the people of Wheatlands told me about their lives.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank doctoral committee members Drs. Lee Adkins, Kenneth Kiser, and David Knottnerus for their assistance in this research. Committee chair Dr. Richard Dodder was particularly helpful in his sympathetic support and matter-of-fact attitude toward the inevitable detours and pitfalls inherent in the dissertation process.

Thanks also to the people of "Wheatlands" for sharing their perceptions and experiences of work, family and community, especially given the tight schedules of two-career families. Fred Beers in particular offered insights that represent a lifetime's worth experiencing and reflecting on Wheatlands. All told, I cannot imagine a more congenial setting in which to have completed this research.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my "informal committee." Patricia Self, Professor of Family Relations and Child Development at OSU, mentored me through the literature review and basic

study design, and was tremendously helpful in helping me conceptualize many of the gender-related issues in this analysis. Professor (and husband) Lee Maril, OSU Department of Sociology, shared his knowledge of rural community and listened-- almost always patiently-- as I talked through successive approximations of my methodology. Over two decades of marriage, he has also consistently strived to remain one of the "good guys" rather than one of the "good ole' boys," especially in his thinking on gender issues. University of Tulsa colleagues Jean Blocker and Susan Chase supplied unswerving belief in my ability, along with the ideal balance of incentives: free meals, positive feedback and exhortations, as well as a constant stream of cheerful (and oft-dreaded) questions about my progress.

Colleagues Nancy Chu, Lana Bolhouse, and Jian Guan plied me with food and moral support. If this is a "weighty tome," these three friends and colleagues certainly added to it. Each time my students at the University of Tulsa addressed me as Dr. Maril, I corrected them, but unconsciously moved one step closer to completing this project. Thanks to Emma the Australian Shepherd for walking me, to Lonnie Daugherty and the guys at Stillwater Automotive for keeping my car on the road against all odds, and to the folks at Aspen Coffee House for the caffeine so essential to this endeavor. Thanks also to my parents Barbara and Bill Fisher and to brother Mike Fisher for the moral and financial support throughout this project.

Finally, thanks always to my faithful cheering section, daughters Jordan and Lauren and son Travis. It was impossible to seriously consider

abandoning this project when my children were so utterly confident of my ability to succeed. No praise has been near so sweet as the words "Doctor Mom" from my daughters, or the question put blithely by my son to a recent caller: "Dr. Maril? Which one?"

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This aim of this study is a holistic analysis of how history, socioeconomic forces, and contemporary cultural codes intersect when families negotiate childcare, housework, and other domestic responsibilities in the community of Wheatlands, Oklahoma. This process, termed "domestic identity negotiation," is examined within the overarching framework of Anthony Giddens' structuration theory to understand how sociohistorical and economic frameworks shape options available to families, and how families in turn construct community on a daily basis in this particular setting.

In setting forth the theory of structuration, Giddens points out that he views theory as a "sensitizing device, a means of examining the nature of human being and doing rather than as an attempt to formulate general laws" Giddens 1984, 23). In like fashion, the application of structuration theory to the behavior of families in Wheatlands should not be regarded as an attempt to construct a universal paradigm, but rather as a means of examining domestic identity within the context of a specific community.

One particular microprocessual dynamic considered in this analysis is the question of whether families tend to traditionalize in the ways in which housework and childcare are allocated over the course of the marriage. Many young couples today begin marriage with the belief that if both wife and

husband work, domestic tasks should be shared. Examined later, however, most families appear more traditional than egalitarian. In this analysis it is argued that such choices may be rational responses to specific life course stages when viewed within the constraints of existing economic and childcare opportunities, and within the contexts of gender, race, ethnicity, occupation and social class.

Research Focus

Much of the prior research on the completion of domestic tasks within families is based upon relatively simplistic analyses of the variables involved in family choices regarding who will take responsibility for housework and child care. For example, some researchers have argued that economic factors alone are sufficient to explain variation in husband's contribution to domestic work; the higher the wife's salary relative to the husband's, for instance, the more likely it would be for husbands to participate in domestic work. Others have argued for cultural or behavioral explanations.

In contrast, in this study it is argued that the totality of the process of domestic identity negotiation is highly complex, and therefore hard to conceptualize because it is shaped by multiple contextual factors, and because the negotiations are inherently dynamic. Perhaps the process can best be represented by visualizing a framed picture of two or more family members talking, with arrows to represent the exchange between them. In this picture, each component is significant:

Sociohistorical/economic framework= constraints outside the picture frame, unseen yet essential; forces such as employment prospects within the community, socioeconomic status, gendered division of labor and the like which have already shaped community culture and thereby individual socialization, and which constantly shape our everyday experience. For example, Wheatlanders who farm are constrained in their choices by dwindling prices and rising costs.

Social context= everything in the picture besides the interacting individuals; the immediate context of interaction. In most marriages, status differences between wife and husband mean that the negotiation outcome is likely to favor the husband. However, the ratio of wife's salary to husbands, as well as age and number of children, shape the outcome of identity negotiation. Race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status also come into play here, since both shape available choices and strategies. If the an upper middle class family becomes more prosperous, they may consider hiring a housekeeper. Families further on down the socioeconomic ladder cannot consider that option; it is a choice they cannot afford.

Cultural code= what goes on in each individual's internalized conversation; socialization, or all the ideas each learned about what women and men (and boys and girls) are supposed to be, particularly within the family context. Adults who grew up on farms learned that men work outside, women (except at peak seasons like harvest) work in and around the home. For folks who were raised in town, that code may seem outdated and downright oldfashioned.

Dynamic interaction= arrows between the individuals, representing how each individual puts cultural code into play, each shaping the other as identity is negotiated; the words themselves, the patterning of words, the patterning of gestures and body movement in an intricate dance of wife and husband, parents and children.

These components represent analytical levels which may be considered separately to enhance understanding of the overall process. Yet it is essential to recall, as Giddens notes, that such separations are artificial. In any "real

life" situation such as the community of Wheatlands, cultural codes, social interactions and sociohistorical and economic frameworks and contexts are interwoven in the ongoing process of social life. The key focus of social analysis should the process itself rather than agency or social structure per se. "The basic domain of study of the social sciences . . . is neither the experience of the individual actor, nor the existence of any form of societal totality, but social practices ordered across time and space (Giddens 1984, 2)."

The inherently processual nature of identity negotiation becomes evident in the following series of vignettes of morning experience of Wheatlands families:

> It is 6:30 on a winter morning in Wheatlands, Oklahoma, still thickly dark, and cold. Here and there the January daybreak is lightened by a few patches of unmelted snow, remnants of one of the small town's two or three annual snowfalls. The streets are clear and dry, however, much to the chagrin of the area's school children, who were hoping for icy roads and a stay-at-home snowday.
>
> A few miles west of town at the Walker home the day starts much as it has for generations of rural families. Josh Walker has already sipped his second cup of coffee down to the dregs, and is pulling on his boots to feed the stock. His wife Lora sets out pancakes for the three kids, who crawl out of bed with varying degrees of complaint matching their ages (five year old Matt, twelve year old Lisa, and fifteen year old Randy), pull on their clothes- Matt still needs a little help from his mother- and settle down to breakfast in the warm kitchen. By 7:30 the kids have finished their breakfast, brushed their teeth, stuffed their lunch, and for the older kids, homework, in their backpacks and piled onto the bus, leaving Lora alone in the ample harvest kitchen to clean up the breakfast dishes and begin the next phase of her day. In a departure from the idealized picture of farm wives past, she starts the built-in dishwasher, turns on the t.v. to the livestock report, switches on the computer, and begins to

input feed costs and stock prices for their farming operation.

Just inside the city limits on the north side of town in the town's one cluster of brand new, upscale homes, the Watson family is also stirring. In the cheerful but cluttered kitchen, Rod pours out Frosted Flakes for seven year old Kyle and five year old Kelsey. In the bathroom, DeeAnn puts the finishing touches on her makeup, clips on her earrings, and calls out to Rod to make sure Kyle remembers to take something for show and tell at school. Then she begins the slow process of hauling Kelsey out of bed. Kelsey does not have to go to kindergarten until afternoon, but she has to get up because her father starts work at Construx at 7:00 a.m., and her mother needs to leave by 7:30 for her 30 minute commute to her job at the Public Health Department in Guthrie. Kelsey whimpers and clings to her mother as her dad calls goodbye from the kitchen. Kyle, half dressed, remembers he has a birthday party at a friend's house after school and hasn't yet gotten a present. Lora sighs in frustration, and promises to do something before the party; she later chooses a birthday card from a stash she keeps on hand for emergencies, shoves a five dollar bill in it, and gets Kyle to sign it in his laborious newly-learned cursive handwriting, making her late for work again.

On the south side of town, just south of the railroad tracks, the lights go on in the small frame home of the Thomas family. Mother Nadine is still asleep; she worked the night shift at Intercity Truck Stop and did not get back until 2:00 a.m. Her oldest daughter, fourteen year old Tamara, is up already, however, rousting the three younger kids from their warm beds into the chilly kitchen. Neil, Tamara's stepfather, has gotten his own breakfast and now sits in front of the t.v. for a few minutes before he heads to the Construx plant where he's employed as a maintenance worker. Shortly after he leaves the house, Nadine pulls herself out of bed to get the younger two kids ready for school. She yawns, a jaw-cracking yawn, and promises herself that just this once, she really will go back to bed when little Neil Junior goes down for his nap. Then she remembers that the boss changed her schedule at the last minute, meaning she has to go into work early today. The kids are nearly out of clean clothes, her washing machine's been acting up, but they can't afford to fix it until Neil gets paid. That means Nadine will have to hit the laundromat instead of taking a nap.

Viewed up close, the morning routines of these three family may seem

like a simple combination of family customs, personal choices and haphazard circumstances. Josh Walker, like farmers over the centuries, gets up early to feed his livestock because cattle are not very patient about waiting for breakfast. DeeAnn Watson rushes to get a birthday present because she procrastinated and forgot. Tamara Thomas lets her mother sleep in because she loves her, and letting her sleep an extra half hour is one of the ways she can show her love.

As C. Wright Mills reminds us, however, our lives are the intersection of history and personal biography (Mills 1956). Examined from a sociological perspective, each of these apparently idiosyncratic family routines can be seen as the intersection of the community's social and economic history, of residents' overlapping cultural codes regarding gendered behavior and attitudes, and of contemporary economic exigencies. Both Rod Watson and Neil Thomas get up around 6:00 a.m. because the town's main industry, the Construx corporation, has started up at 7:30 a.m. Monday through Friday (and sometimes Saturday as well) for the past fifty years. Both DeeAnn Watson and Nadine Thomas work because they and their husbands think they must to maintain their family standard of living, even if it means juggling so many responsibilities that birthdays get forgotten or naps put aside.

On the surface, Lora Walker's life may look most traditional with respect to domestic duties and gender identity; indeed, her husband frets that their friends tease his wife because she is a stay-at-home mom whose husband (by his own admission) does not lift a finger to do housework. Yet

closer examination reveals that Josh puts in a seventy hour week running the farm and an agricultural business the couple started to eke out sagging farm prices. Lora does stay at home- but she also handles almost all the farm finances, including employee records for their summer help, along with all their taxes and bank transactions, just as many other farm wives do (Rosenfeld 1985, Salamon 1992).

To understand the complexities of family process in the community setting, it is helpful to set aside or "bracket" aspects of experience temporarily in order to explore others more completely (Goffman 1974). In this analysis, the focus shifts sequentially from most macrostructural and enduring perspectives on society- social and economic history- through less permanently fixed social contexts- contemporary gender identities, race and ethnicity, social class- to the most microstructural, most agency-oriented perspective on society- individual cultural codes and action schema for negotiation. In the final segments of analysis, the focus shifts back to the issue of process, or social interaction; at this point, contexts which have been conceptually bracketed for the purpose of analysis are shown to be in fact interwoven in the actually seamless garment of society.

Conceptual Assumptions

The model proposed above is informed by Anthony Giddens' theory of structuration as expressed in The Constitution of Society, (1984). Giddens attacks traditional theories of social structure on the grounds that they tend to

reify our understanding of society by artificially separating agency from structure, actors from social action. For Giddens, the appropriate focus of social analysis is structuration, or the process by which social actions, created through the interaction of individuals, assume shape and order over time and space.

Routinely repeated social actions form the basis for *social practices,* in Gidden's terms. Over time, it is argued in this analysis, some social practices become so institutionalized as to form *sociohistorical/economic frameworks.* Sociohistorical and economic frameworks should be distinguished from traditional conceptions of social structure, whereby structure is often regarded as reified and static. In keeping with the theory of structuration, even sociohistorical/economic frameworks evolve, albeit slowly, given the weight of tradition they carry. The gendered division of labor, for example, though deeply rooted in cultural tradition, is experienced far differently by women and men in Wheatlands today than by their counterparts a generation ago.

The concept of *social contexts* is employed to examine how sociohistorical and economic frameworks are carried into day-to-day life. In considering social contexts, relational factors which shape interactions come into play. As Giddens notes, actions are linked to power; "that is, the actor has the capability of making a difference. . . [and therefore has the power] to transform the situation" (Ritzer 1988: 488). But power is relational rather than absolute, structured by one's status within a particular context or situation (Kondo 1992). For example, contexts of gender, race, and social class

shape the relational power of actors in any given interaction.

Cultural codes and corresponding action schema form the third level of analysis. In interacting with each other, "individuals draw on the rules and resources which comprise structure, in much the same way as an individual draws on the rules of grammar in uttering a well-formed speech act (Held and Thompson 1989: 4)." In this sense, structure is both enabling and constraining , in the same sense as a Chomskyan generative grammar provides rules which enable creative and novel discourse while setting outer parameters for what is possible. In Wheatlands, for example, families draw on cultural codes- or in Giddens' term, "typified schemes"- to live out a wide range of domestic identities, yet few if any have ever considered communal living or group marriage, since both of these lie far outside accepted community custom.

Giddens cautions, however, that human agents should be regarded as possessing "reflexivity," or the "monitored character of the ongoing flow of social life, along with knowledgeability" including cognitive skills of a far different order than simply coded programs (Ibid, 2-3). In this view, human agents are far more than the socially constructed creatures of symbolic interactionists, and more too than simply Piaget- or Chomsky-like experiencers of biologically triggered processes. Instead, "the body, its mediations with the surrounding world and the coherence of an acting self" are all part and parcel of the human agent (Ibid, 3).

Agents also function on several levels: the level of discursive

consciousness, which can be easily reported and reflected upon; the level of practical consciousness, or what is simply done, as discussed in phenomenology and ethnomethodology; and the level of unconscious motives and cognition (Ibid., 7). All of these fit together in the *stratification model* of the acting self, which involves "treating the reflexive monitoring, rationalization, and motivation of action as embedded sets of processes (Ibid., 3.)." Thus agents become both much more biologically rooted and simultaneously more dynamic than other sociological paradigms.

The concept of cultural codes and corresponding action schema used in the analysis of Wheatlands bears a close resemblance to Gidden's conception of social structure, which, in his terms, means the "rules and resources" which are implemented in interaction" (Ibid. 5). This contrasts sharply with macrotheoretical traditions which represent social structure as a framework so concrete as to be reified. Structure may be seen as activity-dependent, "both the medium and the outcome of the process of structuration (Ibid. 25)."

Dynamic Interaction is the fourth and final level of analysis. Viewed through this lens, family interaction takes center stage as the focus for understanding how domestic identities are created. This level of analysis highlights the ongoing operation of process in the social construction of identity not simply within individuals, but among individuals and within social groups. Such interactions are, of course, inherently shaped by sociohistorical frameworks and social contexts as well as cultural codes. Yet

the interactions themselves serve to reshape and reconfigure cultural codes and social contexts. This is what Giddens refers to as the double hermenuentic, "the double involvement of individuals and institutions (Ibid., 26)". Stated more succinctly, "We create society at the same time as we are created by it (Ibid., 14)."

Life Course Theory and the New Home Economics

At a more specific level, two other theoretical perspectives- life course theory and the New Home Economics perspective- have also informed this analysis. Life course models, as exemplified by the work of Glenn Elder, "combine aspects of structural and rational choice theories within a temporal framework to place family and individual strategies of adaptation in a larger historical, social, and cultural context of shifting opportunities and constraints, resources and demands, norms and expectations" (Moen and Wethington 1992; see also Elder 1981, Elder and Caspi 1990).

Such models have a variety of advantages in the analysis of complex contextually-based behavior. First, they incorporate recognition of macro-level societal shifts in economic base, social patterns and cultural codes. Second, at the micro level, life course models reflect changing patterns within families over time, including such transitions as childbirth, growth, and eventual departure from home. This emphasis on trajectories and timing also invoke, as Moen and Wethington point out, "the notion of cumulativeness, with conditions and choices in earlier times framing current

options" (1992: 245). A life course approach to the study of family also stresses the critical impact of context; these contexts include situational imperatives, previous experiences, subjective definitions, as well as the availability of both personal and material resources (Elder and Caspi 1990, Liker and Elder 1983). In this sense, the life course perspective dovetails with structuration theory, in that both are grounded in the assumption that contexts ranging from biological through personal, interpersonal, up through more macrostructural constraints such as economic options constantly interact to the shaping of personal and familial beliefs and choices, which in dialectical fashion reshape contexts.

This analysis is also informed by the theory of the New Home Economists and their sociological counterparts, rational choice theorists of family life (Becker 1981, 1991, 1995, Becker and Posner 1993; Van der Lippe 1994, Glass 1988, Hanks 1993). The New Home Economics paradigm is based on the assumption that families make choices, within the confines of structural constraints, to maximize household utility, referring to the well being of the family unit (Becker 1981,1991). As Becker puts it:

> Like the firm in the economic analysis of conventional markets, marriage is a device for producing commodities, albeit of an unconventional sort because they include the number, health and skills of children and the emotional and psychophysical satisfactions of sex, love, and companionship, as well as material outputs such as food, clothing, and shelter. The total value of such commodities we call marital "income," but we emphasize that it is a nonmonetary measure of the value of the outputs produced by a marriage (Becker and Posner 1993: 423).

This paradigm has been applied to analyses of family choices regarding whether the wife should seek employment, family decision making strategies, what type of childcare will be used, and the like.

As critics have pointed out, however, rational choice theory has definite limitations. First, the concept of "quality" is central to rational choice analysis of decision making. Quality, as applied to children, for example, "refers to characteristics of children that enter the utility functions of parents. Quality has been measured empirically by the education, health, earnings or wealth of children" (Becker 1985: 5). However, concepts such as "quality children" are generally defined in a circular fashion: parents want educated children because educated children are valued by society; therefore, "quality" refers to education. In essence, cultural values are assumed rather than defined, or defined circularly, as with no recognition that such values have changed markedly over the course of history, and are culturally and class based.

A second critique of the New Home Economics is that choices are routinely viewed as freely made, with no recognition, as feminist theorists have pointed out, that one spouse's decision may be directly or indirectly coerced (e.g., a wife may "choose" to stay home because her husband refuses to participate in housework). Third, and closely related to the second point, real-life "family" decisions inevitably represent a blend of individual choices; this blend may reflect a compromise, a unilateral choice based on power

differentials, or something in between these two extremes. All of these dynamics must be considered if the process of domestic identity negotiation is to be completely understood.

Despite these reservations, the New Home Economics approach may be quite productively incorporated into the larger framework of life course theory to examine how choices regarding domestic identity, with the following reservations. First, relevant sociohistorical factors, social contexts, and cultural codes within the community of Wheatlands must be adequately specified. Thus for example education for children, particularly in the form of after-school activities, is valued differently by working class families than by middle class families. Second, the level of analysis- family or individual- must be specified; at the family level, power differentials between, for example, wife and husband should be considered.

Definition of Terms

Domestic identity as used in this analysis is defined as the constellation of cultural codes and corresponding action schema which family members rely upon in assuming responsibility for housework (cleaning, cooking, picking up, laundry), childcare (actual childcare, responsibility for arrangements, transportation, scheduling, liaison), and other home-related work (shopping, bill paying, yard work, home repairs, car maintenance). Insofar as possible, domestic identity was conceptualized to include both traditionally female and male tasks relating to household and family

maintenance.

Negotiation refers to the processual aspects of identity construction. In studying Japanese society, Dorinne Kondo asks "How did the people I knew craft themselves and their lives within shifting fields of power and meaning, and how did they do so in particular situations and within a particular historical and cultural context (Kondo 1990: 10)?" Within families, parents and children operate within similar contexts and in similar fashions to craft domestic identities. This process may be conscious, but often is not. Asked how they decided about dividing household chores, for example, wives and husbands often answered, "It just happened." Yet as the interviews proceeded, these apparently straightforward answers were generally revealed as overly simplistic shorthand notions of intricate marital and familial processes which reflected differential spousal power, shifting economic opportunities, growing and changing family size and other conditions within the wider community and society. For that reason, negotiation is defined as the process at both conscious and unconscious levels of defining domestic identity through interaction with other family members.

Rational choice, as employed within the tradition of the New Home Economics, is defined quite narrowly, and should not be construed to be synonymous with "logical." Choices which make sense within the context of cultural codes and action schema are socially and culturally relative. Therefore what may appear rational within one social class or racial/ethnic group- music lessons and ballet classes, 4-H meetings, powwows- may seem

quite irrational by other standards. Nor are rational choices always carefully or consciously made. A so-called "snap judgement" may be made on a rational basis, as socially and culturally defined. Couples who claim family patterns of domestic identity "just happened," for instance, commonly appear to be following the line of least resistance, making the most economically justifiable choice within the parameters of community, race/ethnicity, gender and social class.

Community, as considered in this analysis, means more than just place. For purposes of this research, community is defined as the cultural codes, corresponding action schemas and resulting social networks which are derived from, and reflect the characteristics of, a particular geographic locale. The interactions which result from these networks shape social structures and institutions such as family; in dialectical fashion, these structures and institutions also shape culture and networks (Flora et al. 1992: 15).

Legacyrepresents the means by which cultural and context are transmitted from one generation to the next, to "what parents seek to pass on to their children, including material possessions as well as values and norms," following Flora et al. (1992, in their discussion of rural communities). Sonya Salamon, 1992, uses the notion of "patrimony," a similar concept, to describe the constellation of cultural code and action schema midwestern farmers pass along to their offspring together with land and other belongings. In this analysis, the concept legacy is used to examine how childhood gender socialization shapes girls and boys to form families

which reflect the social classes and race/ethnicity of the families in which they were raised.

Overview of the Work

In Chapter 2, the purpose and objectives of this study are placed in context of existing research on this topic in the review of pertinent literature on the negotiation of domestic identity. Research methodology is set forth in Chapter 3.

Wheatlands families are considered at the first level of structuration in Chapter 4, where sociohistorical and economic frameworks are explored by examining the history and demography of Wheatlands families. In the following chapter, the focus shifts to the second level of analysis, that of social context, in the form of an indepth look at how Wheatlands minority families differ from the mainstream population. The context of community is the topic of Chapter 6, focusing on how rural community has shaped cultural codes and action schema, which in turn shape family choices in Wheatlands.

In Chapter 7, decisions about domestic identity are examined with reference to how they are shaped by the past and present structure of economic opportunities in Wheatlands, both in terms of general trends such as the decreasing economic importance of agriculture in nonmetropolitan areas of the U.S. and in response to specific ebbs and flows such as the oil bust of the 1980s. Here it is possible to see the process of structuration in action, as individual actors make rational choices- based on pre-existing cultural codes,

within identifiable social contexts, and rooted in sociohistorical frameworks- in the process of interaction with family members regarding the assignment of domestic chores. Taken together, these choices form the basis for the construction of domestic identity. Once negotiated, domestic identities are ritualized in the form of social practices which ultimately reconstitute social structure.

The microprocessual aspects of the negotiation of domestic identity within families in Wheatlands are considered in the final three chapters of this work. Negotiation processes within families are examined in Chapter 8. In Chapter 9, choices regarding childcare are examined, with emphasis on how families perpetuate domestic identities in Wheatlands through childcare choices; the ways in which these choices reflect social contexts such as race, ethnicity and social class are also explored. Chapter 10 focuses on the relationship of family life cycles to domestic identity negotiation, including how families evolve over time in response to the above-mentioned factors, as well as in response to changing family structure as children are born to the family, and grow from infants to toddlers to school age and beyond. Taken together, the final three chapters demonstrate the operation of structuration at the microprocessual level in the development of domestic identity among Wheatlands families. This analysis highlights how actual women and men interact within specific sociohistorical frameworks and identifiable social contexts, using cultural codes to interact with each other on a day to day basis to constitute family and community in Wheatlands.

These are the dynamics investigated in this study of the social construction of domestic identities among families of Wheatlands. The goal was to construct a holistic portrait of family life in a small community on the verge of the twenty-first century, situated at the intersection of an agricultural past and a post-industrial future.

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH ON DOMESTIC IDENTITY NEGOTIATION

Given the changing character of women's place in the U.S. workforce and the related changes in family structure, literature on how families structure domestic work is emerging at a seemingly exponential rate. During the last three decades the composition of the American work force has been transformed by the pervasive influx of women into the workplace. In 1960, only one in five mothers with preschool age children worked outside the home. By 1991, nearly 60% of all mothers with preschoolers were employed full time (Ahlburg and De Vita 1992, 25). Dual worker families are now the norm, representing the dominant family model rather than an anomaly. As the ranks of the workforce swelled with women, professional journals of social analysis began to reflect researchers' concerns with the ways in which the prevalence of dual earner households change family life.

The Wheatlands project began at the computer terminals at Oklahoma State University library. The process of sifting through data bases for information on dual earner households sometimes seemed endless; like the fairy-tale princess who had to spin straw into gold, each time I reached the bottom of one stack of references, I encountered a whole new set of key words (dual career/dual earner, maternal employment and housework/childcare, domestic roles, role strain/conflict/overload, community studies, rural studies, sociology of agriculture etc.). This process was complicated by the

interdisciplinary nature of literature in this field; relevant disciplines include sociology, psychology, child development, anthropology, gender, health, history, economics, health, and demography, as well as the myriad combinations of all of the above.

Methodological Limitations of Early Research

Early explanations for the negotiation of domestic duties were limited by the character of research on the topic. Limitations include sampling considerations, definitional problems, and simplistic analysis.

Sampling and Format: Using small cross-sectional samples, researchers were seldom able to explore processual issues inherent in family dynamics over time. This neglect of process was reinforced by the tendency to overlook the contextual complexity of how families allocate domestic responsibilities. The use of national data sets has made possible a much larger base from which to generalize, and the trend toward use of longitudinal studies makes possible at least rudimentary analysis of change in patterns over time, both in the U.S. as a whole and, in some cases, within particular sets of families. Some of the best analyses of process within families, however, have come from qualitative or triangulated studies such as The Second Shift by Arlie Hochschild (1990). Such studies are much more likely to convey the richness of process inherent in the ongoing negotiation of domestic duties, particularly when grounded in demographic and other

quantitative analyses.

The reasons for this become clear when one considers the literature on alternative strategies for measuring housework (Warner 1986). Should researchers ask one partner or both, since wife and husband often have different perceptions of how much time each spent in housework during the same time period? Should children, especially teenagers, have any input? Should researchers rely on memory, or use a log of work? As Warner has demonstrated, each of these approaches has slightly different implications for our findings.

Variables: The majority of early studies suffered from serious flaws in choice and definition of variables (Brayfield and Hofferth 1995). For instance, what is housework? Should the definition be drawn narrowly, including only cooking and cleaning and the like? Or should it be broadened to include yardwork, car maintenance and other traditionally masculine chores? Often definitions were left unspecified, leaving researchers in doubt as to whether they were comparing similar issues or apples and oranges.

Early studies also made little attempt to represent diversity in U.S. families. Social class was rarely considered, with the result that the majority of investigations focused on predominantly middle class, two-career couples. Likewise most early studies sampled predominantly white couples, with no recognition of the possible impact of race or ethnicity. This tendency to simplify potential patterns extended into the separation of respondents into

binary opposites: working/nonworking, married/single, children absent/present.

Over the last two decades, all of these assumptions have been challenged. Two career couples, where both spouses hold professional jobs, were shown to have significantly different choices available to than do dual earner couples, where one or both earners face more stringent job limitations-shift work, for example-- and receive lower wages and fewer benefits. Lower salaries shape choices of daycare, decisions about using convenience foods and other support services etc. All of these issues are directly related to whether one or both members of a couple work part-time, as well as to the mother's workforce attachment (i.e., uninterrupted work history). Relative contribution of the woman's salary has also been demonstrated to have a significant impact on the extent to which her partner assists in carrying out unpaid family work. Race has also been shown to be a significant consideration which apparently operates at least to some extent independently of social class (Brayfield and Hofferth 1995, Collins 1991). For example, African American families are more likely to use kin rather than paid daycare even when compared to others of similar income.

Family composition variables have also been demonstrated to shape choices about unpaid family work. This reflects researcher's gradual recognition of our culture's shift away from "traditional" family heterogeneity in familial patterns. Research which only considers intact two-parent families leaves a considerable segment of contemporary families

unexamined. In the same vein, the number and ages of children certainly shape family choices about how to arrange childcare and family work. A fifteen year old who stays home alone after school is called a latchkey child; a two year old left home is a Child Welfare problem.

Analysis: As methodology has become more rigorous, and as new tools have become available in the form of computers and statistical software, analysis has shifted from simple bivariate correlations to considerably more sophisticated multivariate analyses. Findings from these studies are still limited in their applicability to issues of process and negotiation; they do, however, provide an excellent framework in which to ground qualitative analyses.

Theory and Research

Prevailing theoretical assumptions about gender based on "separate sphere" ideology (Bernard 1981) have served to restrict findings regarding how families negotiate domestic responsibilities. For example, with a few notable exceptions (Rubin 1976, Kanter 1977, Piotrkowski 1978), prior to the 1980s, most analyses took the form of concern with role conflict between homemaker and employee roles for women. The existence of conflict was assumed *a priori*, given that women in the paid labor force was assumed to be non-normative (note, for example, that two-provider families are discussed as an example of "nontraditional families" by Moen, 1982).

In examining the literature, it appears that studies of distribution of domestic duties in families fall into one of three categories: 1) *theories of role overload or role conflict,* based on Goode's original formulation of the additive effects of role strain; 2) *theories of role enhancement* derived from the role expansion hypotheses set forth by Sieber (1974) and Marks (1977), who argue that multiple roles may either serve to buffer (Sieber) or enhance (Marks) each other; 3) *theories of identity negotiation and development,* whereby domestic identities are assumed to be an ongoing process of negotiation and development over the lifecourse.

Role Overload/Role Conflict Literature

The concepts underlying role strain or role conflict theory were laid out by William Goode in 1960. In his analysis, all institutions are made up of role relationships, which are invariably characterized by "role strain," or "the felt difficulty in fulfilling role obligations (Goode 1960, p. 483). This endemic strain results in a series of "role bargains," or tradeoffs, in an ongoing attempt to reduce role strain. Common examples of these tradeoffs include delegation of roles to others and elimination of role relationships.

In his seminal article on role strain, William Goode translated the "grand theory" of functionalist Talcott Parsons into a set of provocative concepts for family analysis. Role strain, he argued, is endemic to society, and not therefore inherently negative. However, when role strain grows beyond manageable proportions, it may develop into role overload, or

having too many role demands and too little time to fulfill them (Baruch et al. 1985, Coverman 1989). If role overload continues, it may in turn lead to role conflict, "when the demands of each of the multiple roles makes it difficult to fulfill the demands of another role" (Coverman 1989, 968).

In Goode's analysis, these processes can be neatly illustrated by viewing the family as a "role budget center," whereby roles are allocated to family members (Goode 1960, p. 492). In the classic structural/functionalist tradition, women were assumed to fulfill the role of "emotional specialists," remaining at home with the children while men were the "instrumental experts," venturing out into the world to make a living. By allocating roles among a group of related individuals, role strain was thus minimized for all family members. Since the inception of Goode's analysis, role theory has played a major part in analysis of domestic responsibilities in modern families.

These concepts fit neatly into what Rosabeth Moss Kanter calls "the myth of the two spheres."

> The myth goes like this: In a modern industrial society work life and family life constitute two separate and non-overlapping worlds, with their own functions, territories, and behavioral rules. Each operates by its own laws and can be studied independently. . . "A myth," Sebastian de Grazia has reminded us, "is not a lie. It is something almost everyone wants to believe. In believing it, he sometimes embraces a cold [finding] too warmly." The myth of separate worlds is not without truth, then, but it is far from all of the picture.
>
> Kanter 1977, 9

Early studies of the interplay of work and family roles were grounded in the

assumption of separate spheres. It logically followed that women who attempted to move out of the "female world" (Bernard 1981, Voyandoff 1988) would create the inevitability of role overload and role conflict.

In examining the literature on role overload, Helena Lopata suggests that the first wave of research focused on the impact of women's paid employment on husbands, since theorists assumed that women's employment would result in a decrease in male productivity (Lopata 1993, 181). This concern gradually declined from 1977 to 1985, as documented by data from the National Opinion Research Center's General Social Survey (Ibid. 182). The second area of concern was the impact upon children. Research in this area is still ongoing, with contributions from the role strain/role overload theorists centering on the potentially harmful effects of maternal employment on children (see, for example, Volling and Belsky 1993). This focus has continued despite the lack of conclusive evidence sought by role overload theorists. The third focus of studies in the conflict/overload tradition centered on the impact of role overload on women. In the majority of these studies, the working hypothesis includes (either implicitly or explicitly) the assumption that maternal employment will lead to role overload, and possibly to role conflict. Kanter terms this the "social problem" orientation toward women in the paid labor force (1977, 60).

Substantive findings of these studies fall into four basic areas. Much of the literature consists of analyses of the stress process, especially as conceptualized by Pearlin et al. (1981; also Aneshensel and Pearlin 1987,

Barnett, Beiner, and Baruch 1987). These studies examined the impact of multiple roles to determine whether there was a differential effect of the impact of employment-related stress resulting from the fact that men and women experienced employment differentially. This research was based on the assumption that employment would act as a stressor for women. This assumption has not generally been supported, however. Women do report more stressors than men, but employment does not appear to have an impact (as confirmed by Anderson and Leslie, 1991, though see Alpert and Culbertson 1987, who assert that dual earner women report significantly more "hassles" than nondual-earner women). The general consensus has been that employment either has no effect, or may indeed serve to buffer strain created by work (Sekaran 1985, Pearlin et al. 1981, Alpert and Culbertson 1987).

Pleck and Staines (1985; see also Staines and Pleck 1983, as well as other articles by the same authors) examined a related hypothesis, positing that roles are "asymmetrically permeable," meaning that demands in work roles were more likely to intrude in men's family lives than in women's, and that demands in family roles were more likely to intrude in women's work roles. Though their original work supported this hypothesis, their 1985 update gave only mixed evidence.

Some authors suggest that failure to find evidence of role overload indicates definitional problems. Coverman points out that the experience of role strain is subjective rather than objective, bearing little relation to the amount of time spent in work (1989). This assertion leads directly to the

second focus of overload studies, namely the importance of maternal attitude toward employment in understanding role overload. Moen and Dempster-McClain, for instance, found that the discrepancy between actual and desired work hours was directly related to perceived role strain (1987). Hock, Gnezda and McBride discovered that women of the "baby boomer" generation, along with less educated or younger mothers, are likely to exhibit a pervasive belief in the "maternal mandate," and thus report strain when working more hours than desired. Perry-Jenkins, Seery and Crouter found that wives who were ambivalent about their provider responsibilities were more likely to report higher levels of depression and overload and lower marital satisfaction, as contrasted with wives who had positive attitudes toward provider roles (1992).

Several overload-based studies examined patterns of housework in attempt to ascertain whether husbands were assuming a greater share. In general, little change was noted (Coverman and Sheley 1986), though patterns did seem to vary based on spouses' attitudes, with commitment to gender role androgeny on the part of both spouses resulting in greater participation of husbands in housework (Gunter and Gunter 1990). In an intriguing analysis of women in four provider roles (primary, main/secondary, ambivalent, homemaker), Perry-Jenkins et al. reported that women who viewed themselves as coproviders were more likely to receive help with housework than were women who saw themselves as secondary providers (1992).

The fourth area of concern was whether gender per se acted as a moderator in role overload. The results here were mixed. As previously indicated, Anderson and Leslie believe there is support for this hypothesis (1991). Schwartz believes women are differentially treated in the workplace because of the interference of maternal responsibilities (1992). In contrast, Sekaran (1985) found the only gender-related difference to be in perception of availability of discretionary time. This issue has critical theoretical ramifications; a dual-world perspective would assume that gender is an essential feature in our experience of the world, while a feminist or conflict analyst might well interpret use of gender as an analytical feature to be a means of ensuring that women stay "in their place."

In several cases, the conclusions of these studies offer intriguing insight into the frequent disappointments encountered by role strain theorists. If the findings failed to match the investigator's expectations, claims of methodological problems often followed. These often included deploring an overly small sample (see Sekaran 1985, Alpert and Culbertson 1987, and Anderson and Leslie 1991), poor operationalization of concepts, lack of construct validity and the like. It was as if researchers found it next to impossible to admit that married women may actually like and indeed benefit from working.

Though the studies cited here are recent, the bulk of "role overload" studies cropped the literature in the 1970s, when working mothers were in the minority. As more and more mothers moved into the workforce,

however, maternal employment became increasingly normative rather than aberrant. Consequently the early conviction that working was a stressor for women, and subsequently for the family, began to give way to new theoretical approaches. For example, in 1985 Greenhaus and Beutell, reviewing recent literature on work-family conflict, found 16 relevant role overload studies between 1972 and 1981 (1985, 304-305). Given the increasing interest in two-earner families, one might expect a proliferation of studies from the role overload perspective. But this review of the literature suggests that no such proliferation has occurred. Instead, emphasis has shifted to more positive views of the interplay of work and family roles.

Role Enhancement Analyses

One primary assumption of the concept of role strain is that all individuals have a finite amount of energy. This assumption was challenged by Sieber in his analysis of role theory (Sieber 1974). As he interprets Goode's analysis of the process, individuals who are unable to reduce role strain successfully are confronted with two overlapping problems. These are role conflicts, where the actor "must choose between the expectations of [role] A and B because compliance with the expectations of one will violate the expectations of the other," or role overload, whereby it is impossible for the actor to meet all obligations for all roles simultaneously (Sieber 1974, 567).

Sieber, however, offers a different interpretation of multiple roles. In his analysis, role accumulation can potentially have a number of benefits,

which include 1) role privileges, 2) overall status security, 3) resources for status enhancement and role performance, and 4) enrichment of the personality and ego gratification (Sieber 1974, 569). Perhaps, then, role overload is not inevitable. In fact, roles may actually serve to buffer each other, he suggests, laying the groundwork for later analyses of the buffering effects of women's employment.

Stephen Marks expanded upon this notion in 1977, arguing that multiple roles might actually enhance each other. In his analysis, he contrasted the "scarcity approach" to human energy with the "expansion approach." Goode's analysis of role strain he suggested, was a classic example of the *scarcity hypothesis*; viewing human energy as a finite commodity which was in scarce supply. The scarcity approach, Marks asserted, has two manifestations. The first type is the use of economic metaphors (which he called the "spending theory" of human energy) whereby energy could be analyzed in terms of supply and demand, a commodity which is spent, expended, invested etc. The other metaphor, common to psychotherapists and clearly evident in the works of Freud, he calls the "drain theory" of energy, borrowing terms from the plumbing trade. "It sees human beings as walking plumbing systems who have various outlets for their energies," and energy "leaks out," "dribbles away," and the like (Marks 1977, 922, using quotes from Bittner 1963 and Coser 1974). This approach is typified by the work of Lewis and Rose Laub Coser (1974), who view all social institutions as "greedy," vying with each other for supplies of human energy. Housewives,

for example, must contend with their "greedy husbands," who minimize their own role strain by delegating household responsibilities to them.

Marks, however, suggests an alternative approach to analyzing human energy. As he views it, except under conditions of exhaustion, "*the energy condition of the body at any given moment is psychologically abundant rather than scarce* [italics in the original]" (Marks 1977, 926). He labels this interpretation the expansion hypothesis to human energy. He traces the roots of this argument to the works of Émile Durkheim, who asserted that humans are enriched and vitalized by social involvement. Thus "there is no inherent limit on the expansion of our commitment levels *within the scope of our own ongoing activities and the role partners we encounter within them* [italics in the original]" (Marks 1977, 927).

The persistence of the scarcity approach in role analysis, according to Marks, can best be understood by its ideological implications. If human energy is finite and human institutions are greedy, then women are either foolhardy or doomed in their efforts to combine family and career, based on the scarcity hypothesis. In order to become involved in the workforce, a women would have to convince her husband to scale down his work commitments, an unlikely scenario, since, "it was the man's overcommitment to his occupation and his under-commitment to family activities that resulted in the family having a greedy hold on the woman to begin with" (Marks 1977, 934). In sum, then, role scarcity hypotheses serve to contribute to the status quo, ideologically excusing men for their failure to

increase their participation in housework and childcare.

This theoretical shortsightedness is hardly surprising. Role theory is strongly grounded in the structural/functionalist tradition in sociology. Marks' argument regarding the ideological implications of role theory dovetails with criticisms of structural/functionalism at a more metatheoretical level of analysis, given the notably conservative emphasis of this theoretical perspective. As previously mentioned, its conceptions of male and female roles are grounded in the status quo of the 1940s and 1950s, reflecting the "separate spheres" thinking described by Kanter and Bernard.

Based on Marks' critique, role theorists began to look at ways in which maternal employment might actually enhance family roles . From the latter part of the 1970s to the present, a variety of researchers documented the positive effects of employment on motherhood. Maternal employment seems to be positively associated with good mental health (Gove and Geerken 1977, Kessler and McRae 1982, Gore and Mangione 1983, Barnett and Baruch, 1987). Maternal employment is also characterized as enhancing maternal well-being (Rosen et al. 1990, Alvarez 1985). Furthermore the impact of maternal employment on children, as mediated by role strain, appears to be insignificant or positive (Gottfried et al., 1988, Lerner and Galambos 1988). Also, quite significantly, no gender effects are observed in examining the impact of employment (Gove and Geerken 1977, Gore and Mangione 1982).

In general, then, the results of role enhancement studies present a much rosier picture of the impact of maternal employment upon families.

In that respect, such studies have presented a critical counterbalance to theorists who sought evidence for the heavily negative impact of women's employment on their families. These studies have also taken significant steps toward looking at the differential effect of maternal employment on families based on social class and maternal attitude (Baruch, Barnett and Rivers 1983, Barnett and Baruch 1987a, Alvarez 1987, Rosen et al., 1990, Pistrang 1984). This emphasis on complexity rather than simple across-the-board relationships continues the trend begun by role overload analyses of the 1980s and later.

Role enhancement theory is a significant step forward from role overload theory, in that it grants the possibility of a successful paid work experience to each gender. Yet it is still grounded in separate sphere structural/functionalist ideology. More specifically, role enhancement theorists continue to espouse the assumption that the experience of men and women is substantively different based on gender rather than based on power.

In a dialectical sense, one might regard role enhancement theory as the antithesis of role overload theory. In that light, findings from role enhancement theory may allow researchers to finally transcend the assumptions that work and family are inherently separate spheres, differentially inhabited by females and males, and that attempts to combine the two domains- work and family- are experienced differently primarily on the basis of gender. Contemporary theorists appear to be moving in that

direction. The most recent investigations of the negotiation of domestic identity are an eclectic collection of approaches to understanding women's experience as 1) a shifting set of role combinations, best characterized as a process; 2) characterized by simultaneously positive and negative aspects (Baruch et al. 1983 use the concept of "balance" to present both stressors and enhancements at any given phase of a woman's life); 3) a concurrent reflection of the interplay of attitudes, feelings, and actual behavior.

Possibly because they are so eclectic, or possibly because they are relatively new, these theories apparently have not been named. In this study, theories that share the characteristics of process, balance, and interplay will be referred to as *identity negotiation theories.*

Identity Negotiation Theories

The theoretical groundwork for contemporary studies of roles in dual-earner families was laid in some the earliest investigations of working women. But social analysts have only recently begun to build upon these foundations.

In 1961, Lois Hoffman suggested that maternal employment was not a unitary phenomenon, but rather a collection of diverse patterns that could best be understood by taking into account whether or not the mother enjoys working. Her concluding sentence is still relevant today: "The purpose in doing this analysis was to show that greater understanding of the effects of maternal employment will come about when working mothers are

differentiated along some theoretically relevant dimension and when the effects on family life, as well as on the child, are examined" (Hoffman 1961, 196). Contemporary researchers such as Shuster (1993) and Gerson (1985), and Perry-Jenkins et al. (1992) are attempting to put this insight into practice.

In 1977 Rosabeth Moss Kanter suggested that our unswerving commitment to a two-sphere ideology prevented researchers from recognizing the overlap between work and family, between male and female. Others have since pointed out how structural/functionalist analyses, including role theory, obscure our understanding of the power structures underlying the interplay between our public and private roles, and the dynamics of oppression that go hand in hand with these roles (see Bernard 1981, Blumberg 1984, Hochschild 1989, and especially Lopata 1993 for further discussion of this issue).

In 1978 Chaya Piotrkowski took Kanter's lead to study the "work and family system" among working class families. She assumed from the beginning that family systems are interwoven with the workplace and the realities of capitalism. Piotrkowski's study has been cited time and again, yet with the exception of Lillian Rubin's work (1976) it is only recently that others have attempted similar analyses (DeVault 1987, Gerson 1985, Hochschild 1989).

Family and the Community Studies Tradition

When families in Wheatlands make decisions about housework and

childcare, their choices are already proscribed by our culture's history, economy, and custom as experienced within the context of community. Very few contemporary studies of family dynamics are grounded in a community framework, however. This may be due in part to the evolution of family sociology. From the 1950s until quite recently family sociology was often regarded as the purview of departments in land grant institutions where the primary emphasis was on application and intervention.

Another contributing factor for the deemphasis on community in studying family is the disrepute of community studies over the past several decades. Once quite popular, rural community studies were increasingly challenged as atheoretical, unfocused and overly simplistic during the 1970s and 1980s.

History of Rural Community Studies

The study of rural community has a long and venerable history within the discipline of sociology. In 1898, for instance, W.E.B. DuBois wrote about Farmville, Virginia, under the auspices of the Department of Labor. In the early 1900s, the students of Franklin Hiram Giddings at Columbia University undertook a series of studies of rural areas, including James Williams's study of "Blanktown," or Waterville, New York, in 1906 ; Warren H. Wilson's study of Quaker Hill in 1907, and Newell L. Sym's study of "Aton," a "Hoosier Village," in 1912. All three studies used open-ended interviewing and observation formats similar to the ones used in this project.

A second wave of community research grew out of the Country Life Commission, established in 1908 at the behest of President Theodore Roosevelt. This commission's efforts resulted in a series of twelve typed reports, characterized by Buttel as extraordinary in their extent, though never published (Buttel et al. 1991, 14). Their research efforts were carried on by Edmund S. Brunner and his associates at the University of Columbia, as well as J.H. Kolb at the University of Wisconsin, who used newly developed survey techniques to study 140 agriculturally-related villages throughout the U.S. They focused on populations of 250-2,500 which were studied in 1923, resulting in a twelve volume Town and Country Life series compiled by Brunner from 1922 to 1923. The communities were restudied in 1930 and again in 1930 1936, producing a truly remarkable portrait of rural life.

This tradition of comparative rural community studies persisted into the 1930s and 1940s, with a growing emphasis on examining how the economic basis of community life affects social organization and social behavior. Notable examples of this tradition include C.E. Lively's work in 1928; the six-community study sponsored by the USDA's Division of Farm Population and Rural Welfare in 1939 and 1940; and Carl C. Tylor and associates work, under the auspices of the Bureau of Agricultural Economy, USDA, in 1944, focusing on 71 rural counties.

Generally speaking, early rural community studies during this period relied on Chicago-style human ecology perspectives and methodological tradition; indepth interviewing and observation were almost always key

methodological components. Studies tended, on the whole, to be atheoretical except insofar as they relied upon folk-urban continuum theory. In more recent years, theory and method split, with increasing de-emphasis on theory as agency researchers expanded the use of survey methods and quantitative analysis. As indicated previously, these studies were quite often sponsored by government agencies, and, like much government sponsored research, tended to reflect the sponsors' hidden agenda.

The community studies tradition, and particularly the concept of the folk-urban continuum, began to be challenged within sociology in the 1960s, characterized as overly simplistic and naive, sometimes even as downright wrongheaded and politically dangerous. But rural sociology, with its strong ties to land grant institutions (such as Agriculture and Mechanical state universities), was insulated until the mid 1970s, continuing to receive funding for applied contributions (Buttel 1991, Wilkerson 1991).

In the 1970s, however, researchers in international development efforts became increasingly disillusioned with simplistic community studies, pointing out that national and international impacts on local communities were consistently overlooked in rural areas, producing in the misleading impression that rural communities were free-standing entities. Researchers in the Latin American critical tradition were at the forefront of this movement. In the U.S., Jim Hightower explicitly questioned the ties between agricultural research and land-grant universities, pointing up the direct impact of agricultural technology on American farmers, their families, and

the promotion of corporate farms (Buttel 1991; also see Hightower 1973).

Some sociologists went so far as to challenge whether there is actually such a thing as true community, pointing out that growth in national and international ties between locality and the world market have erased any isolation that may have once existed. As Charles Tilly stated, for instance, "urbanization of the world" has sharply reduced the probability that communities will act as independent entities (1973). The upshot of these critiques was that rural sociology increasingly shifted away from community studies to other topics, with a growing emphasis on incorporation of theory, history, and critical perspectives (Buttel 1991, 76).

Contemporary Rural Community Studies

In recent years there has been a gradual upsurge of interest in the study of rural communities on the part of researchers who believe the concept of rural community is still useful (Salamon 1992, Wilkerson 1991, Hummon 1986, Newby 1980, Bell and Newby 1971). As Wilkinson points out, "Local social life has become very complex in the typical case, but complexity and the turbulence associated with it do not in and of themselves rule out community" (1991, 6).

Yet as Wilkerson also notes, contemporary studies within the community tradition must begin by careful specification of the meaning of rural community as defined within the demographic and sociological context. Community is more than simply locale, as has become increasingly evident

in today's global society. Even rural areas are closely tied to the rest of the world by economic base and information ties. As Flora et al. point out, however, "Despite these changes, a sense of place still figures prominently in a definition of community [in rural area]." Geographically defined places where people interact, or *localities*, serve to shape social institutions and structures such as family in dialectical process (1992, 15). By extension, therefore, community as considered in this study includes the underlying economic structures, as well as the resulting social networks, cultural codes, and corresponding action schemas which are derived from, and reflect the characteristics of, a particular geographic locale. This definition of community makes possible the examination of the process of structuration at the levels of sociohistorical and economic frameworks, social contexts, cultural codes and social interaction within the locality of Wheatlands.

Key Insights from the Literature

In summarizing contemporary insights on the impact of dual earner families on negotiation of domestic responsibilities, several key patterns emerge.

1) Domestic identities are firmly grounded in history. Most studies of domestic identities begin with a brief nod to changing times. From that fleeting acknowledgement almost all researchers then proceed as if change is an artifact that has now ceased. A processual approach which incorporates

historical data must offer a much more dynamic and differentiated approach to domestic identities than is evident in most of the literature. For instance, how have contemporary economic conditions modified gender and domestic identities in specific settings? Some researchers have suggested that when a woman's salary is vital to the family income, or when it approaches her husband's, family members are much more likely to pitch in with housework (see Avioli and Kaplan 1992, Menaghan and Parcel 1990, as well as Perry-Jenkins et al. 1992). If that is true, the recent economic downturn would suggest that domestic identity and gender shifts may escalate in the future.

Economic change may also act in a dialectic process to reinforce domestic identity shifts. In examining married women's work patterns, for example, Avioli and Kaplan found that the best predictor of continued full-time employment was proportion of adult time in the work force. In otherwords, women who grew up working full time are more likely to continue to do so. This has fascinating implications for future work/family patterns (Gunter and Gunter 1990).

2) Domestic identities are contextual. Contexts may include parental work hours, availability of childcare, hours of school operation and the like. Furthermore, domestic identities are intrinsically grounded in social class, race and ethnicity. Many of the studies cited assume that gender plays a part in the construction of social identities. Far fewer consider social class, concentrating exclusively on patterns of middle or upper middle class

respondents (see Perry-Jenkins et al. 1992, Piotrkowsky 1978, Mederer 1992, among others, as exceptions). Yet there are consistent indications that social class acts broadly in the shaping of social identities (Kanter 1977, Lopata 1993, and Hochschild 1989).

The reasons for the skewed emphasis on white middle class patterns became evident as I attempted to locate non-white, non-middle-class participants for this research. One social worker pointed out what seemed obvious in retrospect, considering the economic realities of being poor. Poor families are much more likely to be headed by a single parent. If there are two parents in the home, limited job skills often lead to higher unemployment or part-time, often sporadic employment. Given the American class structure today, however, failure to collect information on the working class and poor population means research findings are applicable to slightly more than half of all parents. Researchers must take these patterns into account to be certain to incorporate lower-income dual earner households into our analyses of how domestic identities are negotiated.

In the same vein, early researchers focused almost exclusively on caucasian respondents. The rationale often given was that, considering the small samples often necessary in qualitative or longitudinal studies, the handful of minority respondents included would be too small to be statistically significant. Furthermore, as I discovered in Wheatlands, minority families tended to be much more suspicious of and unwilling to participate in the interview process. From their perspective, they had little to

gain, and in some cases, a considerable amount to lose from self-disclosure. For these reasons, researchers have argued, it is often more feasible to focus on one homogeneous group. In the past that position might have been tenable. However, European-Americans represent an ever decreasing proportion of our population; new studies of domestic identity should incorporate our nation's changing demographics.

3) Domestic identities are an interplay between attitudes and behavior. What we say is rarely what we do. Yet attitudes and behavior have a complex, interactive relationship.

DeMeis and others have demonstrated beyond a doubt that attitudes toward employment, taken together with employment status, reveal a great deal about a women's mental health, and possibly even about her attachment to her child (DeMeis et al. 1986, Hock et al. 1984, 1988, 1989, Perry-Jenkins et al. 1992). But where do these attitudes come from? To what extent are they shaped by past work history, as Avioli and Kaplan suggest? To what extent are attitudes a product of our capitalist system, as Kanter and Lopata argue? These issues can be productively examined using the structuration approach, which assumes a dynamic interactive relationship between beliefs and behavior.

4) Domestic identities are processual. The research literature is only beginning to reflect this growing awareness. Thompson and Walker pointed this out in 1989, suggesting that women and men collaborate together in

maintaining gender-specific roles. Perry-Jenkins et al. took this one step further, suggesting that:

> . . . . one promising area to pursue would be to examine how women and men construct gender, and consequently role specializations, at the early stages of relationships, when day-to-day living patterns and behaviors are first developed. These early patterns may set the course for how couples maintain gender differences and specialization in their families, patterns that in turn have important implications for the quality of family life and the context in which children are socialized to think about work and family roles.
>
> Perry-Jenkins et al. 1992, 327

Such an emphasis is notably lacking in the studies reviewed on the topic of role overload and role enhancement. Domestic identity negotiation studies have begun to tackle this area. This study is firmly rooted in the assumption that domestic identifies are dynamic, a process of constant ongoing negotiation on the part of family members.

Taken one step further, it may be enlightening to consider how changing gender constructions will be reflected in the socialization of subsequent generations of children. There are hints of what may be happening along these lines (see Hoffman 1984 and 1989) but the shape of what is to come is still unclear. A processual approach to the construction of domestic identities should take this into account.

These lessons from the literature jibe with what the vignettes presented in the introduction illustrate. When families like the Walkers, the Watsons and the Thomases make decisions about domestic work, their choices are already proscribed by our culture's history, economy, and custom.

In this study I examine how the process of negotiating domestic tasks plays out as a result of the intersection of those constraints. The model incorporates the sociohistorical framework of the community; constraints imposed by the social situation, including social class, race/ethnicity, and other demographic considerations; the cultural codes or schema each spouse brings to the negotiation, and finally, the process of interaction itself.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The primary objective of this research was the completion of a holistic analysis of how socioeconomic constraints, contextual factors, and cultural codes regarding appropriate behavior in one community interacted over time as families grew and changed, producing distinctive patterns of family work and childcare. A variety of methods were employed to accomplish this objective. The specific research strategy is set forth in this chapter, beginning with an overview of research methodology, including research instruments, interview content and format. Other topics considered include community and respondent selection procedures; data collection procedures; approaches to data analysis, ethical and confidentiality concerns; and assessment of validity and reliability. In the concluding section of the chapter, methodological strengths and shortcomings of this project are noted.

Research Strategy

The holistic and contextually-oriented nature of this study suggested a multiple-method approach. For that reason, the project methodology was designed using the principles of triangulation, or "the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomena" (Denzin 1989, 234). As Denzin notes, using multiple methods helps offset each method's inherent weaknesses. Quantitative data alone, for example, lacks contextual richness;

qualitative studies lack generalizability (see Denzin 1989 and Reinharz 1992 for further discussion of the value of triangulation). In the Wheatlands project, that dilemma was addressed by combining several methods to supply context as well as the larger picture in examining the topic of how domestic identities are negotiated.

The use of multiple methods also allows researchers to "cast their net as widely as possible in the search for understanding critical issues in women's [and men's] lives" (Reinharz 1992, 201). This approach has the added benefit of functioning to "enhance understanding both by adding information and by using one type of data to validate another" (Ibid. 201). These advantages proved to be particularly beneficial in attempting to understand the structuration process-- an inherently complex phenomenon- as played out within a wide range of contexts.

The specific research strategy for this project developed as an interface between the theoretical model, prior experience as a social analyst, and practical considerations such as time constraints and driving distance. To examine the negotiation of domestic identity in a nonmetropolitan setting required information on community history; socioeconomic, racial and ethnic contexts, as reflected in demographic structure and contemporary social institutions within the community; and processual information on how couples or families construct domestic identity within these frameworks. After careful examination of existing research, the following methods were selected: 1) analysis of existing historical and archival sources to provide

historical context; 2) examination of 1980 and 1990 census data, along with vital statistics data from the 1890s to the present to provide demographic information; 3) interviews with leading community representatives to supply perspectives on social institutions; 4) indepth interviews of families; 5) a percent-of-tasks assignment; and 6) completion of a log of family work by family members. A survey was later added to supplement indepth interviews. These components were augmented with material collected during participant/observation in the community as a whole.

Research Instruments

Historical and Archival Sources: Information was drawn from a variety of historical sources in order to consider what factors may have shaped how families develop in Wheatlands. The community boasts several local historians, one of whom was interviewed at length; the library and historical society also maintain files on the city, the country, and the region. Furthermore, because the community is relatively recent in origin, its history is brief an, at least for caucasian residents, well documented.

Census Analysis: In addition to examining historical sources, I also constructed a demographic profile of the community, including sex/age structure of the population, racial/ethnicity distributions, fertility, marriage and divorce rates, economic and poverty indicators, and household characteristics. The Government Documents section of OSU library provided

a treasure trove of information on Wheatlands in economic and demographic perspective; this information was supplemented by material from the Wheatlands Chamber of Commerce and the Wheatlands Development Coalition.

Community Interviews: Community interviews were used to gain insight into the community as socially constructed by residents, as opposed to the community as portrayed through histories and census documents. These interviews provided a variety of insider's views of the community, each from a slightly different angle. The community newspaper, The Wheatlands Daily Record, was used as an additional source of information regarding the cultural codes, social networks, economic developments and political processes in Wheatlands.

Family Interviews: Indepth semi-structured interviews with parents in dual-earner households helped to capture the richness and density inherent in the process of negotiation of domestic responsibilities; these characteristics are difficult to capture using traditional survey formats, since the generally narrow scope of inquiry in survey questions tends to elicit nearly identical information from all respondents. Indepth questions allowed respondents to elaborate on topics which fit with their personal experience, and to suggest other topics which may not have been included on the original survey instrument.

Percent of Tasks: After completion of the interview, each spouse was asked to fill out a one page survey which included basic demographic information (age, education, race/ethnicity, marital history) and a "percent of tasks" assignment. Subjects were presented with a list of common home-related tasks, and asked to determine what percent of each was completed by wife, husband, children, or others. Whether done jointly or separately, this assignment always seemed to generate quite a bit of comment from respondents. Generally speaking, both husband and wife seemed to expect (sometimes quite accurately) that their responses would disagree, with wife claiming responsibility for a higher percentage of many tasks than husband.

Log of Family Work: At the time of the first interview, participants were asked to agree to complete a log of family work in which they listed the actual chores they completed on a daily basis. Participants were asked to complete the logs during two week days and two weekend days during the upcoming two week period. The original plan was to deliver logs at the time of the original interview, and collect them two to three weeks later.

This plan proved overly ambitious for myself and for respondents alike. Few respondents completed the logs; most explained (generally quite apologetically) that they were too busy accomplishing domestic work to complete this task accurately. For that reason, housework logs were not used in data analysis.

Couples Survey: As data collection proceeded, it became increasingly

evident that certain categories of respondents were unable or unwilling to volunteer for indepth interviews. When spring came, for example, farm family members demurred that their schedules kept them busy from dawn till 10:00 p.m. unless it rained. Also, working class, minority and low-income families often cited time constraints. Therefore to increase diversity in response, the indepth interview and percent of tasks questions were redesigned in the form of a parallel survey instrument. This made it possible to obtain at least partial information from critical categories of informants. Also, in some cases, after completing the surveys, respondents agreed to talk further about key topics such as the processes inherent in negotiating family work.

Interview Content and Format

In conducting interviews, a standardized set of queries was used to obtain parallel information from all respondents. These queries centered on seven major topics:

1. Gender identity socialization: Each respondent was asked whether his or her mother worked, whether father participated in housework or childcare, whether spouses participated in housework and childcare as children, and if so, whether their tasks were gender stereotyped.

2. Childbirth chronology: Respondents were asked about the number and ages of children, and whether more children were planned.

3. Employment chronology: Each spouse was asked for an employment history, including part vs. fulltime, temporary vs. permanent, formal and informal (i.e., babysitting for a neighbor).

4. Childcare chronology: Respondents were asked if either parent took time off at the time of childbirth, and what childcare arrangements they used; this information was coordinated with employment information.

5. Domestic arrangement chronology: Spouses were asked a) how housework and childcare arrangements were envisioned early in marriage; b) how they have developed over the course of marriage, especially with reference to birth of children; c) how they presently appear; d) what contributions (if any) are made by children. In asking about domestic arrangements, respondents were also asked whether they evolved as a result of discussion or simply "happened."

6. Satisfaction/comments: Each spouse was asked about satisfaction with present arrangements, and what changes, if any, would be desirable.

7. What was not asked: Each spouse was asked what, if anything, researchers should be asking to better understand the topic of how couples negotiate domestic responsibilities.

The open-ended structure of the questions allowed for a wide range of responses. Furthermore, after the first few interviews, the first set of questions, then respondent(s) were allowed to direct much of the interview, prompting with new questions only when necessary.

After experimenting with a variety of approaches, it became evident that questions about childhood gender socialization-- such as whether the respondent's mother worked, what contribution children made in the respondent's family of orientation, and how that shaped premarital expectations about what contributions the wife and the husband should make to marriage-- invariably served to promote discussion. It also encouraged respondents to reflect on the topics under discussion; at the end of the interview, many noted that it was fun or thought provoking to look back to

their childhood. Also, though discussions of childhood generally represented a comfortable nonthreatening topic, it led directly into questions on expectations at the beginning of marriage.

The next series of questions focused on employment and childbirth. Sometimes these topics were approached separately; more often respondents zigzagged back and forth between the two. The decision as to how to proceed depended more on what came up and how long the couple had been married than anything else. Often from that point of the interview onward, respondents took off on their own unprompted descriptions of how gender identity and domestic arrangements evolved over the course of marriage, in response to childbirth, job changes and economic stresses.

The employment/childbirth series of questions led neatly into the heart of the issue: who does what regarding childcare and housework, and how the couple arrives at decisions. This section, as one might expect, was the most likely to generate friction between spouses. Outright warfare never occurred, but there was some fairly heavy duty skirmishing on occasion. The conversation was only redirected if it appeared that the rest of the interview would be jeopardized if the skirmishing was allowed to continue.

The next series of questions, on satisfaction with existing arrangements, and on what family members would change if they could, proved to be a wonderful source of information on how the negotiation process operated. The "satisfaction" questions often generated byplay between spouses, frequently deepening my understanding of household dynamics

with respect to who does what tasks, and where family friction points were located. For example, in one interview, a couple who had presented a picture of generally successful apportioning of tasks confessed that at one point in their marriage, she had gotten so frustrated that she asked her husband to move out.

The final question, on what respondents think is important in understanding contemporary childcare/housework issues but about which I had not asked, produced some fascinating insights. I incorporated this question into my interview format after reading Reinharz' Feminist Methods in Social Research (1992). Reinharz discusses the significant insights which can be added by regarding people with whom one interacts in the field as similar to coresearchers rather than simply as "informants" or "subjects." Trusting the perceptiveness of my informants provided what proved to be, in many cases, one of the best sources of information in the entire interview. It encouraged respondents to consider their domestic arrangements and identities at a significantly deeper level, and often brought up issues I never would have thought to raise.

Selection of Community and Respondents

For purposes of this study, subject selection entailed choice of both community and respondents. Community selection occurred during the spring of 1993, as part of Dr. Patricia Bell's Demography seminar. Respondent selection began during July 1994 and was ongoing until July 1995. Selection

procedures for both community and respondents are specified below.

Community Selection

The choice of a nonmetropolitan town for this study of how families handle domestic responsibilities was influenced by the lack of previous research on this topic. Most prior studies of have been conducted in urban areas or university settings; this is especially true of studies which have included a qualitative or ethnographic component (Lillian Rubin's Worlds of Pain, 1976; Arlie Hochschild's The Second Shift, 1990; a few more recent studies such as Salamon 1992, Rosenfeld 1985, Conger and Elder 1994, have also examined farm patterns).

Furthermore it was reasoned that in a community of 5,000 or less, many of the macrostructural dynamics affecting the negotiation process--such as sociohistorical frameworks, economic trends, and community culture-were more readily observable. Potential community options were limited by driving distance; to conduct indepth family and community interviews, it was necessary to spend a considerable amount of time in the community. Like my respondents, I am a member of a dual-earner family, juggling marriage, three children, and graduate school, along with my job and my husband's. I could not move to another town, nor could I spend hours each day commuting.

Because one goal of this study to understand how intra-community economic factors shape families, bedroom communities were not

considered. Notably atypical communities such as university towns or those with high concentrations of minorities and correspondingly high rates of unemployment and poverty rates were eliminated because based on my model, these factors, along with cultural beliefs, would be expected to shape domestic identities in ways which would be less generalizable to other locales.

The decision to examine dynamics of domestic identity negotiation in a rural setting introduced unanticipated definitional problems. As Seninger and Smeeding (1981; see also National Rural Center 1978; Zuiches 1981; Beale 1979) point out, definitions of rural, nonmetropolitan and metropolitan are often confusing, partly because they are inconsistently defined. The U.S. Bureau of the Census, in Current Population Reports, series P-20, "defines metro residents as all people living in counties with a city of 50,000 or more (an SMSA) plus persons living in contiguous counties (with smaller cities and rural areas) that are lined to metro areas by daily commuting patters. The nonmetro population is the residual" (Seninger and Smeeding 1981, 426). "Rural," as used by the Bureau of the Census in the decennial counts of population, refers to persons living in open country as well as in small towns of less than 2,500, except for those inside the urban fringe of metropolitan areas (Briggs 1981, 376). As Seninger and Smeeding note, official census definitions are often too narrow, since people "living in places of from 2,500 to 50,000 are classified as urban. . . . despite the fact that many of the people in such places have rural lifestyles" (Ibid, 427). Based on that line of reasoning, "rural" was taken to refer to small towns in nonmetropolitan

settings where lifestyles are in many respects non-urban, despite the fact that the population is close to 5,000.

That definition, and the resulting process of elimination of urban, unusually ethnic or overly distant communities, led to Wheatlands which, upon initial examination, seemed to be a perfect choice for a "typical" American small town in size, socio-economic and racial composition. After I began fieldwork, I discovered that Wheatlands differs from the prototypically average American small town in a variety of ways which derive from its economic base. In some respects, Wheatlands is a company town, with many residents working for one employer, the Construx Corporation, which manufactures implements for oilfieds and farming. Given this economic base, Wheatlands has been more prosperous and perhaps somewhat more overtly linked to the national and international economy than other towns of its size. On the other hand, as some analysts have pointed out, nonmetropolitan areas have increasingly "chased smokestacks" as a developmental strategy, resulting in an addition of 1.8 million manufacturing jobs- a gain of 46.6 percent- during the 1962-78 period (Briggs 1981, 197). Furthermore, within nonmetro areas, the manufacturing sector has had the highest rates of increase in the West (74%) and South (56.9%), where Wheatlands is located. Though founded during the 1950s, Construx' most rapid expansion occurred during the 1960s and 70s. In this respect, it may be argued that Wheatlands is a good example of those nonmetropolitan communities which are prospering.

Typical or not, Wheatlands proved to be a fascinating research site. Like many ethnographers, I went from feeling like a stranger to wondering whether it would be feasible to move our family to Wheatlands because it seemed like such a perfect community. By the end of the project, I was gradually able to regain enough distance to put my findings as well as my experience in perspective. Wheatlands is a place where many families thrive and prosper, relative to the national scene. Yet this prosperity is uneven; depending on one's race / ethnicity, socioeconomic status and gender, Wheatlands may be experienced quite differently.

Respondent Selection

Once the community was selected, couples selection began. For the purposes of this study, the target population was composed of couples who met the following criteria: 1) cohabitation or marriage during the year prior to the time of my study (in several cases, this meant that respondents were actually separated at the time the interview was conducted); 2) one or more children living in the home; 3) both couple members were or had been employed at some time during the year prior to the completion of the study; 4) both couple members were between the ages of twenty and forty-five; 5) families resided within the Wheatlands school district within the past year (I originally intended to limit residence to within city limits, but soon realized that this definition was too narrow, since many families who lived outside city limits identified themselves as belonging to the Wheatlands community;

I therefore revised the definition to incorporate such families).

Couples were selected for interviewing based on purposive sampling aimed at achieving a diversity of responses which generally reflected (though did not necessarily statistically represent) the diversity of the population of Wheatlands with respect to ethnicity and social class. For the first round of interviews, I used my community contacts to find qualified couples who were willing to participate in the study. I also contacted the Chamber of Commerce and the local newspaper, which published a story on my study, to recruit participants. Later in the study I used theoretical sampling, or "sampling aimed toward the development of the emerging theory," to gain further insight into the process of identity negotiation (Kathy Charmaz 1983, citing Glaser and Strauss 1967 and 1978).

The rationale for purposive techniques became evident shortly after I began interviewing. Almost all the respondents contacted during the first round of interviewing turned out to be white middle or upper middle class dual career (as opposed to dual earner) couples. Part of this proved to be a numbers problem, given that a total of 50 non-white couples with children under 18 years old lived in Wheatlands in 1990. Furthermore, minority families often have to work extra jobs to make ends meet, as do working class folks (see, for example, Rubin 1994). That meant I had to convince a significant percent of a very busy group to consent to share their very limited time with me. By contacting community service agencies and daycare centers, however, I was gradually able to broaden my contact base, increasing the

diversity of my sample. This broader sample led to a significantly more complete understanding of the dynamics of negotiating household and childcare tasks within the context of specific socioeconomic frameworks.

Data Collection

Data collection took place over a two year period beginning in August 1993 and ending July 1995. Data collection included three phases: collection and analysis of archival sources and community interviews in the first phase; couples interviews, percent of tasks assignment, housework logs and couples survey in the second phase; and administration of the couples survey during the final phase.

Collection of Archival and Community Data

Collection of demographic and other archival sources, as well as the completion of community interviews, began in July 1993 and ended in July 1995. Though the bulk of this work was completed during the first year of the project, community interviews were collected through July 1995.

Interviewees included the former newspaper editor and head of public relations for the Construx corporation; the county director for the Department of Human Services; a school principal; staff workers at several social service programs for low-income residents; coordinators of the Wheatlands Development Coalition; staff members from all local daycare centers and several dayhomes; a variety of local business people; and key

members of the African American community in Wheatlands.

Completion of Indepth Interviews and Related Instruments

The second phase of data collection included administration of indepth couple interviews, the percent-of-task assignment, and distribution of family logs beginning in August 1994 and ending August 1995. Interviews ranged from one to three hours in length, averaging approximately an hour and a half if couples were interviewed separately, just over two hours if interviewed together. The total interview process - including time spent scheduling , travel time, interview time and transcription/analysis time- took approximately five to six hours per couple.

Indepth interviews and the percent of task assignment were administered during the same session. Spouses were interviewed either jointly or separately, for reasons outlined below in the discussion of interviewing strategies.

A total of twenty two families were interviewed.

Completion of Couples Survey

The couples survey instrument was administered during July 1995. To supplement these interviews, an additional twenty surveys were completed by distributing questionnaires to parents at two daycare centers and two children's after-school activities sites in Wheatlands.

Data Collection Problems and Strategies

Scheduling indepth interviews with dual earner couples proved more problematic than anticipated. Nearly all potential interviewees were friendly, intrigued by the project, and generally quite willing to participate. But finding time for an interview invariably posed a major challenge. As part of a dual-earner couple myself, I should have anticipated this; working and raising a family, running a household and managing to squeeze in at least a minimum of other activities is a juggling act at best.

I quickly developed strategies to maximize my chances of scheduling interviews. First, I interviewed most couples together rather than separately. At the onset, I planned to interview wives and husbands separately, since prior research has demonstrated that self-report data the responses to questions on who is responsible for specific household duties may vary considerably from one spouse to the other (see, for example, Rubin 1994). I assumed that if promised confidentiality, spouses might be more likely to discuss childcare and domestic arrangements more openly. Furthermore, having two separate accounts of the same arrangements would provide an additional source of data, i.e., the discrepancy between wife's and husband's accounts.

After a few interviews, however, it became apparent that the logistics of scheduling separate interviews for working couples proved a significant hardship which would increase the refusal rate substantially. I then began to offer my respondents a choice between separate or joint interviews. I was

careful to point out that separate interviews might be the best choice if disagreement posed potential problems. Joint interviews, representing 75% of the total interviews, offered an unexpected bonus. When interviewed together, spouses contradicted and "corrected" each other, clarified and amplified each other's responses, and often offered a wealth of information in the form of body language and side remarks. This actually proved a source of extra data, since the interaction between wife and husband was generally rife with clues to where the sore spots lay, and how "true" a picture they were presenting in describing their approach to housework and childcare. One particularly fascinating example of this was that when children interrupted the interviews (as they invariably did, since nearly all the interviews took place at home), it was almost always the mother who responded to their needs. Also, if I was offered refreshments, the woman was always the one to offer.

Second, I tried to be as flexible as possible in scheduling interview appointments; most families requested weekday evening interviews. Many appointments took three or four contacts to set up, as one spouse coordinated with the other spouse to find an open date. Flexibility also meant accepting the inevitability of rescheduling. Over half of all interviews were rescheduled at least once, due to unanticipated family commitments on the part of my respondents.

My third strategy for maximizing response was to tell prospective interviewees that previous respondents described the process as thought-

provoking and often fun. Most of the people I interviewed had never considered domestic identity as the product of a process grounded in socialization and community. As we talked, they begin to reflect on these issues, often producing fascinating insights in the process.

Finally, in interviewing working class and minority respondents, I gradually loosened my requirements, interviewing whether or not husbands were willing to participate, and in two cases, after members of the couple had separated. I made this judgement call when it became evident that rigorous application of my baseline criteria would have meant that this study, like so many of its predecessors, would have had next to no minority representation. In the long run, the wealth of information offered by minority and working class family members more than justified this choice.

Ethics and Confidentiality

Several issues regarding ethics and confidentiality arose in the course of this research, partly as a result of the indepth interview format and partly due to the geographical location chosen for the study.

With respect to the interviews, one frequent dilemma was the extent to which I should participate in the interview process. In traditional interviewer training, researchers are taught to discourage interaction with respondents, and to minimize or eliminate researcher participation in the form of comments on the respondent's answers, offering of observations from the researcher's experience or the like; such interaction is viewed as

shaping or actively tainting the study's results. Increasingly, however, researchers from qualitative and feminist traditions, among others, have questioned this approach. Psychologist Stephanie Riger, for instance, notes that:

> Traditional research methods, as indeed American culture, emphasize objectivity, efficiency, separateness and distance . . . . Let us consider as well connection and empathy as modes of knowing, and embrace them in our critieria in our work (Riger 1988; see also Riessman 1987 and 1990; Reinharz 1992).

Using a nontraditional approach may serve to build rapport between interviewer and interviewee (DeVault 1990), to empower the respondent to feel knowledgable (Yendle 1984), and to give the researcher access to "subtleties" which do not emerge in survey research (Gray 1989, Maril 1994).

With that in mind, when respondents asked about my own domestic identity or asked for feedback on how I perceived their situation, I resisted the impulse to dodge personal interaction by citing objectivity. Instead I answered, as carefully as I could, that I am part of a dual earner household with three children with a good though far from perfect husband, and that I sympathized with their situation. I declined to pass judgement on the "goodness" or "badness" of any particular set of domestic arrangement, but did on occasion cite relevant literature or offer commiseration.

Having been trained as a cultural anthropologist-ethnographer, I know this approach is controversial. I have always used it to some extent (I would argue that most if not all interviewers do), though usually surreptitiously,

writing up the results of my findings as if I had maintained my proper distance from my "subjects." But reading Reinharz' discussion of ethics in feminist research, and teaching ethics as part of a qualitative methodology course at the University of Tulsa, I had occasion to rethink my position. When, for example, a farmer confessed toward the end of the interview that he worried because his wife was often criticized for being a traditional stay-at-home mother, I shared with him Sachs' research on women as "invisible farmers," critical to the process of farming but invisible because they were not directly paid. His wife, I suggested, fit that pattern; she does all the bookkeeping, records stock reports from cable t.v. to their home computer, does much of the purchasing, runs their home-based agricultural products business, runs an in-home daycare- and does not call herself a farmer. My respondent seemed fascinated with this insight. This led into half hour's more discussion of these issues; at the end, the respondent told me several times how helpful it had been to him to think about these topics. As he pondered this issue, his answers became more and more direct, more indepth, and ultimately provided many additional-- and quite possibly more valid-- insights.

This is not suggest that self- and disciplinary-disclosure is a simple issue, nor should it be advocated for all interviewers or ethnographers. As Reinharz points out, "Researchers who self disclose are reformulating the researchers' role in a way that maximizes engagement of the self but also increases the researchers' vulnerability to criticism, both for what is revealed

and for the very act of self-disclosure" (1992, 34; see also Reissman 1988, 1990). Despite these potential drawbacks, however, I used this technique because I felt the benefits far outweighed the costs by greatly increasing the validity of my findings as well as the degree of comfort both I and the people I interviewed experienced.

Confidentiality

Throughout this study, I consistently tried to respect the confidentiality of my informants. Working in a small town, this was not as simple matter. The couples interviewed usually knew most of the couples in the community, including families I had interviewed. It would have been easy to engage in gossip about their friends and neighbors I had been willing to do so.

I was also careful to respect the privacy of wives and husbands. By IRB standards, the questions asked did not qualify as "sensitive," because respondents were not asked about psychological problems or sex or drugs. Yet peering behind the scenes in any working marriage, one inevitably comes across sore spots ranging from minor emotional scrapes and bruises to major traumas. During the course of my interviews, I listened sympathetically and supportively, but carefully avoided being cast in the role of therapist or arbiter.

At the onset of the first interview, I fully informed study participants what would involved, both verbally and by reviewing the consent form,

based on the OSU IRB-approved form, which study participants were asked to sign. This ensured that respondents were fully informed of the nature of the study, including procedures used and means of protecting subjects' confidentiality. In reporting on my findings, I changed names and identifying details so as not to breach that confidence.

After some debate, I also changed the name and identifying details of the community I studied. I struggled with this decision. In the beginning of this project, it seemed that the specific history, geography and demography of Wheatlands were so tightly bound to contemporary social structure and cultural beliefs that I could not at first imagine how to analyze present-day patterns without revealing too much about specifics from the past. As I gained distance, however, I began to recognize that the ways in which I felt Wheatlands was completely unique often overlapped with analyses of other small towns (most notably, with patterns of Midwestern farming communities described by Salamon in Prairie Patrimony, 1992). This realization helped me to recognize that my analysis would lose little by calling the community "Wheatlands," the county "Sooner," and by reshuffling strategic historical and demographic details to allow study participants to maintain their privacy.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was carried out using the grounded theory method of analytic induction (Denzin 1989, Charmaz 1983, Glaser and Strauss 1967, 1978).

This approach posits that it is possible (indeed, often desirable) to simultaneously collect ethnographic information and develop theory. The goal of this analytical approach is to achieve what Clifford Geertz has called "thick description." As Geertz notes, "The aim is to draw large conclusions from small, but very densely textured facts; to support broad assertions about the role of culture in the construction of collective life by engaging them exactly with complex specifics" (1983, 28).

The specific format for this type of analysis is set forth by Charmaz in "The Grounded Theory Method: An Explication and Interpretation" (1983). As Charmaz explains, the process involves an ongoing interaction between data collection, data analysis, and theory formation. Once collected, data are coded in initial form; as this process occurs, the ethnographer continues to collect data, which are then used to develop categories for *focused coding* which represents a higher analytic level of looking at ethnographic observations. As this process unfolds, the ethnographer begins to write *memos*, or "written elaborations of ideas about the data and the coded categories (representing) an intermediate step between coding and writing the first draft of the analysis" (Charmaz 1983, 120). As memos accumulate, they are sorted, then integrated (Charmaz 1983, 122-123). The final integration synthesizes the ethnographer's coded observations at the theoretical level.

In my case, this meant I transcribed interviews onto a pre-formated style sheet, grouping related comments from my field notes into demographic information, socialization issues, employment data, childbirth and childcare

considerations, and input about each spouse's participation in, satisfaction with, and feelings about family work. Most interviews also resulted in special sections to reflect issues informants raised which were not incorporated into the standard interview; examples of such topics include discussions of race and community, concerns regarding changing valuation of children in families, difficulties which led to separation etc. When possible, I tried to complete transcriptions within a day or two of the original interview.

As part of the transcription process, I used "***" to mark particularly significant passages and my own narrative comments, which I bracketed to distinguish them from respondents' words; this approach allowed me to use the "search" function of my computer software program to locate these passages later. I also kept extensive notes on a series of legal pads; these notes, along with starred and bracketed passages from interviews, were in turn incorporated back into my interviews. Due to this dialectical approach, no two interviews are identical; all respondents were asked about the same baseline questions, but in later interviews more sophisticated probes were incorporated to get increasingly detailed information about, for example, race, specific community employment and daycare concerns, and problems posed by particular socioeconomic statuses.

Selected Characteristics of the Sample

In many respects, interview and survey respondents proved to be quite similar, as evident in the comparison of selected characteristics of interview

and survey respondents summarized in Table 1.

TABLE 1
SELECTED RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS

	Interview	Survey
Age		
20-24	3	4
25-29		6
30-34	8	2
35-39	9	5
40-44	2	3
Mean Age:	34.0	31.3
Years of Marriage		
1-5	2	10
6-10	1	2
11-15	12	4
16-20	5	4
21-25	2	
Mean Years of Marriage:	13.7	8.9
Social Class		
Working Class / Lower Class	11	11
Middle Class	7	9
Upper Middle Class	4	0
Race / Ethnicity		
Caucasian	19	20
African American	3	0

Generally speaking, survey respondents appear to be somewhat younger, and consequently have been married for a shorter period of time than interview respondents. As was anticipated in the project design, survey respondents are also more likely to be poor, working class or middle class

than upper middle class, therefore balancing the somewhat skewed class representation of the original sample.

Validity and Reliability

Validity was assessed at two levels: a) content validity, by comparison with results from other contemporary studies of the same phenomena; and b) member validation, whereby qualitative findings "are validated to the extent that collectivity members recognize and endorse the sociologist's account of their social world" (Bloor 1983, in Emerson). Validity was also assessed by the use of triangulation. Triangulation was achieved in two respects. First, triangulation of informants was achieved by interviewing both spouses, and children, where applicable; this information was supplemented by interviews with community representatives in schools, social service agencies, daycare centers and dayhomes. Secondly, triangulation was achieve by the use of multiple methods, including indepth interviews, surveys, the percent-of-tasks assignment, and historical and demographic information.

Use of multiple informants was particularly valuable in this respect. As noted, spouses interviewed separately provided information which was different from, and useful in different ways, than interviews with spouses interviewed together. At another level, the picture which emerged from talking to family members took on new dimensions when viewed in the context of interviews with childcare staff, social service agencies, and

representatives from the Wheatlands Development Coalition. Usually the information overlapped, though rarely completely. Given the open-ended interview format, it was possible to cross-check key information by asking other respondents to verify or expand upon it. When possible, insights were also cross-checked against demographic and historical information for accuracy. Also, when possible, findings were put in the context of quantitative research on similar topics.

Use of the "percent of tasks" assignment made it possible to gain insight into the extent to which wife and husband agreed on completion of housework chores, and to verify or expand on assessments of how family work is completed which was offered by informants during indepth interviews.

Validity of Interview Results

By using open-ended probes rather than preformated questions, it was possible to check emerging theories of domestic identity negotiation with respondents. Some interviewees had spent little time thinking about the processes of identity negotiation; others have apparently considered these issues at length. Generally speaking, informants appeared to regard the emerging analysis as an accurate representation of their experience. Respondents later in the study often suggested refinements to the analysis which deepened and expanded upon my original formulations.

The "percent-of-tasks" assignment was particularly useful as an

assessment of member validation. In this task each spouse was asked to assess the relative contribution wife, husband, and others made to the completion of domestic chores. In nearly all cases, each spouse expected that the wife would, overall, report and complete a higher percent of tasks in almost all categories. The validity of these results supported by findings from a variety of other analyses (many using large nationally based samples; see Appendix for summary of studies); overall, women apparently complete approximately 70% of all household tasks, with men completing most of the remainder; results from this study were 66% for wives, 30% for husbands, 4% children or others.

In administering the percent of tasks assignment, some couples did them independently, some jointly. Given the small sample size it is difficult to know whether this influenced the reliability of results. I originally expected that it would, with women, for example, reporting more accurately when husbands were not present. However, any impact of spousal presence appears to be considerably more complex in operation, reflecting not only gender differences but also marital dynamics; several respondents joked that their wife or husband might retaliate if they under or over reported. Others voluntarily compared results and commented cheerfully on similarities and discrepancies. It would be intriguing to replicate the percent-of-tasks assignment under controlled circumstances to determine whether reliability was affected by spousal presence or absence.

Minority and Majority Respondents: Findings from minority families should be regarded with considerably more caution than findings from majority respondents, given the sample size of only three. However, responses from minority interviewees do mesh with other findings, as well as with information from demographic and community sources. This would certainly be a productive topic for future study.

Reliability

One common critique of indepth interviews is that the complexity of coding responses may lead to results which are inherently difficult to replicate, suggesting problems with reliability. In order to assess reliability of results, two respondents were asked to complete the survey instrument which was developed from previously coded and compiled results of the interview. One respondent was surveyed nine months after her original interview, and the other six months later. In each case, responses to open-ended queries and multiple choice questions were markedly similar, though indepth interviews supplied considerably more information on processual aspects of identity negotiation, as might be expected.

In sum, use of the survey instrument for interview respondents serves as an indirect indication that the results of indepth interviewing should be regarded as generally reliable. It is hoped that future research in this community will further support these findings.

Methodological Strengths and Limitations of the Project

The goal of this research was to produce a holistic portrayal of the process of domestic identity negotiation. It was decided that a triangulated methodology would contribute considerably to the achievement of this goal. With that in mind, the original study design was quite ambitious, a wide variety of methods in a longitudinal design to enhance both validity and reliability.

Like many projects, the design was modified by the exigencies of time and practicality. The log of household work and the longitudinal component of the original design were dropped; community interviews and a survey were added; and of respondents was dropped from fifty in the original design to twenty two. This modified design meant that diversity of social class was achieved; despite significant efforts, however, few minority respondents were located.

All told, the greatest strengths of this study appear to be threefold. First, as was hoped, use of a variety of data sources has made it possible to view family from a variety of lenses or perspectives, ranging from quite macroctructural (economic, sociohistorical) to quite individual (friction points within families, negotiation strategies). Second, because these perspectives are all set within the context of one community, it is possible to view family process dynamically, as an ongoing interaction between agency and structure- or, in Giddens' terms, to view the process of structuration. Third, except as noted, the community appears to be sufficiently typical of

other nonmetropolitan communities to allow cautious generalization of the results.

Several limitations of this analysis should also be noted, however. First, as a community, Wheatlands is generally holding steady or prospering. Small towns which are economically distressed would quite likely differ in the processual specifics of identity negotiation. Thus while this study may provide a general framework for interpretation, it should not be regarded as typical in all respects of the majority of small towns.

Second, this study would have been enhanced if more interviews could have been completed. This is particularly true for minority respondents. To the extent that such information was gathered, it appears to be highly suggestive. For example, respondents have rarely been asked to discuss their satisfaction with household arrangements (Hochschild 1990 is an exception); the few cases where such questions were asked suggest that women were quite dissatisfied with the apparent inequity of arrangements. In this sample, many respondents- particularly those from working class and farm backgrounds- regarded existing arrangements as a logical if sometimes onerous response to economic realities. This would appear to be a fruitful topic for future investigation.

In sum, this study represents a significant contribution to the study of domestic identity negotiation based on its triangulated methodology and processual, holistic portrayal. Though still somewhat preliminary in nature, the results represent one potential model of how families interact within a

series of structural constraints to determine family responsibilities over the life course.

CHAPTER 4

HISTORY AND DEMOGRAPHY OF WHEATLANDS

Contemporary families in Wheatlands negotiate gender identities and domestic responsibilities within the context of a small town, a nonmetropolitan enclave in a rapidly urbanizing world. The town square, at first sight, looks as it might have fifty years ago-- the historic De la Rosa building, where the Chamber of Commerce is now located; the Carnegie library, built in the early 1900s; the stately court house surrounded by the post office, the police station, and city hall. But many of the buildings, once occupied by mom and pop drug stores, dry goods and department stores, cafes, hotels and even an opera house, have been replaced with specialty stores-- a video rental business, two florists, two shoe stores, a couple of collectible/antique stores, a Christian book store and an insurance agent. A few storefronts gape empty, looking out on the square where in days past, there were always shoppers and strollers and often, farmers hawking their wares.

Off the square to the west, businesses give way within a block or so to one- and two-story frame houses. Radiating westward from this center, homes with tall trees and neatly tended lawns are replaced by smaller, often shabbier dwellings with an occasional junked car or abandoned refrigerator off to the side. Within a few miles the houses dwindle off, leaving only the state highway to traverse the open fields, rolling toward Tulsa.

But Wheatlands is two towns, really. East of town, where the state highway approaches the interstate, the roadside is cluttered with fast-food franchises and convenience stores-- Sonic Drive-in, Hardees, and the ubiquitous Wal-Mart and MacDonalds, where teenagers wearing t-shirts from Hard Rock Cafe and Eskimo Joe's, Levis and Wrangler jeans climb out of cars and pick-up trucks. Looking back into town from this strip, Wheatlands looks much like any other small rural town, marked by a water tower and the grain elevator. To the east, however, a series of clean-lined brick buildings nestles into the rolling fields. The cluster of buildings comes complete with its own water tower emblazoned with the company logo and a parking lot filled with employee's cars. This is the main plant of Construx, a state-of-the-art manufacturing facility which employs a thousand folks from Wheatlands and other nearby communities. Almost all the motels in the county-- a Best Western, a Days Inn, and a Motel 6-- cluster right off the interstate, for the convenience of engineers and sales reps and customers who fly in from all corners of the U.S., indeed from all over the world, to create or admire or buy Construx products. This is the new world, the community that links Wheatlands with Stillwater, with Oklahoma City and Tulsa and Wichita, with South America and Toyko and Stockholm.

The two towns overlap at the town square. Many of Oklahoma's once-viable town squares are now surrounded by empty buildings and trashy, weed filled vacant lots from days when the farm crisis and the oil crisis of the 1980s left sagging incomes and failed businesses in their wake. But Wheatlands's

square, if not thriving, is at least still viable, and slowly growing more so. A closer look at the downtown business district reveals the impeccable restoration work recently completed on the library, preserving its elegant lines while totally updating the facilities just in time for the twenty-first century. The De la Rosa building, once an abandoned bank, has been neatly renovated to house its present occupants. Just off the square a wholly modern Community Center offers a swimming pool, before and after school childcare, aerobics classes and activities for senior citizens.

The families of Wheatlands also live at the crossroads. Until half a century ago most of them were engaged in farming or small mom and pop businesses. Men farmed, or worked for pay. Women who could afford to stay home generally did so, tending children, the house, and perhaps a garden. Women who had to work for money-- widows, single women, women whose husbands could not make ends meet because of disability or poverty-- seldom discussed their labor, since it violated community values of what men and women should be (Sachs 1983, Riley 1992, 1988).

Today, however, what women and men do in Wheatlands families and in the workforce has changed dramatically. The economic infrastructure has shifted considerably as the number of family farms dwindles. Many of the small town businesses which once catered to farmers have disappeared, replaced by discount houses and shopping malls in nearby cities (Newsom 1992, 136). The most common dream among Wheatlands' young folks is to leave town right after graduation for urban areas where they can get jobs and

enjoy what they perceive to be the advantages of an urban lifestyle (local survey; Newsom 1992, 136).

As family-owned farms and businesses have disappeared, most families needed two incomes to make ends meet. As a result nearly half of all labor-force age women in Sooner county are employed. This shift in the labor force has corresponded with a shift in what women and men expect of each other in terms of gender identity, and in terms of domestic responsibilities. To understand the specific ways in which gender identities and domestic responsibilities have changed in Wheatlands, it is useful to examine historical trends which have shaped the present day community and its residents.

Wheatlands in Historical Perspective

Wheatlands is a Land Run town. Until September 16, 1893, the total white settlement of the Wheatlands area consisted of a Land Office, a post office, and a few illegal settlers (the "Sooners") who snuck into Indian Territory before it was officially opened to white settlement. On the day the Cherokee Outlet was formally opened to white homesteaders, people poured into the area in unruly droves-- on foot, on horseback, in wagons, even on trains. Some 100,000 persons waited on the starting line to secure homesteads in the northwestern part of Oklahoma (Morris et al. 1986: Figure 48). By evening that day the town of Wheatlands had a population of 20,000 (some estimates are as high as 40,000) complete with its own "Hell's Half

Acre" of over a hundred tent saloons and gambling halls. As one historian noted, throughout the Cherokee Strip, "Squabbles and fights for possession were as plentiful as lawyers" (Cunningham 1973: 18). Within two months city elections were held and the Hell's Half Acre shrank to half the original number of saloons, gradually giving way to wooden boarding houses and cafes, several newspapers, over fifty small grocery stores, a few dozen lumber yards, several brick yards, law offices, open air churches and civic amenities such as electric lights and street cars. Within a decade the town boasted a train depot, water system, spacious court house square, schools, library and even an opera house to serve the population of just over 14,000 residents in the whole of Sooner County.

Population Dynamics, 1890-1990

Like much of Oklahoma, Wheatlands is characterized by intriguing population trends due to its unusual settlement pattern. In Oklahoma as a whole, the total population in the late 1800s was extremely small. Between 1890 and 1900, however, the area's population expanded by approximately 200% when lands which had previously been part of Indian Territory were opened to white settlement.

Over the following several decades, however, the population of Sooner County declined, first dramatically, then more gradually, reflecting the changing economic base of the area.

Table2
Population Dynamics, 1890-1990

Year	Oklahoma Total Pop.	Increase or Decrease Number	Increase or Decrease Percent	Sooner Co. Total Pop.	Increase or Decrease Number	Increase or Decrease Percent
1890	258,657					
1900	790,391	531,734	205.6			
1910	1,657,155	866,764	109.7			
1920	2,028,283	371,128	22.4			
1930	2,396,040	367,757	18.1	15,139		
1940	2,336,434	-59,606	-2.5	14,826	-313	-2.0
1950	2,33,351	-103,083	-4.4	12,156	-2670	-18.0
1960	2,328,284	94,933	4.3	10,376	-1780	-14.6
1970	2,559,463	231,179	9.9	10,043	-333	-3.21
1980	3,025,290	465,827	18.2	11,573	1530	15.2
1986				11,800	227	1.9
1990				11,045	-755	-6.4

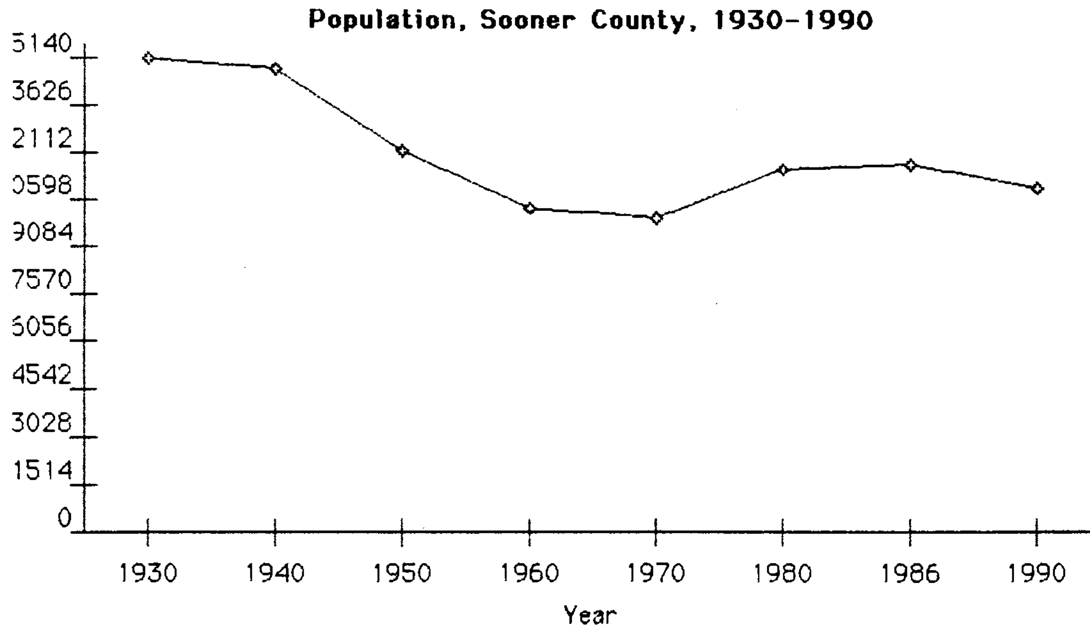
Sources: Oklahoma statistics, Morris et al. 1986, figure 75; Sooner County population, 1990 Census of Population, U.S. Dept. of Commerce.

Examined graphically, population figures portray a pattern of gradual decline, with a brief reversal during the 1980s, when the oil industry in Oklahoma temporarily benefitted from the Arab oil embargo. After the oil bust in the late 1980s, the county's population resumed its gradual downward trend. Local residents would like to believe that recent local prosperity has turned this trend around again, attracting a slow influx of new residents; the grade school principal, for instance, noted a ten percent increase in grades two through five in 1994. If that is indeed the case, however, the change is too recent to be reflected in county-wide census statistics.

The gradual downward trend in population is reflected in declining population density in Sooner County in recent years. Its current population density of 15.1 persons per square mile is low compared to the majority of the state or to the U.S., at 57 persons per square mile in 1970 (Day

and Day 1987: 345).

Figure 1
Population, Sooner County,
1930-1990



Sources: Oklahoma statistics, Morris et al. 1986, figure 75; Sooner County population, U.S. Dept. of Commerce 1991a.

Most of the present residents of Wheatlands were born in Oklahoma, (76% in 1980, and 77% in 1990). The couples interviewed for this study reflected this dynamic. Though many had left town temporarily for education or employment reasons, the majority were born and raised in the community. Most also said they planned to raise their own children in Wheatlands. Though no one claimed their town was perfect, most residents were quick to point out the relative advantages of Wheatlands compared to urban areas as well as to other small towns in the vicinity.

Table 3
Nativity and Place of Birth

	1980	1990
Native	11,502	
Born in Okla.	8,721	8,548
Born in another state	2,761	
Born abroad or at sea	20	
Foreign born	71	
Residence during last 5 years		
Same county	2226	
Same state, different county	1740	
Different state	859	
Abroad	2	

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980 Census of Population, General Social and Economic Characteristics, Oklahoma, 38-269; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990 Census of Population, General Social and Economic Characteristics, Oklahoma.

Economic History: By the time Oklahoma was granted statehood in 1907, Wheatlands was the county seat and largest community in Sooner County (Morris et al. 1986; U. S. Dept. of Commerce 1981a and 1991a). Early settlers were ranchers, farmers and business people. Oil came to the Cherokee Strip in 1911, attracting new settlers. Like most of the state, Sooner County has significant areas of oil and gas production, including a portion of a "Giant Oil Field"- the designation for fields that have an ultimate recovery of more than 100 million barrels - in the northern part of the county (Morris et al. 1986: Figure 70). As a result, during the first three decades after the Land

Run, population continued to grow, though the dramatic rate of increase slowed.

During the 1920s increasing production costs, high interest rates, and erratic government policies drove the price of wheat down. Oil production was also erratic. Most of the oil fields in the Cherokee strip reached peak production within two to three years, then declined, often leaving abandoned equipment and ghost towns (Newsom 1992, 130-134). Then the Depression and the Dust Bowl hit Oklahoma. In Wheatlands, as in much of the rest of the state, population steadily dwindled during the 1940s and 1950s, as farms and hopes blew away. Sooner County shrank by a nearly third over the next three decades, dropping from 15,000 in 1930 to 10,000 in 1960 (Oklahoma statistics, Morris et al. 1986, figure 75).

In most parts of the state the downturn created by farm failures was temporarily reversed during the second half of this century. The impact of the Oil Boom in the 1970s was particularly important. Sooner County, like other oil-producing counties in Oklahoma, saw a brief boom in the 1970s as a result of the Arab oil embargo. High oil prices led to increase exploration, and to the influx of transient workers. The population in Sooner County rose to nearly 12,000, with half of all county residents living in Wheatlands.

When the embargo was rescinded, oil prices collapsed. Unemployment rose sharply. Oil-related businesses went bust, or fell on hard times. Even farmers were hurt, both directly, in the form of higher fuel prices, and indirectly, since many farmers had used oil royalties to repair

equipment or pay on loans (Newsom 1992, 134). Population growth slowed, and subsequently declined to approximately 11,000 in the county, with 5,000 living in the community of Wheatlands based on the 1990 census.

Family life was also affected. Men who lost jobs reported that for the first time, they were likely to help with housework or childcare. Partly this was the result of having spare time. From another angle, however, the wife's job often took on a greater significance than before, as earnings which might once have seemed secondary became more critical for family survival. Median household income in Sooner County dropped from $14,000 in 1979 to $11,000 per capita in 1989 ($30,000 per family; U.S. Dept. of Commerce 198lb,, 38-329; U.S. Dept. of Commerce 199lb, p. 110).

Women in Wheatlands

Women who came to Wheatlands with the Land Run arrived not as wives and mothers of men who homesteaded. They also came as homesteaders; about 20% of all original townsite homesteaders were women This figure was derived by counting names on a list of homesteaders in the township in which present-day Wheatlands is located compiled by the local genealogical society (only names which were obviously female were included; names which were androgynous or simply initials were classified as male). Women also worked as milliners, stenographers, store clerks, telephone operators and restaurant owners (Cunningham 1973, p.24), and took in laundry. Several women ran subscriptions school and many were

school teachers, often teaching for a few years before marriage, sometimes longer.

Farm women worked side by side with their husbands. "Mother raised chickens and canned lots of fruits and vegetables and kept a large cellar filled with supplied. [She] worked in the field gathering with us at harvest time and she also helped with the plowing" (Genealogical Society 1987: 321). "Martha was a good helpmate and mother, she made soap and candles, sewed clothes, quilts, and most of the household items, as well as daughter her girls. They had thirteen children." Ibid. 325). To make ends meet, farm wives often peddled their produce in town. "Marie raised a big garden and chickens and delivered quarts of cream and dozens of eggs to customers in [town]." "Anna raised chickens and churned butter, selling butter and eggs to buy groceries" (Ibid., 352, 336). These patterns persist on contemporary farm homes. Wives of farmers interviewed in the Wheatlands project often reported that they had gardens and chickens, canned vegetables and sewed clothing or craft items which they used or sold.

Kinship often shaped domestic identities in early Wheatlands. If there were no brothers, girls often helped their fathers in the fields. They also cooked for threshing crews or helped care for the sick in neighboring families (Ibid, 354). Daughters of widowers sometimes took their mothers' place. "May, at nine became the woman of the house when her mother died" (Ibid, 325). Widows often struggled to hold their family together. "His [widow] continued farming with the help of the children" (Ibid, 334) After her

husband died, another woman "continued to raise chickens, which she dressed for sale. She had her own milking cow. She owned the entire block. She sold lots intermittently for residences" (Ibid., 34).

Women also served as a civic force through social clubs and organizations. Clubs such as the Ladies Wednesday Morning Club, the Women's Christian Temperance Union, the Wheatlands Progress Club, the Sisterhood Club and others were actively involved in efforts to influence state legislators on the issues of juvenile delinquency, child labor laws, education, suffrage, and construction of a local library (Cunningham 1973: 124). Women's efforts in later years contributed to the war effort, the town's annual birthday celebration, and the local museum. Hired girls also played an important part in early Wheatlands. Many of these were rural girls who wanted to attend high school. Because there were no school buses, these girls came to live in town to complete high school, often working for city folks for their keep (Beers 1991).

Women in Wheatlands Today: As is evident, there have been women in the paid labor force in and around Wheatlands since the community was first settled. This is further confirmed by the information respondents offered regarding their mothers; more than half of all individuals interviewed stated that their mothers had worked during their childhood. However, in keeping with U.S. trends, the percent of women in the labor force has been growing over the past several decades. In 1990, nearly half of

all Wheatlands women 16 years and older were in the labor force; this compares to 73% of all men (1990 rates for the state of Oklahoma were 53.5% for females, 72.3% for males; 1990 Census of Population and Housing, Summary Tape File 31). Translated, these numbers mean that daycare and family work issues are likely to be topics most Wheatlands families must confront on a daily basis.

Childcare poses particular problems for families with infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. Census figures reveal that women with young children in Wheatlands were quite likely to work; nearly 60% of all women with children under six years old were in the workforce in 1990 (Table 5, "Employment Status and Journey to Work Characteristics: 1990," Summary Social, Economic, and Housing Characteristics, Oklahoma, 61).

Age Structure of the Wheatlands Population

The ways families work out housework and childcare are quite obviously shaped by fluctuations in the economy, which directly effect whether or not parents are employed, how much they are paid, and what work schedules they can negotiate. The impact of the population's age structure on family work is less immediately evident. The relative size of age groups in any population, however, provides critical information about a wide range of demographic trends and resulting family patterns. Economic development, crime rates, availability of housing, even marriage and fertility rates relate directly to the age groupings in a particular population.

These rates in turn shape family options in negotiating domestic work. For example, communities with larger proportions of young people are likely to have higher birth rates, more pressure on schools, and a great deal of competition for jobs. Such conditions would be likely to put extra stress on marriage and family.

Overall, both mortality and fertility rates have been steadily declining in the United States. When represented in graphic form, like most modernized countries, our population's age structure has shifted from the pyramid shape (high birth rates, high death rates) to a more barrel-shaped configuration, reflecting fewer births and greater longevity (Gill et al. 1992: 76-79; McFalls et al. 1987: 78-79. The Sooner County population does not reflect the classic Baby Boom bulge found in the U.S. pyramid, however. This is probably because people born during the peak years of the baby boom found little employment in Wheatlands in pre-Construx days, and left town in search of jobs. That trend is still evident today. Asked to rate youth opportunities in Wheatlands in 1994, 76% of all respondents in a recent community rated them as "low" or "very low" (Survey Results for "Citizen Involvement Meeting" 7-14-94). It is hardly surprising, then, that both the 1980 and 1990 Sooner County pyramids show decreased population during the years when young adults traditionally attend college or seek work in urban areas, during the twenties and early thirties. But many of these young folks apparently return in later years. As one community resident noted, "when kids graduate from high school, the first thing on their minds is to

leave Wheatlands. Slowly but surely, however, Wheatlands pulls them back," to raise a family, as happened with her, or perhaps later, for retirement. Returnees cite the quality of life, classified as "high" or "very high" by 50% of survey respondents; education, public spirit and availability of jobs, particularly at Construx.

The percent of Sooner County population in each age group also rises in later years (from 45 on, in 1980, and from 50 on in 1990) as compared to the population of Oklahoma as a whole. This may correlate with good health care and resulting lower mortality rates, with the growing trend toward retiring in Wheatlands, or quite likely a combination of both factors. As compared to both state and national averages, Sooner County's life table for 1980 (the most recent year in which data were available) suggests a longer life expectancy at birth, indicating generally lower than average infant mortality rates, along with a longer life expectancy throughout the age categories considered.

Marriage and Childbirth Patterns

In any population, economic and social patterns combine with the age / sex structure of a population to produce a series of distinctive marriage and childbirth patterns. These choices have considerable significance for the options faced by families in negotiating housework and childcare; families with greater numbers of children, for example, face considerably heavier childcare demands.

The sex ratio, or ratio of males per 100 females, has a major impact on marriage rates, since lower proportions of males to females overall, particularly in specific age-groups, will directly affect the pool of marriage partners. In Wheatlands today, looking a all persons 16 years and over, women outnumber men for all races, at approximately 89 men for every 100 women. This is somewhat surprising, given that sex ratios in nonmetropolitan areas of Oklahoma tend to favor women, running as high as 110.8 for marriage aged persons in rural areas (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980 Census of Population, General Population Characteristics, Oklahoma, 382; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990 Census of Population, General Population Characteristics, Oklahoma, 149; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990 Summary Social, Economic, and Housing Characteristics, Oklahoma, 61).

Table 4
Sex Ratio, 1980 and 1990
Oklahoma, Sooner County, and Wheatlands

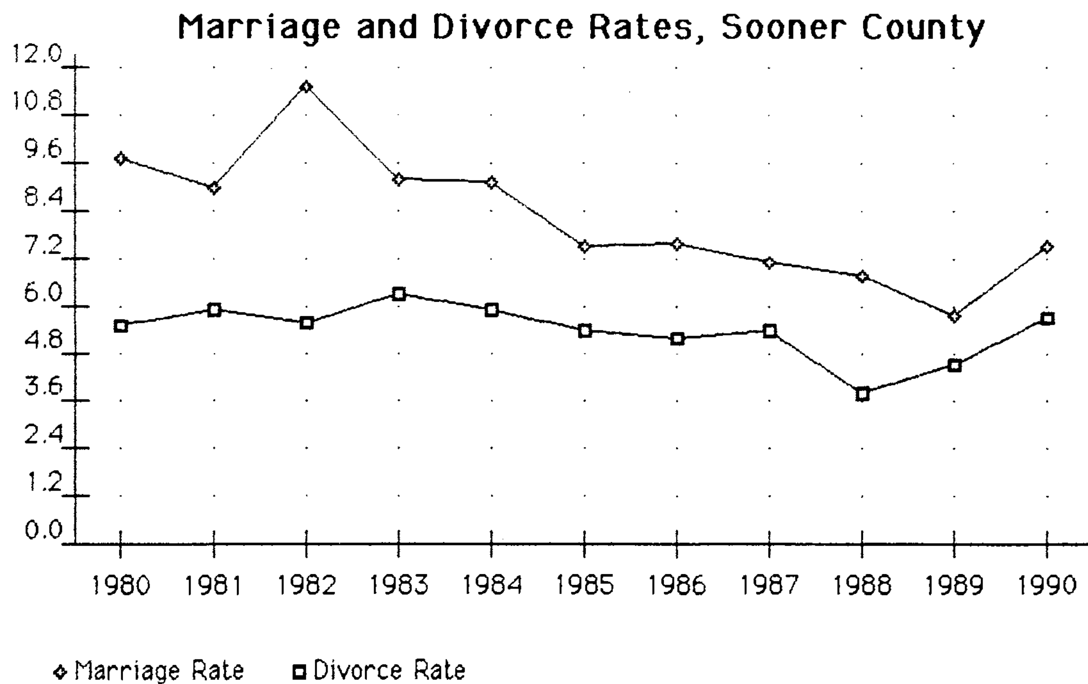
	1980	1990
Oklahoma	95.3	94.8
Sooner County	95.32	94.5
City of Wheatlands	supressed	89.0

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980 Census of Population, General Social and Economic Characteristics, Oklahoma, 38-269; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990 Census of Population, General Social and Economic Characteristics, Oklahoma.

Marriage Patterns: Represented graphically, marriage trends in Sooner

County over the past decade show a gradual decline, while divorce trends generally hold steady, reflecting national marriage and divorce patterns. In Wheatlands, the odds still are that most people will get married, and if divorced, will remarry. But the probability in that respect has been gradually changing, as reflected in the following chart of marriage and divorce trends:

Figure 2



Source: Oklahoma Department of Public Health, Oklahoma Health Statistics, 1980-1990.

Overall, however, the majority of Sooner County residents still choose marriage. Looking at marital status in the county reveals that over sixty percent of all residents sixteen years and older are married. These figures vary considerably by race, with significant implications for family patterns, as

discussed in the following chapter.

Figure 3
Marital Status, 1990, Sooner County

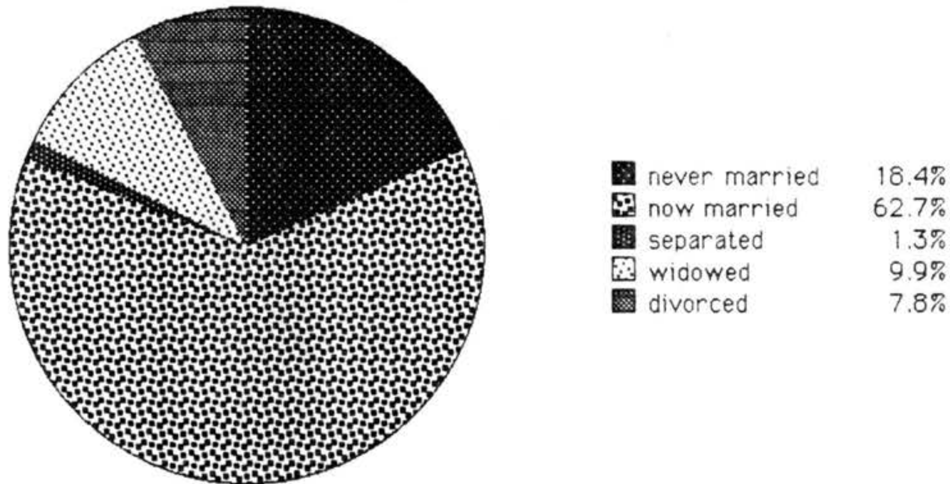


Table 57, "Household and Family Characteristics by Race and Hispanic Origin: 1990." General Population Characteristics, Oklahoma, 179.

Childbirth and Fertility Patterns: The number of children born to a given family has considerable significance for decision about what kind of childcare will be needed, number of hours women can work. There may also be an indirect relationship between family size and women's employment, with two-income families choosing to have fewer children. This certainly seems to be the case in Wheatlands. Looking at the most basic measure of fertility, crude birth rates, it can be seen that Sooner County, like the rest of Oklahoma, demonstrates a decline in the number of children born per 1,000. Both county and city rates (12.9, 12.7 respectively in 1990) are also

considerably lower than U.S. rate of 16.2 or the Oklahoma rate of 15.2 for the same period. This means Wheatlands couples are having significantly fewer children than couples elsewhere, and significantly fewer children than did couples in Sooner County a decade ago, given that the rate declined from 17.9 to 12.9 over the preceding decade.

Table 5
Crude Birth Rates, Oklahoma and Sooner County

Year:	1980	1990
U.S. (1989)		16.2
Oklahoma	17.2	15.2
Sooner County (all races)	17.9	12.9
City of Wheatlands	---	12.7

Sources: U.S. Department of Commerce, 1981a; U.S Department of Commerce 1991a; Gill et al. 1992, p. 40.

To get a better picture of fertility data, it is helpful to examine the general fertility rate (Live births / Total female population ages 15-44). In 1980, this figure was 87.6 live births per 1000 women in the specified age range. By 1990 it had dropped to 64.4 (U.S. Department of Commerce 1981a, U.S. Department of Commerce 1991a).

These figures parallel nation-wide fertility trends (Gill et al., 1992: 49-50). The overall crude birth rate, however, shows a more rapid decline than has been demonstrated in the U.S. as a whole. This may be related to the relatively high levels of education and income levels as well as the low levels

of unemployment in Sooner County, since both factors are routinely related to decline in fertility (Ibid., 50). Another factor may be growing sophistication about birth control among the Wheatlands population. When asked about the number and spacing of their children, a surprising number of respondents-approximately 80%- claimed that the children they had were planned, and that they planned to have no more.

Families in Wheatlands

In 1990, the median family size in Wheatlands was 2.94, paralleling the family size of the respondents sampled in the Wheatlands project (U.S. Department of Commerce 1991a). Examined by family type, there were approximately 600 families with children under 18 years of age, including 150 families with children under six, in Wheatlands. Of these, 500 were married couple families, including 110 families with children under six, and 100 were female-headed, including 20 families with children under six.

In terms of racial distribution, the majority of all families were white, with whites accounting for 550 out of the total 600 families with children under 18 years of age; this included 450 of the 500 married families, and 85 of 100 female-headed families (representing about 16% of the white population; General Population Characteristics 1990, p. 374). Adding in childless families or families with children over 18 results in a total of 1325 families, 1220 of which are white. The total number of households of any type in the community of Wheatlands is approximately 2,100.

At first glance, income and poverty figures for Wheatlands would suggest that families face a rosier future in Wheatlands than in Oklahoma over all, or than in the U.S. in general. Median income for a family in Wheatlands in 1989 dollars was $29,000, comparing favorably with Oklahoma in general, at $28,554. In all of Wheatlands, there were only 200 families who reported income levels below poverty as defined by the federal government, representing 13.5% of the community as a whole.

Examined closely, however, income and poverty levels are somewhat deceptive. White families face a very different set of economic life chances than minority families, as indicated by considerable variation in family income and poverty levels by race. The implications of this variation are quite significant, as will be discussed in Chapter 5.

Summary

In many respects, Wheatlands families live at the crossroads. For the past century the community has followed the common pattern of slow but generally steady decline as farming became less profitable for small farmers. The farm crisis and the oil bust of the 1980s hit hard. Wheatlanders had to leave town to find work, and women who had planned to work part time or stay out of the workforce completely often found that their jobs had become essential to the family income.

The New Home Economists such as Gary Becker would predict that dwindling income and rising numbers of wives in the workforce would lead

to lower marriage rates, higher divorce rates, and smaller numbers of children (Becker 1981, 1985, 1991; Becker and Posner 1993). These are exactly the dynamics one observes in Wheatlands. Marriage has held steady to a larger degree than in urban areas, but divorce is definitely on the rise. Fertility rates have dropped even more significantly than elsewhere in Oklahoma or the U.S. in general, possibly reflecting to overall higher rates in the workforce of women with young children.

In this respects, Wheatlanders live at another intersection. Gender identities have probably never been as traditional as originally described; as noted, many women on farms and in town have worked in one way or another ever since the Land Run established the community. Now, however, women's work is increasingly open and recognized. Many women in contemporary Wheatlands have become "career primary" as opposed to "part-timers." As women's salaries rise, and as these salaries become more essential to family income, it is quite likely that they will expect to renegotiate their domestic identities (Becker 1985).

CHAPTER 5

HIDDEN COMMUNITIES:

RACE AND ETHNICITY IN WHEATLANDS

Delia Grey is a youngish-looking African-American woman, very attractive, with a skullcap of black hair which accentuates her high cheekbones and laughing eyes, dressed professionally but with a flair in a heather grey dress, red t-shirt, red nail polish, and large gold earrings. At the onset of our conversation she asked if I really want to interview her. She had, she noted, been separated from her husband for a month, and at fifteen, her only child was really too old to be a childcare problem; her biggest childcare issue, she noted with a laugh, was how to keep her daughter and her daughter's week-old driver's permit away from her sporty 1993 Toyota. The unstated message behind her words was, "I will cooperate because I agreed to do so, but don't expect me to tell you much of significance."

I assured Delia that I was in fact eager to interview her. My first contact was made before she and her husband separated, and, as several Wheatlands residents cautioned, finding African American or low income dual-earner couples in Wheatlands presented a considerable problem, in that those groups are small relative to the total population, and families in those categories are much likely to be headed by a single parent or characterized by sporadic employment if two parents are present.

Despite my assurance, however, the interview was slow going at first. Delia was very pleasant, make eye contact, offered up a few laughs with some information, but she was very careful. Near the end of the interview, asked for suggestions about other potential informants, she replied that she could think of no one. All her family and friends worked odd shifts and sleep days, and besides they are not listed in the phone book, and she did not have their numbers with her. What Delia was really saying, of course, was that she had no reason to trust an unknown interviewer far enough to grant access into the black community without more extensive credentialing.

In response to her reluctance, I explained that I was determined not to fall into the trap of overlooking minority families simply because they are hard to reach, noting the lack of written African American history in Wheatlands. Delia agreed with that observation, and added that the black population in Wheatlands has been dwindling because there are so few economic opportunities, forcing blacks to either commute or move. The few who remain work for each other and marry each other, meaning that nearly all the black population in Wheatlands is related by blood or by marriage, around seven extended families in all.

As we wrapped up the interview I told Delia, in complete sincerity, how much insight she had given me into how patterns in the black community differ from white Wheatlands. Unsolicited, she noted that she had thought of several couples who might talk to me, that she would check with them over the weekend, maybe have some names for me by the

following week. She had, in essence, decided that I was legitimately concerned, not only about the general topic of childcare but about the African American experience in Wheatlands.

Barriers to Understanding Race in Wheatlands

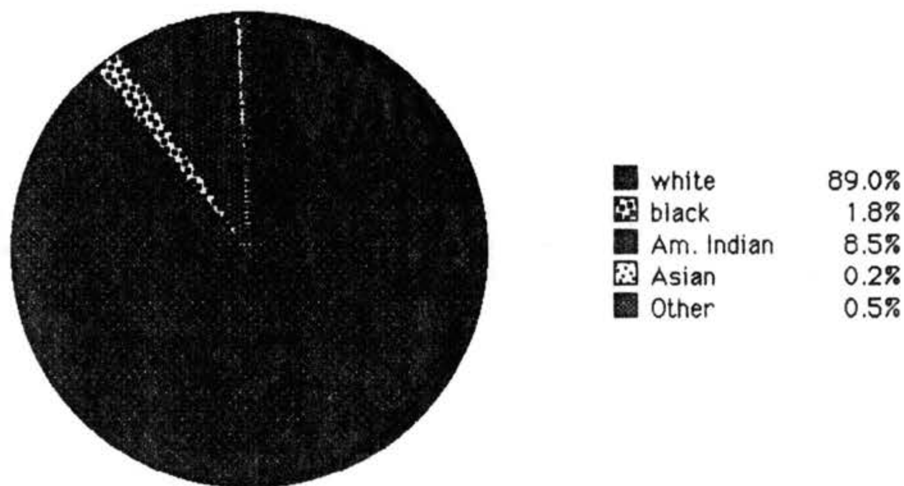
Family experience, it has been argued, is best understood by first examining the historical grounding which shapes contemporary cultural and social patterns. Therefore to understand modern-day minority experience of family, it is useful to begin with the historical context. Attempting to discover the history of Native and African Americans in Wheatlands proved to be a provocative and frustrating endeavor, fraught with academic deadends interspersed with tantalizing nuggets of information. All told, it became increasingly evident that minority Wheatlander families have a hidden history, unpublished but often fascinating in the ways it differs from the majority experience. Accounts of early settlement in Wheatlands focus primarily if not exclusively on male European American homesteaders, and even more specifically, on German, English, and Scotch-Irish or "American" settlers. For that reason, with limited exceptions, it was necessary to rely primarily on oral accounts from African American and Native American residents of Wheatlands (Cunningham 1973 is the principal exception).

Similar problems exist in examining the demographic features of the Wheatlands minority population. Because so few minority residents live in Wheatlands- or, for that matter, in Sooner County- much potentially

valuable census data must be supressed to protect individual privacy. Local data- from the Chamber of Commerce, for instance- makes no distinction between majority and minority residents. One might assume, as majority residents apparently do, that with such small numbers, minorities have been absorbed into the mainstream, sharing a common history, demography and culture. But minority residents see the situation quite differently.

Part of the problem in gaining access to minority families was a simple numbers issue. The present-day racial composition of Sooner County reflects Oklahoma-wide rural patterns, to a large extent; with the exceptions of historically African American or Native American towns, most of rural Oklahoma communities are predominantly Caucasian. In Wheatlands, nearly 90% of all country residents are caucasian, as indicated below:

Figure 4
Race Composition 1990

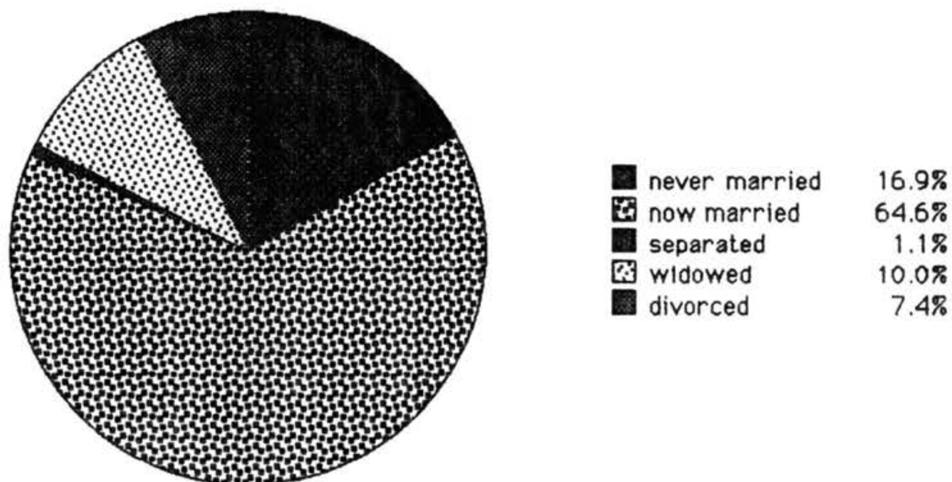


Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, 1991a, 405.

These figures become even more significant when translated into numbers of Wheatlands families. Because the community is small, the total number of families is small, at approximately 600 if one considers all families with children 18 and under. Minorities represent only 10% of the town's population, with about 4% African Americans, 4% Native Americans, and 2% other; translated that means a total of twenty African American and twenty Native American families in Wheatlands.

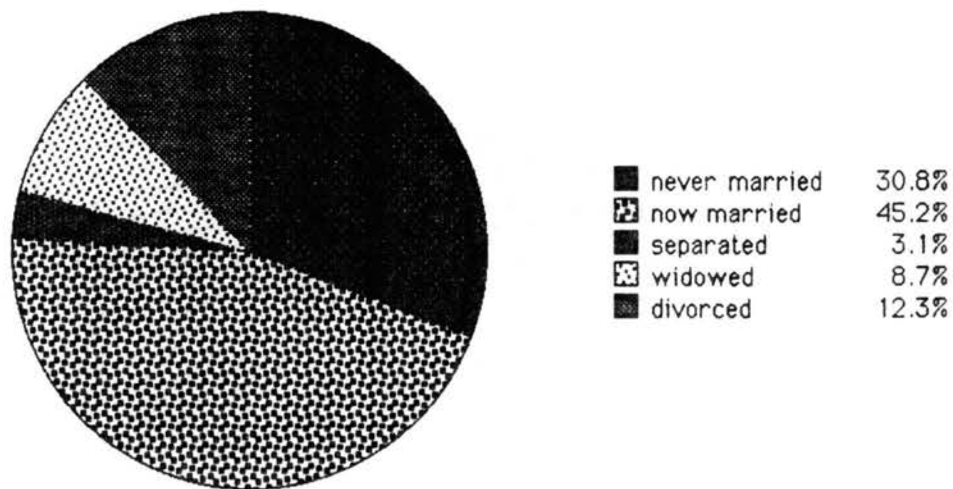
Locating respondents was even further complicated by the initial requirement that families be two-parent, dual earner households to qualify. As the following illustrations show, that in essence means 20% fewer Native Americans or African Americans qualified under the terms of the sampling frame, since considerably fewer of them were married.

Figure 5
Marital Status, 1990, Whites



Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, 1991a, 405.

Figure 6
Marital Status, Nonwhites 1990



Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, 1991a, 405.

Finally, as the illustrated by the vignette at the beginning of this chapter, gaining access to minorities was not the final barrier to gaining knowledge. Minority respondents were much more likely to be distrustful, for cultural as well as practical reasons. In Delia's case, the main impediment was doubting that a white non-Wheatlander could truly understand or care about black community experience. For LaRue Chase, a young African-American recently widowed mother who receives subsidized childcare, the stakes were much higher: potential loss of benefits if she inadvertently revealed too much about her previous marital situation or financial and childcare arrangements. Her answers to my questions were quite superficial, carefully couched so as not to jeopardize her status.

Given these barriers, it certainly would have been easier to omit

minority families from the project sampling frame. Choosing to include them generally meant speaking with mothers only, and sometimes with recently separated women. This admittedly means the data should be regarded with caution. However, since the experiences of minority families in Wheatlands are in many ways distinct from the experience of white residents, even partial information was considered to be useful. Negotiating housework and childcare must be done within very different parameters for minority families in Wheatlands.

Native Americans in Wheatlands

Based on the archeological record, Native Americans passed the Sooner County area for centuries before white settlement, but there was apparently never a stable Indian population. Once whites came, much of what would later become the state of Oklahoma was assigned to tribes as reservations. Wheatlands, however, was part of the so-called Unassigned Lands. For that reason, any Native Americans who live in Wheatlands today most likely have tribal ties elsewhere.[1]

Most Native Americans remained on or near reservations until World War II. During the 1940s and 1950s, many Native Americans enlisted in the armed services. Indians also began to feel the pull of job opportunities during that time. Wheatlands, however, would have had little to offer jobhunters until significantly later, when Construx began to improve local

employment prospects. Consequently, Native American Wheatlanders are likely to be recent arrivals, without the long-term family ties to the community detailed by whites and blacks alike.

Native Americans who came to the community would have had little incentive to identify themselves by race or ethnicity, particularly when to do so meant facing increased discrimination. Long-time social worker Barbara Jamison, for instance, remarked in all sincerity that "those Indians expect you to give them everything." She made this comment though she herself is African-American, and able to describe in passionate detail how discrimination affects her people.

Similar attitudes in the schools discouraged Native Americans from self-identification. In the 1970s throughout Oklahoma, Native Americans moved to gain cultural recognition in communities where their presence was strong. Indians from one nearby town, where approximately a third of all primary and secondary students were Native American, described the problems they encountered in attempting to achieve acceptance of their "Indianness" by introducing tribal customs such as handgames and dances into the schools. "But the whites didn't want to even acknowledge us. We'd hold these cultural events, they wouldn't come, only our parents would be there." At that time these Native American students had exclusively white teachers and administrators who could not comprehend, for instance, why Native American boys and their parents would protest when told they could not wear their hair in the tribal way. The message was clear: their culture was

inferior, their entertainment too trivial to acknowledge.

In small towns like Wheatlands, it was better for Native Americans to simply lay low, to "pass," if they could. Many were able to do so;, despite the stereotype of copper-colored skin, dark eyes and straight black hair, modern-day Oklahoma Native Americans run the gamut from traditional stereotype to blue-eyed blonde. Outside Wheatlands-- at regional powwows, for example, or other Native American ceremonies-- tribal affiliation might be more readily acknowledged. In town, few residents were able to identify Native American families, however.

Native American Demography

Differences between Native Americans and the majority population in Wheatlands are quite evident in the ways demographic patterns diverge. The male to female ratio is close to even for white Sooner County residents, but significantly more disproportionate for Native Americans (community figures were supressed due to the small number of Native American residents; figures for African Americans were not available). Lower sex ratios such as that found for Sooner County Native Americans typically correlate with lower rates of marriage and higher rates of out-of-wedlock birth. This fits with the a considerably lower marriage rate reported by nonwhites in Sooner County, and would result, by extension, in correspondingly different patterns in gender and domestic identities.

Combined with higher rates of divorce (and often with higher death

rates), skewed sex ratios will ultimately produce a significantly different population profile. This trend is already evident in the discrepancy between the median ages of Native Americans and whites in Sooner County; in 1990 the median age was 24.8 for Native American males and 23.6 for females, compared to 33.8 for white males and 34.1 for white females. The population is young, and presumably more fertile, as evidenced by considerably higher birth rates than the white population of Sooner County (African American crude birth rates should be regarded with caution; the county-wide population is so small- twenty Wheatlands families and two rural families responded in the 1990 census- that one or two births distort annual statistics).

Table 6
Crude Birth Rates by Race
Oklahoma and Sooner County

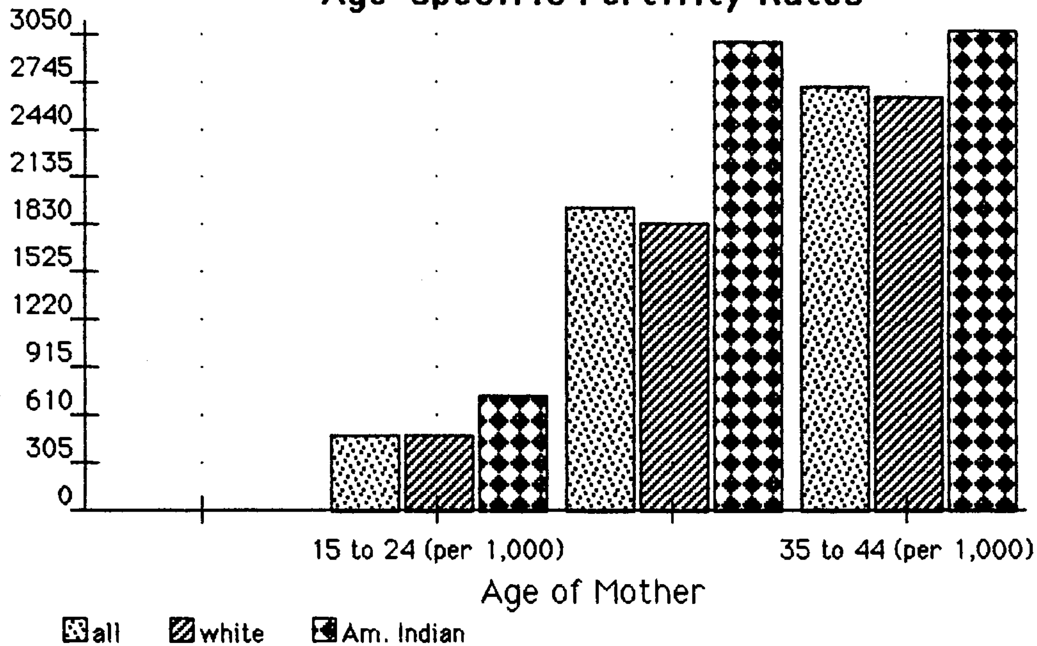
Year:	1980	1990
U.S. (1989)		16.2
Oklahoma	17.2	15.2
Sooner County (all races)	17.89	12.9
Sooner County by race:		
White	16.7	11.8
Black	33.8	10.0
Native American	28.8	26.7
City of Wheatlands	---	12.7

Sources: U.S. Department of Commerce, 1981a; U.S. Department of Commerce 1991a; Gill et al.

Looking at children ever born to women in specific age categories also provides some intriguing clues to what is happening to fertility rates in Sooner County. This rate suggests trends in the making by comparing age

cohorts of childbearing women in terms of reproductive histories. Native Americans are having more children earlier, and their fertility rates are remaining high for all age cohorts. This, of course, suggests that the Native American population of Sooner County will grow at a significantly faster rate than caucasian, black, or other subpopulations. It also suggests that Native American families, with more children, on average, face very different childcare problems than do whites in Wheatlands. Particularly for single mothers, unless daycare is subsidized, each extra child either means greater reliance on ties with kin or considerably greater daycare expenses.

Figure 7
Age-specific Fertility Rates



Source: U.S. Department of Commerce 1991a, 173.

Poverty figures also vary by race. In 1990, 14% of whites, 33% of

blacks, and 22% of hispanics in Sooner County were characterized as having incomes below the federal poverty line. In the "other" category, which includes Native Americans and a very small number of other ethnic groups, 40% of all Sooner County residents fell below the poverty line. This means that the choices available to Native American families in negotiating childcare and household arrangements are likely to be markedly different from the choices white families can make. This was particularly evident in examining daycare, where the options in Wheatlands, though limited, varied significantly by socioeconomic status.

Table 7
Sooner County Poverty by Age and Race, 1990

	Whites	Blacks	Hispanic	Other
%	14.1	33.3	21.5	40.4

Source: U.S. Dept. of Commerce, 1991a, 110.

African American Wheatlanders

African Americans played an active in early Wheatlands, though their participation is not well documented. A group of college educated African Americans from Langston, Oklahoma participated in the Land Run with the intention of creating an all-black community in the locale of Wheatlands. Though their efforts were unsuccessful, some remained, including one charismatic college-educated entrepreneur and community benefactor who

was to serve as a role model to young African American Wheatlanders for many years (Cunningham 1973, 59).

For more than half a century Wheatlands served as the regional secondary educational center for African Americans. Students traveled to Wheatlands from as far as thirty miles away to attend high school. The school building was originally erected in the 1800s, in the southern part of town. In the 1930s, the school was hit by a tornado, but was rebuilt by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the form of a spacious red stone two-story building. Blacks from surrounding communities continued to attend school there until the schools were desegregated in 1954.

Blacks were also socially and residentially segregated in Wheatlands. Most lived in the southern part of town, with another cluster on the northern edge of Wheatlands, but none lived in the central part of town. Segregation also prevailed in use of public facilities and in social relations as well. For example, the first black-owned business on the central square opened in 1994.

Though not evident in public histories, several black community members asserted that the African American population represented a considerably larger proportion of the total Wheatlands population in years past. In recent years, increasing numbers of blacks have left the community seeking employment, according to one black community leader. One might suspect that this trend was hastened by the closing of the black school system in the mid-1950s with the advent of desegregation.

Contemporary African Americans in Wheatlands

For Wheatlands blacks, as for Wheatlands Native Americans, just getting by poses more challenges than it does for white residents, as indicated by the 33% rate of Sooner County blacks who live below the federal poverty line.

One problem is the lack of jobs. As many Wheatlanders pointed out, almost all jobs in Wheatlands come from family connections. But African Americans, with only seven sets of families, have fewer potential family contacts. Consequently their job prospects are far more limited than those available to white residents, or to Native Americans who can "pass" for white.

In the three existing African American businesses in Wheatlands, the pattern has been for one family member to leave town to raise venture capital, then start up a business which will be run by family members. This is what Delia Grey's uncle did when he set up his Hardees franchise; he works in Tulsa, coming home weekends to help out, but his mother and one brother and several relatives by marriage work there days. Another family, the Potters, have opened a barbecue on the interstate. The money for this was supplied by Mark, one of Delia's sister's classmates who works in Oklahoma City, coming home weekends. His mother and step-father run the place; he works weekends, as does his brother. They hire some of the younger African American youths in town. "Those of us who are trying to prosper are always

trying to help others."

Thinking back on her childhood, Delia reflected on patterns of black employment. "There are a lot of people who are highly qualified. But since it's a small town, it's so family oriented that it keeps coming down to who your kin are, who you know. Even at Construx, who you know is important as to whether you get on there. And then, well, there're only two black women in the office. The rest work in the 'hot' areas in back [where the actual manufacturing takes place]. You sure wouldn't find me back there." Asked about the overall black employment at Construx, Delia suggests "Maybe 2%." It was not possible to verify these figures since Construx personnel declined to be interviewed. However, Delia was very accurate in her assessment of other community demographics, pegging blacks at "less than 5% of Wheatlands," for example; the actual number is 4%.

According to Delia, there are a few African Americans at the Department of Public Safety, and a few working for the city, generally in outdoor jobs. But she only knows of one black ever employed at either of the banks. "You never see a black face in the shops, in the courthouse. There was one black librarian at the elementary school. But that's it. If you're not employed by Construx or at one of the restaurants on the highway, you don't see any black faces in town." All told, there is so little employment in Wheatlands that most blacks have to commute to nearby cities. Many leave town. "There's nothing to keep anyone there. They just move away." But family ties, it seems, keep bringing them back.

This theme of family ties repeats itself when Delia talks about childbirth and marriage. Delia had her daughter when she was a seventeen year old junior in high school, not missing even a day of school because of the timing of her arrival. She was not married at the time, indeed did not marry until she was 28, to a man she had been living with five years at the time, and who was not her daughter's father.

Asked why she had a child at seventeen, Delia answers, "It just happened, and it wasn't such a bad thing, because I wasn't really cut out for college." Later, by dint of a lot of moving and shaking, she has in her own estimation been able to get to the same place others did following a much more socially endorsed path of college and marriage. Delia describes going back for her class reunion. "There were lots of people, they spent maybe $40,000 on college and they're not doing any better than me." She doubts her daughter will go to college either. She talks about it occasionally, but "she just doesn't think she's college material. And not everybody is, after all."

Viewed from a structural perspective, one can see that Delia had little else to anticipate. There were few jobs available in Wheatlands for African Americans, because few blacks had the capital to start businesses or the customers to pay for goods and services if they could manage to do so. Of those few jobs, education beyond high school would have made little if any difference, since they were domestic labor, childcare and waitressing. Consequently the generationally transmitted pattern of women working in low income jobs was perpetuated. Culture and economy interact to produce

social behavior divergent from the middle class mainstream.

Why didn't Delia marry? In part, this is probably a cultural pattern. Throughout Sooner County, nonwhites marry at lower rates than whites, and are less likely to remain in marriage. Delia grew up in a single parent family, as did her husband; mother-headed families were culturally acceptable. Also, familial ties to Delia's childhood family were very strong, often competing with her marital ties. "Because my brothers and I are so close, it's easy to call my brothers to help with my car. If I had financial problems, I would just call my brother, not talk it over with my husband." Her family has always been "a real close unit. Every Sunday is like a holiday, we all get together, we're a real loud boisterous family." These problems, compounded by conflicts between Delia's daughter and husband, gradually pulled their relationship apart.

But the pattern of unwed motherhood among the Wheatlands African American population has demographic and economic roots as well, as New Home Economics theorists might predict. In demographic context, the state of Oklahoma, at least to some extent, mirrors national trends whereby the ratio of males to females leaves some women without potential mates (U. S. Department of Commerce 1991b; Oklahoma figures were used since city and county figures were supressed in census data. See also Staples 1986). Also, the pattern Delia Grey describes suggests that there are even fewer jobs for men than for women in Wheatlands proper. The intersection of cultural patterns, economic realities, and demographic trends coalesce into the

loosening of marriage bonds, tradeoff for the strong matriarchal family ties. In this context, choices which may seem illogical by white middle class standards make perfect sense.

Negotiating Domestic Identity

Delia Grey had her child out of wedlock while still in highschool. Shortly afterwards she left her daughter with her own mother while she attended a votech in another town. For a while, her mother and a her cousin and daughter lived with her while Delia and her cousin Tate went to school. Then Delia's mother went home, and Tate's friend Robert Grey moved in, with all of them sharing the housework. Gradually Delia and Robert became a couple. When Tate left, Robert stayed. For a while, Robert's children with from his previous wife joined them. Five years later Delia and Robert married.

Viewed from an outsider's perspective, this sounds like the stuff soap operas are made of. Upon closer examination, however, one can see the same social forces at work that act on other Wheatlanders, modified by Delia's race. Because income is so low for African Americans (local figures were not available, but at the state level, per capita income for blacks is $7,356, as compared to $12,859 for whites in 1990; Oklahoma State Data Center, Profile 7), to help her family make ends meet, Delia has worked at least part time since she was fourteen, with only one very brief interruption. She rationalizes this by citing personal characteristics. "Being in the house, it's

just not me." She has no problem with women who choose to stay home, but she is too independent to do so herself. This pattern is consistent with Avioli and Kaplan's findings regarding the impact of long-term workforce attachment on women's attitudes toward domestic identity (1992).

Low income also shapes Delia's childcare choices. Delia has never paid a babysitter on a regular basis. The only babysitters her child has ever known have been family. When she went somewhere in the evening, her mom or her grandmother or her brothers pitched in. "That was just the way my family was." Delia sees kin ties as a cultural issue, which it is, at one level. At the cultural level, family is important because they care about you in ways strangers could never be trusted to do. Therefore leaving a child with someone other than kin is unthinkable.[3]

Examined from one angle, one might argue that this social behavior is primarily the result of the underlying cultural pattern (see Collins 1991 for an excellent summary of the importance of kin, fictive kin, and neighborhood networks of child care; also Parish, Hao and Hogan 1991, Brayfield and Hofferth 1995). At a structural level, however, it is fascinating to consider the four way interaction between kin, childcare, marriage, and employment, at multiple levels of cultural patterns, social behavior and economic prospects as shaped by past structures of opportunity. Examined at the next level of analysis, however, leaving children with family is the direct result of not being able to afford other alternatives. Whether or not Delia believes family

is important, the only real childcare options open to a seventeen year old unwed mother are family or subsidized daycare.

When she went to the votech, Delia stayed with relatives. She explains this by referring to family closeness, but it also made economic sense. Asked how the shifting cast of people accomplished family work, Delia answered cheerfully. "It wasn't so much cut and dried divided. We just figured it out, did what had to be done."

Her husband-to-be was especially helpful. "He did laundry better than I did. Me, I'd fold it and leave it in the basket, just grab my clothes from there. He folded it and put it all away." She paused, and grinned. "Everybody always laughs because he did my handwashing. But we just did what we could to get by." This is consistent with patterns reported elsewhere which suggest that African American men consistently contribute more to housework than do white men (Heathe and Bourn 1995).

At one stage her husband did all the housework. When he was first divorced, he had custody of both his children and had recently lost his job, so he stayed home to take care of them. Later they went to live with their mother during the school year, but would come visit every summer, and on holidays. Asked about that about that, and she says, it worked out fine. "We were all just really good friends." Her step-children, now 14 and 16, still call and visit her even though she is separated from their father.

Like other Wheatlands informants, they never negotiated these arrangements. "It just kinda happened. Saturday morning was our big

cleaning day. We got up, got it all done. If it didn't get done that Saturday, it just waited till the next Saturday. I think that's something that was instilled in me when I was a kid. That's how we did it. And because I work all the time, when I come home, I'll pick up a little. Maybe cook. If I cook, I don't wash the dishes."

Today Delia's daughter does much of the housework. She does the dishes, her room and her bathroom. She also does her own laundry. "And she does a real good job of cooking. She can cook a whole meal." She also has an afterschool job to pay for the fancy clothes and other luxuries.
In sum, the skills she is learning parallel those that her mother learned a short generation before her. She has learned an effective way to get a living in a limited economy, and she has seen how feasible it is to get by, on terms acceptable to her mother, at least, with little or no reliance on men who are not already kin to her. Given this legacy, one presumes that in years to come, she will negotiate her domestic identity in a style significantly different from the one chosen by young white Wheatlands women.

FOOTNOTES

[1] Local historian Mary Jane Warde was extremely helpful in understanding these issues, and in directing me to appropriate sources, including Parman 1994 and O'Brien 1995.

[2]Carol Stack, in All My Kin, 1974, discusses these issues in a Midwestern community.

[3]Kin may be biological or fictive; as Delia explains, any adult with whom African American Wheatlander children have a close relationship is automatically awarded honorary kin status and a name to go with it, such as "Aunt Girlie."

CHAPTER 6

COMMUNITY CULTURE AND FAMILY

Linda and Keith Cummings live in a home on the edge of the Wheatlands Country Club in a sprawling one-story ranch style home that overlooks the lake. Their two boys, eight year old Matt and five year old Tom, scoot out the door on their way to a neighbor's house for a round of before-dark outside play on this pleasant early summer evening, welcome change from the high 90s temperatures Wheatlands has been experiencing lately.

Inside the Cummings home are all the trappings one would find in contemporary upper-middle class homes in communities throughout the U.S.: built-in appliances in the kitchen, wall-to-wall carpet throughout the house, furniture in matched sets that coordinate with the color schemes of curtains and wallpaper and in the family room, where we will be doing the interview, a king-sized entertainment system. Linda offers tea, which I gratefully accept; when I compliment her on it she demurs that it was nothing, she made it in the microwave. Before we can begin, however, the phone rings. It is the babysitter, a teenager hired for the summer only, who will not be able to come tomorrow because of a family emergency. Linda, briefly worried, excuses herself to call her regular babysitter, a woman who babysits in her home-- a "licensed dayhome provider," in the official jargon-- for up to eight children from several families. As she calls, I ask Keith if last

minute childcare emergencies pose problems for them. "Not really," he tells me. "My parents live here, and Linda's mom. Now that they're retired, we can call on them in a crunch. Besides, Linda's boss is pretty reasonable about letting her take off if she needs to."

About that time Linda comes back, drops thankfully into her cushy chair, jiggles the icecubes in her glass of tea and takes a long sip. Then she shakes her head. "I hate these daycare emergencies. We're lucky, we've got enough options that I can nearly always find someone, but still, it was so much easier back before all these daycare licensing wars."

Puzzled, I ask what she means.

Keith shakes his head. "Oh, about three or four years ago somebody took it upon herself to start reporting unlicensed daycare homes. Our regular babysitter, Gloria Carter, she got reported. Raised her rates right after that. Everyone in town did. Had to, I guess, all the extra stuff you have to do to get licensed. But it's a real pain in the tail."

Linda sighs. "What I'd really like to do is stay home and watch the kids myself. Then we wouldn't have all these hassles with how to get them to baseball practice and boyscouts after school and golf and swimming lessons in the summer."

Keith snorts. "You'd go crazy." Linda, who has been following this conversation closely, protests mildly, "If I wasn't working, I'd be more active in clubs, in social activities." Then she pauses, laughs it off. "Of course, I might just sit home and put on weight and hate it." But the look she gives

me belies her statement. Then, as if escape a potential argument, she changes the subject. "You know, you really ought to talk to Gloria Carter, my regular sitter, about the daycare situation. She knows a whole lot about it."

Later I take Linda up on her suggestion. When I do, I meet Gloria, a forty-some years old woman who looks at least half a decade older, and who is surrounded by several cheerful preschoolers as she stands in the door of her older two story brick and frame tree-shaded home. This is a place I would have been pleased to send my own kids. Though it is crowded, it is scrupulously clean, with all sorts of bright and tidy playthings inside and out. As we talk, the kids come up to Gloria for a series of hugs and pats and drinks of ice water, which she helps them get for themselves from the spigot on the refrigerator door, in paper cups with Construx Corporation logos, I notice.

I ask Gloria about the" daycare wars." She shakes her head. "The first year and a half I wasn't licensed. Didn't know I had to be until someone turned me in," she said. "There was probably fifteen or twenty of us got turned in at one time. It makes you kind of nervous. The house was fine, but I had to raise my rates a little to feed the kids exactly like I'm supposed to, get enough car seats, stuff like that. Now it happens every year, anybody that isn't licensed, somebody calls the Child Services on them."

This story is repeated again a few nights later, as I speak with Cathy and Carl Foster in their home on the south side of town. Cathy is a secretary for a real estate agency, Carl works as an electrician. It is frustrating, they tell me, trying to get children settled for the summer. Their kids are twelve and nine.

This summer they have been leaving them at home on their own, because the rates for licensed dayhomes are too expensive, and their kids balked at the idea of a teenage sitter. What about relatives, I ask? Cathy's mother works, and Carl's mother lives out of town. They have a neighbor who keeps an eye on them, and Cathy could come home for an emergency, but she would be docked pay if she did that very often, and right now they cannot afford to lose any income.

Besides, Cathy tells me, "It's a good way for them to learn responsibility. They're doing the chores, and we're paying them for it. They're expected to clean the whole house, laundry, their rooms, the living room, dishes. We pay them pretty good. Half of it goes into savings, the other half they get to spend."

I ask their daughter how this is working. "Good," she says. "I like the money."

"To a point, it's working," her dad cautions. "They only get paid for what they do. The second pay period they did real bad. But this week was better." He pauses. "It's a lot to ask. But we set goals high so they try a little harder."

Community and Family in a Rural Setting

This series of conversations illustrates the interface between culture, economy and social behavior in how families negotiate domestic work within the rural community context. Because Linda and Keith Cummings

have better jobs, they have a wider range of choices about childcare and work than do Cathy and Carl Foster, who are working class. Yet the Cummings and Foster families, as well as Gloria Carter, are all constrained by the social sanction of gossip, a powerful force in this rural setting.

Community in Wheatlands

Wheatlands today is not a community in the classical sense of an isolated geographical entity or locale. This is immediately evident in considering its economic base. Farmers, representing nearly half of all Sooner County workers, are tied directly to national and international markets for their livelihood, far more than to local markets, in fact. When the oil crisis hit Oklahoma in the mid-1980s, many farmers suffered as they struggled to pay the higher cost of fuel or to compensate for the loss of oil royalties once used to repair farm equipment or to pay on farm loans (Newsom 1992, 134). From another angle, the Construx Company, which employs nearly half the Wheatlands workforce, sells its products internationally, sending sales reps world-wide. As one local historian noted, community residents fail to realize the many ways the company is tied to the international economy, or the impact these ties exercise in terms of educational and cultural issues since, as a whole, Construx employees are more likely than the average nonmetropolitan resident to be interested in education and the performing arts.

Wheatlanders are also connected to the larger economy through their

spending on shopping and recreation. A member of the genealogical society recalled that when she was young, Saturday was a big day because everyone came to town to bank and to shop. Families would park on the square, walk around, or just sit people watching while their parents did their business. Then her family would eat in the cafe, shop, see, as she put it, *"everybody".* At night, parents would send the kids at the movie theatre on the square if they had somewhere they wanted to go. Everybody did it, and never thought twice about it.

Then the banks started closing on Saturday, because people got more mobile, and could come into town whenever they pleased. Once the banks were closed, other stores began to close at noon on Saturday. "Now there's no recreation, no theatres. People just run into Guthrie-- it's no big deal." Another long-time resident pointed out that in modern-day Wheatlands there are no department stores, no place to buy a man's suit, no place to buy major appliances. On the other hand, Wheatlanders increasingly rely on national chains such as Wal-mart, Safeway grocery stores, and a slew of fastfood restaurants including MacDonald's, Braums, Hardees, and Domino's Pizza.

Paradoxically, however, community is very real for most Wheatlanders. One recent survey asked residents in an open-ended question what they liked most about their town. "Community pride," "small town atmosphere," "it's homey," "that pioneer feeling and spirit," "friends help each other" (Survey Results from "Citizen Involvement" Meeting, p. 2).

These themes were reiterated in indepth interviews conducted with Wheatlands residents. Community is not locale, but it is very real to the folks who live there.

As Thomas and Thomas pointed out in their classic statement, "If [people] define situations as real, they are real in their consequences" (1928). In that sense, community as socially constructed by Wheatlanders exercises a very real impact on the negotiation of domestic responsibilities on an ongoing daily basis. This impact may be seen in community culture, as well as in community economic, social and political structures; it may also be seen in the cultural legacy Wheatlands families pass on to their children through the process of socialization.

Community and Culture

Culture, as defined in this analysis, consists of beliefs and corresponding schemas that serve as interpretive fameworks and scenarios for actions (Ortner 1981, 1990). Beliefs are passed on to children as one part of their a legacy (Flora et al., 1992) or patrimony (Salamon 1992), which includes values, norms and action schema as well as material possessions (Flora et al., 81).[3] Linda and Keith Cummings will pass on to their children whatever wealth they manage to accumulate through working. But they will also give them the legacy of team sports and scouts and golf and swimming, the upper-middle-class legacy of leisure time. On the other side of town the

Foster parents are teaching their children how to work hard, how to look out for themselves, and that life can be an uphill battle.

Within the community as a whole, several cultural themes emerged consistently. These included frontier heritage, religion and the Protestant Ethic, neighborliness, and the ties of kinship and family. The extent to which each of these beliefs exists in practice is certainly open to debate; when anthropologist Oscar Lewis discovered visited the "little community" of Tepotzlán, Mexico, described by Robert Redfield in the 1940s as close-knit, charming, and neighborly, he found community residents to be greedy, self-serving and generally anything but charming (Redfield 1955; Lewis 1951). The same Wheatlands residents who lauded community neighborliness overwhelmingly cited poor attitudes (including apathy, greed, gossip, and poor community support) as the biggest single problem in Wheatlands.

Yet whether or not Wheatlanders are satisfied with what they see in the community today, by believing in neigborliness, frontier heritage, religion and the importance of family, they transmit a distinctive constellation of norms and values to future generations. This legacy will in turn play out in how younger generations interact with their families, their employers (and perhaps employees) as they reconstitute community in coming years.

Frontier Heritage: Wheatlands is a land run town. The people who live there are proud of that heritage. In fact, the biggest community

celebration is the annual reenactment of the Land Run every September 16th. As the centennial celebration of the Run approached in 1993, Native Americans protested the unfairness of celebrating what many have construed as a massive land grab which deprived rightful residents of their homes. But Wheatlanders forged full steam ahead with their celebration.

One major aspect of this heritage is a persistent Horatio Alger "can-do" ethic. One young woman described quite vividly how her father transmitted this legacy to her and her sister. "If we complained, he just said, 'No, that's not too heavy. You just get mad at it and lift it.' Usually he was right too. 'Did you get mad at it?' That was his favorite line." Translated into an action schema, this means believing that hard work will result in success no matter what. This cultural code ran throughout responses of couples and community representatives in Wheatlands, though African American residents and Native Americans had a significantly different take on this issue.

Frontier heritage also implies a strong commitment to gendered identity. Ortner and Whitehead note that women are often defined in terms of their relations with men (the "world of heterosexual relations") while men are defined in terms of their occupation of certain exclusively male roles as statuses (the "world of men") (1981). As noted in the discussion of women in early Wheatlands, women have worked for pay, or as integral parts of family farming and ranching enterprises, since the community first came into being in 1883. But in local histories, women's

status was routinely defined as "wife of" or "widow" of a man (Genealogical Society 1987).

This notion of gendered identity allows wives, especially working class wives, to interpret husbands' lack of participation in housework as rational within the context of the larger situation. Asked about her husband's input to housework over the course of marriage, one wife responded, "No, he's never helped, so it hasn't changed much. But it's also not that he's sitting home in an easy chair. He works hard, two jobs sometimes. When the [oil] boom was going he just was working constantly, he would work long hours, 67-70 hours a week. Weekends, he drove a salt truck. He did yardwork when he came home, but there just wasn't time for any more."

This was particularly true for farm couples. Talking with Lora and Josh Walker, for example, it was possible to see the process of legacy transmission in action. They have been married nearly eighteen years. The relationship which has evolved between them seems rich, sturdy, and vital. On the surface, they were one of the most traditional couples interviewed - and Josh, at least, was defensive about it. In listening, however, a different dynamic emerged: a shared partnership where certain responsibilities are gender allocated because it was more efficient and/or convenient to do it that way. But the underpinning of that arrangement is (at least seemingly) a rock-solid mutual respect.

Lora was the daughter of a working mother. At home, her mother did most of the housework; as for her dad, "absolutely not." Josh was the son of

a farmer whose parents divided work by gender in much the same ways the Walkers do today. When they got married, in college, Lora expected to do it all. She was very straightforward about that, and responded with sympathetic nods when Josh noted that their friends criticize him. "He gets the money for us," she noted matter-of-factly. "I think it's a fair trade." She also gets the house, Josh pointed out. "Not too bad, huh?" he asked, gesturing proudly around at the modern-day harvest kitchen, table big enough for twelve, built-in-bookshelves with a state-of-the-art computer, ample kitchen workspace organized around a center island, all part of their near-new looking stone and cedar two-story house.

When first asked, Lora responded that she did not work outside the home. She was a farm wife, plain and simple. Then Josh pointed out that Lora handles the calls and fills the orders on the feed business they began in the mid 1980s, after the farm and oil crises hit them. In summer, she babysits for other people's children, a practice she began when wheat hit a low. The extra income helps, though she is careful not to mention this until Josh leaves the room. She has also done sewing for other people.

In addition to her paid duties, Lora also does all the farm bookkeeping plus all the bookwork for her elderly parents. She taught herself computer to make this process easier. In discussing this, she minimized her level of knowledge, but confessed to upgrading their system in 1992, casually throwing around names of peripherals and wishing they had gotten a CD rom.

In discussing their children, Lora and Josh say they help, and "there are no gender related chores in this house. They can all do it well." Lora pauses, then adds significantly, " But they're *busier* than we were as children [Josh nods in agreement]." It is here that the gendered- and middle class- legacy emerges. Their son is in Future Farmers of America, Future Christians of America, basketball, baseball, shows cattle and pigs. Their daughter has danced since she was three, has been in 4H and church activities. If they grow up to be farmers (as their son, at least, seems to hope), the Walker children will slide easily into the gendered identities that fit the farm lifestyle. If, however, they move into town, they will have the skills to lead middle to upper-middle class lives with little adjustment.

The legacy from frontier days has also established community standards for how far residents may deviate from accepted norms and still be accepted. In Wheatlands, this range appears to be narrower than in surrounding towns. When Wheatlands originated as a land run town, springing from nothing into a fullblown city overnight, the small Native American population was driven out along with "undesirable" elements, in contrast to other nearby communities where established tribal settlements persisted side by side with a considerable number of quite colorful early settlers. African Americans who arrived settled on the southern and northern edges of Wheatlands. In consequence, in Wheatlands there seems to be little latitude for deviation from established norms, which suggest that families are expected to be churchgoing, hardworking, dedicated to prosperity

and propriety. Those who are not, at least with regard to domestic identity, become the targets of community sanctions.

Community residents interviewed for this project associate the frontier tradition with values of self-sufficiency and bootstrapping independence. These values correlates with norms implicit in the Protestant Ethic, and probably tend to act as a brake on rapid changes in gender identity. Paradoxically such norms may also correlate with the high numbers of women in the workforce. As noted, nearly half of all women age 16 or older in Wheatlands are in the workforce, including about 60% of all women with children. In part, of course, this is because there are enough jobs to go around; the county unemployment rate was 4.9 in 1990, compared to a statewide figure of 8.2%. But it seems probable that many women entered the workforce in Wheatlands earlier than in other parts of the U.S. Approximately two thirds of all individuals who participated in this project reported that they had mothers who worked during all or most of their childhood. If farm wives are counted (as it has been argued elsewhere that they should be), this proportion rises to 80% of all respondents. This, of course, has intriguing implications for gender identity; women and men in Wheatlands might be expected to experience less stress from the prospect of a wife working than would couples in areas where women's entry into the workforce has been more recent.

Not surprisingly, the greater incidence of women in the workforce has filtered down into lower than average birth rates. In 1990, the birth rate as

reported in the census was 16.2 for the U.S. as a whole, 15.2 for Oklahoma and 12.7 in Wheatlands. This correlates with what informants reported; very few have more than two children, and only one couple has reported that they are considering any more. This in turn has a wide impact on child care and negotiation of housework; fewer children mean, on the one hand, fewer built in babysitters and chore-doers, and on the other, less mess and less required childcare. In an increasingly nonagricultural economy, this is exactly what one might expect.

Religion and the Protestant Ethic: Religion has played a major role in Wheatlands since the community's inception. Early observers described tent churches which sprang up within days of the Land Run, as well as open-air religious meetings (Beers 1991, Cunningham 1973, Debo 1944).

In a series of portraits of the first Wheatlands settlers, over half claimed to be "American," arriving in Oklahoma Territory from Missouri, Kansas, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio and a handful of other states. For early residents who claimed any particular ethnic heritage, Germanic background was by far and away the most common, representing close to one fifth of all Wheatlands settlers. Their impact is reflected in the existence of two Lutheran churches, one of which ran a private school from the early 1900s until quite recently; they now operate the largest preschool and dacycare in the community.[4]

This strong Germanic and Protestant heritage interfaces with frontier

heritage to reinforce belief in hard work and general industriousness in much the way Max Weber originally described it (1958). Such sentiments are evident in the comments made by the Walkers and others. The Lord helps those who help themselves, in the minds of most community residents.

Religion is also reflected in business dealings. Early in my studies of Wheatlands, residents noted that every Christmas Gus Gerhart, president of Construx, gives an anonymous donation of $1000 to each of the community churches. This, I was told, was to encourage other Wheatlanders to follow his example of commitment to church and community. Sure enough, just after Christmas the Wheatlands Daily Record carried a series of thank-you notes from all fifteen churches to "our anonymous friend."

The code of charity as expressed through religion also plays out at other levels. Community representatives recently initiated a special program composed of representatives from social service agencies, the Community Center, education and the local ministerial alliance to help kids from falling through the cracks. "Taking care of our own, there's a lot of feeling like that," the high school principal told me proudly. "This community really does a lot for people." Also, with encouragement from the Gus Gerhart and the Construx employees, the County Social Services office formed a committee to screen applicants for benefits over the holidays to prevent perceived abuses such as double dipping, and to be certain "truly needy are helped."

South of the tracks, where the homes are smaller and more dilapidated, interspersed with small trailer homes and weed-infested vacant

lots, commitment to the prevailing Germanic Protestantism is more uneven. "The ones that amaze me most are these so-called good Christians," one African-American woman tells me. "You go to church with them, and they sit there fellowshipping and backslapping. Then they shun you in the supermarket. And this is the so-called bible belt." Yet even this woman advocates in the importance of Christian beliefs. "If they were really Christians, those white folks wouldn't act that way."

The other side of this issue is the extent to which the Construx Company mediates religious expression through selective support of charitable efforts. The local food pantry and clothes closet, for example, are located in a deteriorating structure south of the tracks. The roof leaks, many of the linoleum tiles are missing, and the whole place could use a thorough cleaning. The Community Center and the Child Development Center facility, both supported by Construx, stand in stark contrast to this ramshackle edifice. Both are brand spanking new, perfectly maintained, and well supplied with the staff and the vans and all the other necessities for providing services to "deserving" clients.

At a community level, there is significant involvement in civic and charitable efforts. Though many Wheatlanders mentioned the lack of recreational opportunities for youths, adults were likely to complain of over-involvement in social groups, church activities and charitable efforts. But this may be changing. In a recent edition of The Wheatlands Daily Record, one columnist wrote, "This is an update on last week's column about our

senior citizens' need for help. So far, the Wheatland Nutrition Center has received many additional requests for meals, but only one new volunteer to deliver them. I am a little surprised but maybe it's just going to take time for more folks to react to this problem" (Beers 1995, p. 1). To some extent, this may be a function of the growing number of women who work outside the home. Women, traditionally the backbone of volunteer efforts, have less and less time to devote to charity as they struggle to balance the demands of work and family.

Neighborliness. "This is the friendliest place you've ever lived," the director of the Youth Services Program told me. She should know, she said; in the course of her work she has been transferred all across the state, and before her divorce, spent time in Arkansas and Texas as well. Because Wheatlands is such a small town, she was worried that her teenage sons would feel ostracized as outsiders. But from the moment they arrived, they were welcomed right into the community.

This community goodheartedness is also much touted by others. The middle school principal, also new to Wheatlands, had heard that the community was standoffish. "But that certainly hasn't been my experience," he told me. "Everyone's been very friendly. As soon as you arrive, civic organizations reach out to you. If you're ready, you're embraced in a minute." In fact, it's easy to get overcommitted. He is on the Chamber of Commerce, the church board, the Child Development Center board and the

Youth Services committee.

Wheatlands' community spirit was even described in Guideposts magazine. "I didn't know Wheatlands would have a square, and sidewalks, and chimes that ring out at noon. I didn't know that paying bills was a social event- that is, you don't mail them, but rather walk around the square, visiting as you leave your checks. People care- so much that Mrs. Lynch, who's 102, can live alone. Everyone checks on her. The waitresses even know my favorite kind of pie, and before I ask, they tell me if they have it. People sit on their porches and wave at you. . . ." (West 1990, 43).

Neighborliness is also expressed as boosterism. From the early days onwards, Wheatlanders seem to have been joiners. Many of the organizations and clubs they join have traditionally been gendered. Men join the Elks, the Lions, the Kiwanis, and a long list of others. For their part, women joined garden clubs, library organizations, sewing clubs. Both women and men belonged to church groups and athletic teams. In the past, these too were usually gender-separate. More recently organizations which promote civic pride (such as the Land Run Club) and economic development (the Wheatlands Development Coalition) have attracted women and men alike.[5] It will be intriguing to see what impact mixed-gender groups have in promoting more androgynous gender ideologies for future Wheatlanders and their families.

There is, however, a flip side to neighborliness, in the form of gossip.

This plays out in negotiation of housework and childcare in a variety of ways. For instance, one husband, discussing his concerns about placing children in childcare while his wife works, has gotten at least one indirect message. "Traditionalists say you should stay home with your kids. Nobody says anything to your face, but you hear people talking."

The Cummingses and the Fosters and Gloria Carter have also experienced this side of neigborliness, in the annual call-in campaign of the daycare wars, when unlicensed dayhome operators are reported by an anonymous source. The national rhetoric may be politically correct heterogeneity in behavior, but Wheatlands residents still stress conformity. These attitudes turn up again in the results of the Citizen's Survey. Asked, "If you could change one thing about this community, what would that be?" many Wheatlanders lamented traditionalism, narrow-mindedness, resistance to innovation and gossip.

Kinship and Family in Wheatlands: "Wheatlands is a family town." "Construx is a family-type corporation." Quotes like this recurred again and again in the course of speaking with Wheatlander families. Along with the importance of neighborliness, valuing family seems to be one of the primary exceptions to the frontier ethos of self-reliance. This was evident in the incidence of "born and raised" Wheatlanders who have either stayed or returned to raise their own children interviewed for this project, and jibes with census figures, which indicate that 76% of all residents were born in

Oklahoma, as well as with results of the Development Coalition survey, suggesting that youths are eager to leave after high school graduation but often equally eager to return a few years on down the road. This creates an ideal situation for two-earner families in a town where the main industry does not allow time off; almost all families interviewed reported that one or more of the grandparents was willing to help out in a pinch. Ironically, the major exception to this trend occurred when a couple had two working grandmothers, as was the case for a considerable number of informants.

The importance of kin was also reflected in the valuing of children. Farm families and working class couples were most likely to mention unsolicited how important children are to them. As Carl Foster puts it, "Lots of the people we know see it as, 'They're kinda in my way, but they're nice decorations.'" Carl shakes his head in disgust. "That don't fly." Farmer Josh Walker and his wife Lora concur. "Any more, so many couples never get to spend time with their kids. They get home, they're scared to discipline them, kids are just doing all kinds of junk. I think a lot of problems stem from that, but I don't have the guts to say it." Adds Lora, "Seems like they have to do that because they feel guilty."

Josh nods, and observes, "We don't do what the kids want to do, we do what the family wants to do." This is in many respects a telling comment. The Walkers, raising children to be farmers, look at family as the basic unit. Work and family should be integrated, children brought into the legacy young.

Culture and Social Class in Wheatlands

The cultural patterns observed in Wheatlands represent a set of pervasive beliefs which have an impact on all families within the community. This impact should be viewed somewhat cautiously, however. The ways any cultural code is experienced are tempered and modified both by social class and race.

Social class, as used in this analysis, refers to "a category of people within a system of stratification who share a similar style of life and socioeconomic status" (Levin 1994, 455). In Wheatlands, as in many rural communities, there appear to be basically four class groupings. The first group includes small independent entrepreneurs such as the Salzbergs who manage their own businesses, hiring only a few workers or none at all. The second group is the managerial class, including managers, professionals, and government officials who, as Flora et al. describe them, "work for others but who have some degree of job autonomy" (Flora 1992, 87); Linda and Keith Cummings are members of this class. Members of the entrepreneurial and managerial classes in rural areas are middle class, in Weberian terms; depending on income and lifestyle, they run the gamut from middle to upper middle class. Of the families interviewed, four could be classified as upper middle class on this basis, and seven as middle class.

The third class grouping is the working class. These individuals, such as Gloria Carter and her husband, have limited education and consequently

limited life chances. While sharing many of the same community cultural values as the Salzbergs and Cummings families, the Carters are less likely to benefit. If there is a recession, they are more likely to lose their jobs. They must negotiate housework and childcare choices within this framework of social class. Based on occupation, education, and lifestyle, nine of the families interviewed fit this pattern.

The fourth social class in Wheatlands consists of the poor or working poor. Poor families have low-paying jobs, if they work at all; their jobs are considerably more subject to the fluctuations of the economy. Childcare choices are considerably limited by these circumstances, no matter how much poor families hope to emulate mainstream community culture. Two of the families interviewed fit this pattern.

As noted previously, race also has a considerable impact on how community culture is experienced, and consequently on how families make choices about housework and childcare. This impact appears at least to some extent to operate independently of social class. As W.E.B. DuBois pointed out long ago, however, minority individuals must learn to negotiate with a "double consciousness," operating simultaneously within minority and majority cultures. As described by minority residents like Delia Grey, this is certainly the case in Wheatlands.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Williams' work was later replicated at Cornell University, by Mather, Townsend and Sanderson in 1934, and by W.A Anderson in 1954).

[2]Only 14 of the reports were published; perhaps the best known is Walter Goldschmidt's As You Saw, 1948 and 1978, on the San Joaquin Valley in California; see Buttel 1990 for an excellent discussion of these issues.

[3]This concept is derived from Flora et al., 1992, in their discussion of rural communities. These authors define legacy as "what parents seek to pass on to their children, including material possessions as well as values and norms," p. 81. Also see Salamon, 1992, who uses a similar concept to describe midwestern farmers.

[4]County Genealogical Society, 1987; ethnic heritage was calculated by counting the number of early settlers in whose biographies ethnicity or state of origin was mentioned.

[5]Even in these groups, however, women and men tend to concentrate in particular subgroups; beautification vs infrastructure, for example.

CHAPTER 7

FAMILY, WORK AND WHEATLANDS

Cathy Foster, talking about her husband's contribution to childcare, laughingly proclaims that Carl had to teach her how to boil formula, "all that baby stuff." This sounds unlikely, given the household dynamics they have described earlier. But Carl nods with wry amusement. "Cathy had complications when she had Sarah, had to stay in the hospital for six weeks, so I had a crash course in babies." One night he came home from the oilfield, picked up baby Sarah from his mother-in-law's, visited his wife in the hospital and went home so exhausted that he let Sarah fall asleep in her playpen as he sterilized the baby bottles while he watched t.v. Hours later, he woke up with a jolt to a smoke-filled house and the smell of burning plastic. "Sarah was fine," he said, "Close enough to the floor in her playpen that she was still sleeping peacefully. But after that, we did bottles of a morning." Still he would not hand the baby over to relatives because, "Especially with your own child, you want to do everything. They watched her during the day. I had her at night, went to see Cathy in the hospital, then we both came home and crashed." He managed, he said, because he was self employed, and could work his hours around the baby's schedule, and because Cathy's mother could work the night shift, watch the baby days.

With their second child, life got more hectic. "Money was real tough. Two babies meant two car seats, two of everything. We had to change

houses." This was partly because the second was born "in '85 when the oilfield went bust, so we was just getting back on our feet." When asked about the impact of the oil bust on the community, Carl shook his head. "It hit Wheatlands like a sledgehammer. We had seven tank truck businesses, then two. A beaucoup of mom and pop restaurant and cafes- they're all gone now. The bank, there's never been a year they didn't get a bonus, but that year they only got a flat rate. It bottomed out in 1987. The population dropped two, three thousand in a two to three period." Cathy adds that her parents-- who were self- employed, running a restaurant-- lost not only their business but their house as well, casualties of the bust and the advent of fast food restaurants. Soon after, her father died and her mother went back to work.

In general, Wheatlanders of all social classes were remarkably astute regarding how the economy shapes their private lives. When asked to trace their employment, childcare and housework histories, many couples volunteered information about the interface between the oil bust or the farm crisis and personal choices they made in the process of negotiating domestic responsibilities. Husbands were most likely to offer these insights first, perhaps because business and money matters are considered to be within men's culture sphere, as Ortner suggests, but wives often elaborated as we kept talking.

In any community, the type and number of economic opportunities shape many community-wide aspects of the social and cultural patterns,

including how families allocate domestic responsibilities. For example, there is growing evidence that when a wife's salary supplies a significant proportion of the family income, her husband is more likely to participate in housework and childcare (Avioli and Kaplan 1992, Perry-Jenkins et al. 1992). Furthermore, characteristics of available jobs (such as working hours, schedules, and the like) will shape the constraints on dual earner couples, necessarily limiting the parameters within which working couples can negotiate. Farming, the oilfield, and Construx emerged as the three economic sources most influential in shaping contemporary Wheatlands family patterns.

Farming and Family

Farming is still the principal occupation for more than half of Sooner County residents, with total farm earnings of 1 to 2 million dollars for the county as a whole (County and City Data Book 1988). The area's main crops are wheat and oats, as well as sorghum, alfalfa, and hay (Oklahoma Department of Agriculture 1987). Farmers also raise sheep, hogs, and milk and beef cows, though livestock production is moderate compared to other parts of Oklahoma (Ibid).

But contemporary farm life is changing rapidly. Today nearly half of all Oklahoma farmers are technically insolvent; more than half make more income from outside sources than they do from farming, with the income, in many cases, coming from the woman's salary. As farmers quit or retire in

Wheatlands, as in other farm communities across the nation, they are not being replaced by members of the upcoming generation; the average farm owner in Oklahoma in 1990 was 58 years old (Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Oklahoma Agricultural Statistics 1989, p. 83, 58).

Of the couples interviewed, half reported that at least one spouse had some involvement in farming, either as a child or as an adult. Yet only two named farming as their principal occupation. Several mentioned that they had tried to make it as farmers, or that they still have hopes of being full-time farmers, but for now, they regard it as too expensive, too uncertain and too time consuming. As Sandy Parker, whose husband farms part-time, told it, "Ross' mom's always stayed home, his dad was a farmer. He has always ultimately wanted to farm. But we couldn't make it with the land we had, so he started substitute teaching when we got out of college. Our first son was born in 1984. Ross was still teaching some, farming some, and he helped out with the baby some."

But Ross hit farming at the wrong time. Prices dropped, and the oil bust hit just as he decided to quit teaching and came back to farm for his dad. "He was up at dawn, got home 6:00 p.m. at the earliest, more like 10:00 during harvest season, was gone 95% of the time." Their second son was born just as the full impact of the bust hit Wheatlands. Sandy, though a farm girl herself, is still bitter about what that did to their family. " Sure, Ross would help a little, like if the baby got up twice in the night he would get up with him. But I did the rest. I figured, that's fine, I'm home, I can do that. But it wasn't

enough. He had to get a weekend job to pay the bills. I never saw him." Today Ross has gone back to teaching, Sandy works as a data processor at the hospital, and they still try to farm as best they can on weekends.

This pattern is being repeated throughout Sooner County, which, in recent years, has fluctuated between overall state trends and more regional patterns exhibited in western sections of Oklahoma where agriculture has been the economic base. As machines have replaced people, farms and ranches have been consolidated into larger operations. Couples like the Parkers do not have enough land to make a go of it, or enough money to buy the necessary equipment. Therefore, like many other farmers, they have allowed much of the land once cultivated for crops to returned to pasture and grazing (Morris et al. 1986: Figure 75). And as they struggle, their families often suffer.[1]

Those who manage to stay in farming, like the Walkers, were raised to believe that nonstop work, at least from spring through fall, was a standard part of life. "Families that want their children to carry on the family business consciously go about inculcating them in farm lore and practices," says Sonya Salamon (1992: 51). This socialization process may include playing with a set of miniature farm equipment, participation in 4-H, FFA, or home ec classes, going out with dad on the tractor, helping mother in the garden (Ibid., 51-53).

The Walkers recognize that work is gender separate on the farm. Even as children, boys help with fieldwork and take care of large animals, girls help

in the home and garden, sometimes tend chickens and milk cows. But the Walkers see it, there is more than enough work for everyone; the work is gender separate for the sake of efficiency (Becker, 1981, argues that efficiency was the original reason behind most gender-separate work). In the normal course of family life, boys learned one set of skills from their farming fathers, girls got a different sort of legacy from their mothers. As Lucy Stallard tells it, "My friends that had brothers, then typically their brothers were thrown into it."

Fathers who had no sons often put their daughters to work. This happened to Lucy and her older sister as a teenagers. For a few years her sister bore the brunt of it. "At first it was, "Grace, you go do this, Lucy, you go help your mother. That meant taking food, running errands while my sister drove the tractor. When she left for college, though, I learned [farming] real quick." That legacy has stayed with Lucy. Though neither she nor her sister nor their husbands farm as a principal occupation, her sister has a little land, and Lucy has some livestock, as do her girls.

Both sisters also accepted the necessity for hard work, and for constant work. As we speak, one of Lucy's colleagues comes in to say hello. "Pat, you'd be proud of me," Lucy laughs. "I left a dirty pot on the stove last night from the spaghetti." Pat feigns shock. "Lucy puts us all to shame," she says. "I don't know how she finds time for two kids, a husband who works all the time, and a house that always looks immaculate." For those who still farm, as for those who have farmed, hard work is a given, both in the workplace

and at home. One wife of a Construx employee summed it up quite succinctly. "One thing that might have saved us- he's not a farmer and he's not a golfer." Both pursuits apparently lead to absentee husbands.

Impact of the Oilfield on Wheatlands

As a result of the decreasing numbers of farmers , most rural community centers have lost population, unless the economic base diversified. This trend was reflected in the gradually shrinking population of Wheatlands until for a short while the oil boom of the early 1980s attracted new community residents.

Gas and oil production have been a source of income in Sooner County since the first decade of the twentieth century. The area ranks particularly high in oil production (Wikle 1991: 44). Benefits from the petroleum industry been indirect, however. Early in Wheatlands's history, community founders decided to stay out of the refinery business. This was probably a wise decision at the time; histories of Oklahoma oil towns describe a rollercoaster of boom or bust cycles, leading to a series of ghost towns throughout the state. For towns that survived, life was dangerous at best, with open oil lagoons scattered all over to contain surplus oil, natural gas seeping out to gather in lowlying areas, exploding and setting fires when unwary settlers created heat or friction (Pawnee Pride cite1994**). Oilfield towns also attracted unsavory elements in the form of gamblers, prostitutes, and thieves such as the Doolin Gang. Wheatlanders chose to reject that lifestyle, turning down offers from at

lest one major oil industry to locate there (Cunningham 1973).

Still, because of their proximity to a number of producing fields, Wheatlands has profited from gas and oil production by acting as a service community for the industry. Oilfield workers often shop in Wheatlands, both for personal and business-related items; they eat and bank and send their children to school in Wheatlands. Like Carl Foster, many Wheatlanders have also worked in the oil fields from time to time. John Salzberg was one of them. Now, however, he runs a prosperous real estate agency. But the journey from the oilfields to his real estate business was not an easy one, as John tells it. "Back in 1980, I was a sales manager for a truck equipment company, working 8 to 5, except when I was traveling. I had part of my dad's land too, still do, we've got a place out there. Business was real good, with the oil boom. After a year and a half, I had the chance to buy the business."

Over the next three years, the boom went bust, and John Salzberg's company failed. Reflecting back on those times, wife Beth shakes her head. "In our marriage, we've had some strenuous problems. When the business failed, without the communication we've had, well, you have to share the good and the bad. Some of the couples we run with that have frankly failed, they just don't work together. We don't get everything we want in our marriage, nobody does. But we share so much."

During the time after John's business went under, Beth's income was what pulled them through. John pitched in at home, doing a greater share of the work than he had done before, or than he does now, Beth sighs. These

days, "I get crazy sometimes and fly off the handle. But the majority of the time I think we're all just doing what we gotta do. Like when he's out golfing, sometimes I think he's not participating enough, that he has more free time. Then I kick back and realize, he's golfing with the people he does business with. He needs to do that. To me that's real important. He's out there trying to make things better for us. If he were just out goofing off it would be different, but his job requires that kind of thing."

Several other wives also commented on husbands' use of leisure time. Some wives were dissatisfied. "With Ross, he has a lot of things outside, like farming, and that is his passion. But I don't feel like I am supposed to have that option. He picks and chooses, he sits and waits. Me, I have to get the house stuff done." But as DeeAnn Watson put it, "When he goes to these company dinners, goes out golfing with the big guys, it looks like he's just having fun. But it's work. That's how we get ahead." Like Beth Salzberg, she is willing to do a bigger share of the housework and childcare if there is a payoff in the end.

Family, Construx, and Wheatlands

Compared to the rest of the state, Sooner County falls within the intermediate range for both retail trade and manufacturing, low in service sector jobs (U.S. Dept. of Commerce 1991a, 38-301, and Wikle 1991). Major sources of employment in Wheatlands include the Oklahoma Department of Public Safety, employing 125, the Sooner County Courthouse, with 75

employees, half a dozen small industries and the Construx Company.

This picture bears closer examination, however. In 1990 the Construx Company employed 800 people, and as many as 1000 in 1995. Due in large part to the success of Construx, in recent years the overall unemployment figures for Sooner County have been remarkably low, at 4.9 percent in 1990 compared to a statewide unemployment rate of 8.2 percent (U.S. Dept. of Commerce 1991a, 38-301, and Wikle 1991).

It should be noted that this rate conceals a significant amount of diversity by race/ethnicity. For whites, the unemployment rate was 3.3 percent. In contrast, the Native American unemployment rate was nearly quadruple that of whites, at 11.9 percent (U.S. Dept. of Commerce 1991a, 38-301). The rate for African Americans, though suppressed in census figures due to small numbers in the population, may also be construed as considerably higher than for the population as a whole, based both on related figures (poverty level, income level) and on information from community agency representatives.

Put together, these figures portray a relatively prosperous county, at least for the majority of Sooner County residents. This portrait is supported by statistics on poverty; approximately thirteen percent of all families fell below the poverty level in 1989, as compared to over eighteen percent in many southeastern and southwestern Oklahoma counties (U.S. Dept. of Commerce 1991a, 38).

Not all Construx employees live in Wheatlands, and not all

Wheatlands residents work in town. Still, any employer of that magnitude necessarily shapes many features of community. The Construx company keeps a surprisingly low profile, however. This became evident in discussions with community representatives. At the schools, at the newspaper, at the library and the community development coalition and the social service agencies, one official after another referred to the generosity of the Construx Company or its founder, Gus Gerhart. Residents were often careful not to mention Mr. Gerhart by name, however. "He likes to stay anonymous," I was told repeatedly. In part this is because, as one of his former employees explained, "Mr. Gerhart doesn't want Wheatlands to be seen as a company town."

Initially these explanations seemed logical. However, when I attempted to interview Construx representatives, it became evident that there were other facets of Construx's attempts to minimize its community presence. My first appointment with a company representative was cancelled, with sincere if slightly embarrassed apologies, by the middle level administrator who had cheerfully agreed to speak with me several days earlier. When he had mentioned our appointment to his boss, an upper-level management employee, my contact was told he would have to be out of town that day, and anyway, his boss was the person to talk to, because the boss knew more anyway.

My attempts to contact my informant's boss were initially stymied. He was busy, or on the telephone, or out of town. When I finally reached him,

he was at first evasive, citing a busy schedule and professing not to understand why I wanted to talk to community employers anyway. At last, however, apparently convinced that I was sincere and not trying to do an exposé on Construx, he confessed that the only way I would be able to schedule an interview with a company representative was by contacting Mr. Gerhart directly.

In discussing rural communities, Wilkinson stresses that one should not automatically take evidence of community solidarity on face value. In contemporary capitalist society, what appears to be community solidarity may be, in Wilkinson's terms, "shams perpetuated by a self-interested elite for the purpose of making class exploitation and domination" (Wilkinson 1987: 4). This is not to imply that Gus Gerhart, who is truly admired by most of his employees and many community members, is simply a greedy capitalist masquerading as one of the "good guys." However, from an outsider's perspective, it is certainly in the best interests of Construx for Gerhart to monitor carefully what community members as well as outsiders know about the actual operations and financial status of the company.

Local histories and promotional materials describe Construx as a family-held corporation which grew out of an automotive repair shop in the late 1940s. At that time, the shop did diesel repairs and some oilfield work. But in the late 1940s, the founder's son came up with the idea of a specialized farm implement which he considered to be much needed but nonexistent. After tinkering for a while, he finally created a workable product in the early

1950s. Between then and 1970, the Construx Company has repeatedly doubled its sales and profit, working nine to twelve hour shifts to keep up with demand. The company has never had an actual layoff, though they did, in the words of one former employee, use a mild recession in the mid 1970s as the opportunity to "clear out dead wood" (though, of course, families whose main wage earner got laid off would certainly not appreciate this interpretation of why jobs were lost).

When the recession hit in the 1980s, the company's rate of expansion slowed markedly; during the summer of 1987 employee's hours were cut to seven hours per day, for example. Since the town has such close ties with the company, the impact on Wheatlands was considerable. Still, Construx managed to keep expanding gradually, and today, any periods of contraction have been minimized in company and employee accounts of the company's past.

The company is still family owned and family-run, as company employees are proud to note. Family ownership has meant that Construx has somewhat unusual work patterns and benefits. Since the company's inception, for example, all employees were expected to work from 7:30 a.m to 5:00 p.m. as standard, resulting in a 45 hour workweek. Employees rarely complain, since the last five hours are paid as overtime. Even more overtime is not unusual during peak demand periods. In some cases, night shifts are scheduled.

Roger Stanley described how this work schedule shapes their family

life. Roger has worked for Construx every since he graduated. His wife Kate works for the County Tax Assessor in a nearby city, commuting half an hour each way. "This is the kind of life it's bought us," Roger says with quiet pride as we sit on the patio of their now ranch-style home. Their green Ford Explorer sits in the driveway in front of a two car garage. The yard is neatly groomed, planted with hostas and shrubs, bright beds of hot pink and salmon impatience and scarlet begonias. "A guy comes in to do the lawn, we've got a housekeeper who comes in every two weeks, a lady who does ironing. We've tried to leverage our time a little in that respect because it gives us more time to spend with the kids."[2]

That is the upside of the equation. The downside is that their two preschool-age sons are dropped off at the church-sponsored daycare center at 6:45 a.m., stay until 5:20 p.m., occasionally a little later. But that, according to Roger, is a small price to pay for what they have. Asked whether other employees complain, Roger nods his head. "Yes, some," he says, "When you look at professional type jobs, they typically come in at 8:00 or 9:00 a.m., for the national average, so there's been some talk. And Mr. Gerhart has been receptive, up to a point. We do have some flex hours now. It depends on the job, and has to be negotiated with the supervisor. But then, most folks, if they stay a while, they get to see what all Construx offers."

Kate seems less certain. "To make it all work, we have to get up at 5:00 a.m., leave the house by 6:30. We eat out at least a couple of times a week.

My mom helps out a lot." She pauses, then offers tentatively, "I'm thinking real hard about what I want to do next. I'd like to be home more. With the kids, trying to get them to all their activities, it's real hard."

But Roger, like all the other Construx workers who spoke with me, is completely committed to the company. Rod Watson, another Construx employee, put it quite simply. "There's no better place to work than Construx. For a while, money was what was motivating me. But no more. I love it. People leave thinking they can find a better job, but then they come back. Whenever anything happens, they're there for you. My boss, he's the nicest man alive." He went on to cite employee participation in the company stock program, the Christmas bonus, the consideration for family emergencies. "They're like family," he said. This comment emerged over in discussions with Construx workers. One Construx salesman pointed out that married men who apply for traveling salesmen positions are asked to bring their wives to the interview, "so that they can be included in the decision." What Watson did not note was how such a policy might benefit Construx; husbands whose wife strongly objected would not be hired, thereby lowering attrition rates on the sales force and holding down the cost of training and increasing Construx' profits.

Roger Stanley was quite astute in the extent to which he was able to see how the company operates. Asked about the question of corporate daycare, he shakes he head. "Mr. Gerhart, he's real committed to staying away from the company town image. His 'company culture' is to see private individuals

step in. That's what he did with the Community Center, that's what he did with the Child Development Center. Construx will offer seed money, but the company doesn't want Construx folks to be the only ones to make the decision. They want to get the community involved." By talking this approach, Gerhart and Construx have succeeded in solidifying the company's image in Wheatlands as community and family oriented.

The Construx work schedule, along with demands of farming, has had a considerable impact on businesses and other social institutions in Wheatlands. As Carl Foster explains, at 6:00 in the morning the cafes and service stations are open, often the busiest they'll be all day. The bank drive-through opens at 7:45 a.m., the lobby at 8:30, and closes at 5:30 p.m. Childcare facilities also reflect Construx hours; most open between 5:30 and 6:00 a.m, since the first shift at Construx begins at 6:00 in the morning right now. In contrast, in our university town it is difficult to find anyone who will take children before 7:30 a.m.

Like many family-held companies, Construx did not offer any maternity benefits until it was mandated to do so. Despite recent changes at a national level which mandate unpaid family leave in companies the size of Construx, most company employees still believe that family leave is not allowed, and note that they are discouraged from using personal sick days to stay home with sick children, a practice many employers informally accept whether or not it is officially sanctioned. Furthermore, as a general rule, employees do not accumulate vacation time. Until recently the whole

operation was closed for a week-long period at Christmas and again over the Fourth of July; though the actual purpose was plant retooling, the timing made it seem as if companies are officially endorsing Wheatlanders' cultural commitments to church, community and family. This practice is slowly beginning to change. Higher-level employees are allowed to working during official "downtimes," accumulating unpaid hours which may be later exchanged for vacation time. But working class employees are much less likely to be able to save up comp time for family emergencies.

Translated, this means that if dual-earner parents both worked at Construx, child care would present major problems in terms of time off for doctor's appointments, emergencies, school programs and the like. The one recently divorced single mother with whom I spoke confessed that she did not see how she could make it, if it were not for her mother, who helps out in a pinch, and the daycare center she uses, which allows her to bring her preschooler in before dawn so she can work the early shift. Gus Gerhart has a simple answer to this problem, however; according to company policy, spouses may not be hired. If employees marry, one is required to resign (one wonders how many employees choose to cohabit rather than confront the loss of a job in a community where most jobs are supplied by Construx).

Construx' policy on hiring of spouses may have an impact on traditionalization of marriage. Since Construx is the largest employer in town, and pays some of the best salaries, the spouse who is employed there might be construed to have the best and most secure salary. Higher salary

frequently translates to greater power in negotiating domestic identity. It seems likely, therefore, that the spouse who remains with Construx will have more power within the marriage. Of couples interviewed for this research, two couples indicated that they had faced this dilemma. In each case, the wife was the one who quit, suggesting that the husband's power quite likely increased.

Despite these obvious drawbacks, Construx has apparently been a major contributer to the growing numbers of women in the workforce in Wheatlands. Originally women were only hired in the only secretarial pool. In the early 1970s, however, the company's founder began to hire women in the plant on an experimental basis. Regarding this experiment as a success, Construx continued to hire women.

Construx also shapes available housing in Wheatlands. Originally, almost all Construx employees were from Wheatlands. Now, however, many commute from other parts of Sooner County, and from other nearby cities, including significantly more urban areas. Being right off the interstate makes commuting much simpler; in some cases, as one former employee pointed out, out-of-towners can get to work faster than if they had to drive across town in an urban area, where traffic creates constant slowdowns. Given a choice, many of these commuters would prefer to move to Wheatlands. However, until interest rates dropped, few new houses were being built, leading to a shortage of middle-range housing in Wheatlands. New residents had to settle for older, often smaller houses than those to

which they had been previously accustomed.

Construx and Community Politics

Any newcomer to Wheatlands hears about all the wonderful things Gus Gerhart and Construx have done for the town. Either directly or though employee efforts, Construx has given major contributions to the community center, to the library, the schools, the historical society, and cultural events. Contributions which come directly from Mr. Gerhart are nearly always anonymous, "so that he won't be perceived as trying to interfere with the town," one local merchant told me.

The impact of Construx is evident in other ways. The Wheatlands Development Coalition was started by the retired public relations manager of Construx. Several mayors have been retired Construx employees. Nearly every charitable organization in town has at least one upper level Construx employee on its board, helping to formulate policy to serve the families of Wheatlands. One committee, for example, determines which families are deserving of Thanksgiving and Christmas handouts. Families who are perceived by community (and by extension, Construx) standards as abusing local charity are not certified as recipients. "Before," the local director of children's services informed me, "some of these people, they'd just go from one agency to another to see what they could get. Now we've tightened up that loophole. Now only the truly deserving get anything."

Barbara Jamison, director of Grace House, tells the story differently.

Grace House is a food pantry and shelter located quite literally on the wrong side of the tracks. Getting there takes some doing; there are few through streets, and the trains still run across the three intersections that connect the south side of the tracks with the north side of town via the business district. Grace House itself is impressive from a distance- red hand-hewn blocks of stone that in Oklahoma often denotes the work of the Civilian Conservation Corps during the Depression. Up close, the signs have faded so badly that it is difficult to tell where the main office is located. Inside Ms. Jamison sits ensconced at her battered desk behind stacks of hand-written forms. The room smells faintly of mildew, neglect, and smoke. The ceiling shows signs of past leaks, verified by missing patches of floor tiles where the cement shows through.

Ms. Jamison is the antithesis of the professional bureaucrat. She is nearly as worn in appearance as the room, her face a roadmap of wrinkles from smoke and weather. But her wonderful rich voice-- a version of Barbara Jordan-- gives the first clue as to why she has lasted this long. Our interview is punctuated by a series of interruptions. A woman and her son from east of town arrive to deliver clothes, bedding, and hospital equipment from her recently deceased husband. One client and one colleague call about the following day's schedule. A black Wheatlander comes by to check out a bed for her son, and arranges to send him by to pick it up later on, and an older man stops in with two sacks of clothes he wants to donate.

Construx, Jamison concedes, does admirable things for the community,

considering all the charities the company supports. But Gerhart will only help those who are in a position to help themselves already, in her opinion. In essence, then, Construx shapes the definition of what will be labeled a social problem. "Sure, Construx will build a new building, things like that. But Gerhart won't help the people who are really down and out." She pauses, takes a drag on her cigarette. "He even drives out businesses he don't want. Like the aluminum door frame place, they started small, got going pretty good. But he wouldn't sell them the building they were in. So they moved to another town."

Former Construx employees are also less than starry eyed about the company. "You wouldn't believe how many things get shut down in Wheatlands behind the scenes," one noted disgustedly. "Like companies that got booted out the door because Construx doesn't want them here. Sure, Construx brings in a lot of jobs. But keeping others out limits competition wagewise, in the workforce." There is, this analyst tells me, a countervailing force supporting change, especially among the younger generation. "But Wheatlands is so small that nobody wants to ruffle anybody's feathers. Like the Chamber of Commerce, nobody there will challenge what Gus Gerhart wants."

In essence, then, the same forces of community gossip which shape family dynamics operate on economic and political entities as a brake against change. This also happens through the political structure, which is heavily stacked with former Construx employees and businessmen who have close

ties with the company. The churches, recipients of generous annual gifts, are unlikely to oppose Construx. Pro-Construx sentiment is even perpetuated through the local newspaper, which exchanges employees back and forth from the Construx public relations and marketing departments and the paper's newsroom. Gus Gerhart seems to be quite sincere in his desire to avoid the image of Wheatlands as a company town. The bottom line, however, is that it works that way despite his efforts.

Construx, Education and Legacy

Wheatlands is a good place to raise children, in part because it is a good place to get an education, its residents told me. Four public schools, each for a different age group, provide safe and supportive environments for learners, particularly compared to urban Oklahoma school systems. Two of the schools look brand new, and the others have been maintained and upgraded, unusual in a state that offers minimal support for education. Average expenditures per pupil in 1988 were among the highest in the state, at $3,500 (County City Data Book 1988). Asked about this, one school principal replied that the Wheatlands Education Foundation, "backboned by Construx," gives as much as $50,000 per year for projects the schools cannot afford. The computer keyboards I hear clicking away next door, for example, are courtesy of a project through the Construx engineers, who are "very proeducation." "Even the farmers in Wheatlands are college educated," he tells me with a chuckle.

The presence of Construx is felt in other ways. All schools in town run from 7:55 a.m. to 3:10 p.m. Most Construx workers begin at 7:30 in the morning, get out at 5:00. To bridge the gap, children are allowed in the school buildings at 7:20 a.m. free of charge. After school, all children who live more than six blocks away may ride the bus home or to the daycare at a nearby church. There is also a bus that takes children to afterschool activities programs at the Community Center.

That is not to say there are no problems with teenage pregnancy, school dropouts, delinquency. A recent survey indicated that a third of all elementary students are latchkey children, going home to a house with no adult present for thirty minutes or more. But even for those problems, there is "super community support and involvement," as one informant told me. Several community organizations came together this year to start a Parent as Teacher program to teach skills to at-risk parents. There is also a special program composed of representatives from social service agencies, the Community Center, education and a ministerial alliance to help keep problem children from falling through the cracks.

This support is reflected in educational achievement levels. Students last year scored an average of 75% on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills in 1994. The outcome is a significantly more educated population than was found in most of the state, with 12.3 median years of education, and 71.3% percent highschool graduate or higher, considerably higher than most other nonmetropolitan areas of the state (U.S. Dept. of Commerce 1991a, 37). This

rate varied remarkably little by race, with a median of 12.3 years of school completed for whites, 12.2 for American Indians (and corresponding 63.0 and 54.4 percent high school graduates for whites and American Indians respectively: U.S. Dept. of Commerce 1981a, 38-350. The educational level of Sooner County residents rose slightly between 1980 and 1990, with 72.8 percent of all persons 25 years and older having a minimum of a high school degree (U.S. Dept. of Commerce 1991a, 37).

Work and Family Work in Perspective

Families in Wheatlands, as described previously, fall into one of four social classes: entrepreneurial, managerial, working class and poor or working poor. These classes serve to shape lifestyle, life chances, and the structuring of domestic tasks, including the ways children will be raised and the legacy passed on to them. This experience is further modified by the types of work available to Wheatlands breadwinners. Entrepreneurs, though self employed, depend on the community's three principal industries- farming, oil, and Construx- for support, both directly, and through the income these industries supply to their prospective clients and patrons.

Of the three industries, Construx is the most significant, based on its size and on its prosperity as compared to farming and the oilfields. As a result, Construx has the most direct impact on the experience of family life in Wheatlands. Job opportunities supplied by the company put money in the pockets of family wage earners, shaping the kind of childcare they can afford.

Employment policies such as working hours and approved leave determine what kinds of childcare will be necessary for working parents and how family emergencies can be negotiated. The ban on simultaneous wife and husband employment suggests that one spouse- generally the husband- will have a higher salary, and consequently more family power, particularly when negotiating domestic work. Gus Gerhart's selective support of charitable causes directly shapes opportunities available to poor families, and indirectly shapes the legacy passed on to all families in the form of school opportunities. This legacy cycles back to shape gender and social class identities of young Wheatlanders as they learn to become productive citizens and family members of the next generation.

FOOTNOTES

[1]See Conger and Elder's Families in Troubled Times for a detailed discussion of how the farm crisis hit several hundred Iowa farm families. As Conger points out, "Hardship within families multiplies the impact of economic stress in that individual responsibilities become social obligations for maintaining not only one's own welfare but also the economic health of the family unit" (1992: 255). From a systems perspective, this puts tremendous pressure on all family member, including children.

[2]Note Roger Stanley's use of business terms to describe his family. He "leverages" his time, and "This is the life it's bought us." Demographic transition theorists might view such statements as evidence that declining child birth in post-industrial societies is related to the growing tendency to view children as material objects. New Home Economists regard such statements as evidence that family life, like work life, is subject to cost/benefit analysis.

CHAPTER 8

NEGOTIATION AND FAMILY WORK

Dee Watson recounts that her mother stayed home until she started school, then went back to beauty school. Afterwards she had her shop in their yard. As for housework, "My dad never lifted a finger. Mom did it all." She can't recall doing much of anything to help. At marriage, "I expected I would do mostly the things mother did. But then when the children were born we started doubling up. What with working and trying to finish college, there was no way I could keep up alone."

Rod's family, he says, was like "the Cleavers. Mom stayed home most of the time. But when I was ten she went back to work as secretary at the school." Though Rod helps Dee with the kids, children, his dad never did. "I don't think he ever changed one diaper." When his mother was in the hospital, "he fried a roast." Both laugh. By the time Rod was in high school, his dad would pitch in some with the dishes. "I don't know how that happened, if he just decided to do it, or if she asked him." As for his brother and sister, "They ate the food." "I can remember cleaning up my room. I mowed the lawn, took out the trash." At this point, Rod interrupts himself. "This is kinda neat. I haven't thought about this stuff in a long while."

Talking about expectations at marriage was a like watching a team of comedians. By this time, the couple was well into their joint act, enjoying every minute of the conversation (except when the toddler turned up a few

too many times). "When I got married, well, I wasn't sure I even understood the minister's questions. But the first thing I remember is coming in from work, putting on my running shoes, and Dee says, "no, you're staying home.'" "Well, you didn't even consult me!" They laugh. Then Rod adds, "But I never pictured my wife as someone who would wait on me hand and foot." And Dee chimes in, "And I appreciate him every day. My parents divorced with I was eight years old. I had a life of turmoil through high school. All I really wanted was a normal home life. I wanted to bea part of the Cleavers. "

But the Watsons are not the Cleavers. Both DeeAnn and Rod Watson work fulltime. With two young children, they face a daily struggle to keep up with all the family work. As Rod notes, "Used to be, it was never cluttered. But now, a lot of that stuff, you have to let that go." "Like closets," says Dee. She goes on to describe a typical day. "Here's what I do. About half the time, we go half and half getting kids ready. He makes toast," Rod agrees. "Yeah, I start breakfast, makes coffee the night before, and I leave by 7:20, 7:25. Then she takes over, combs their hair, brushes the toddler's teeth." At lunch time, "He comes home when he's in town, does the dishes at lunch. Especially in this house, I can't get it all done, because there isn't enough time to do it all." As for supper, Rod says, "I get home, she's got dinner made, or at least started.

The Watson's conversation illustrates the results of one family's

domestic negotiations. Couples in Wheatlands live out their daily lives within the frameworks economic constraints and social structure, which interface with cultural codes and action schema. Yet these social forces are not static. Day by day, couples negotiate identity within these contexts. In this chapter, the focus shifts from macrostructural constraints to the microprocessual dynamics within families which result in daily negotiation of domestic identities. Patterns observed in the couples interviewed and surveyed are used to examine how family work is allocated, what cultural beliefs underlie this process, and how couples translate cultural beliefs into action schema through negotiation strategies aimed at reducing mismatched expectations and resulting sore spots.

DeeAnn and Rod Watson illustrate how a couple's history plays into expectations at marriage, and how circumstances such as job changes and childbearing shape these- ideally- shared expectations into social behavior throughout the course of a marriage. Both came from very traditional backgrounds with respect to gender identity and corresponding action schema. Both entered marriage with relatively traditional expectations, though Dee's ideas were somewhat more egalitarian than her husband's, possibly because her mother worked outside the home longer and more consistently than did Rod's. Their dual career marriage forced them to redefine their "Cleavers" image of how to handle housework. The births of their two children brought about further accommodations. Recently, Rod's growing income and corresponding job responsibilities-- he travels

nationwide-- have gradually forced them to traditionalize how they handle domestic work.

The Watsons also illustrate one style of negotiating. During the interview, especially as they discuss satisfaction with their existing arrangements, they begin bickering-- lightly, playfully, but increasingly seriously. Gradually it becomes evident that this is their strategy for negotiating through the sore spots. History and context contribute to cultural attitudes, which provide action schema for desirable behavior in particular circumstances. On a daily basis, couples such as the Watsons and the Walkers and the Carters act within these frameworks to negotiate the parameters of acceptable behavior within the family setting.

Culture, Domestic Identity, and Action Schema

Wheatlanders grow up within a community culture which is an outgrowth of the frontier tradition and the Protestant Ethic, and which, taken together with the importance of kin, promotes self-reliance, hard work, and gendered identities in families.

Wheatlands is a small town, a fact of which one is reminded at every turn. Time and again the role of gossip in shaping behavior was mentioned as a critical sanction in how wife and husband will structure domestic identity. For instance, there is still a strong strain of traditionalism which mitigates against children being left with others too long. Several two-career couples raised this issue, always defensively. Husbands were likely to talk

about being away from home "building character" or fostering greater independence for children. Wives, in contrast, were more apt to talk about guilt with respect to what they or their children were missing. This suggests that gossip promotes a certain degree of traditionalism in gender identity, and that this traditionalism is in turn expressed in a felt strain for women between the pull of job satisfaction and the countervailing pull of mothering (see DeMeis et al., 1986, Hock et al., 1988, Hock et. al 1989 and Perry-Jenkins et al. 1992 for discussions of the impact of attitudes on maternal employment).

Conversely, to some extent, gossip also serves to push stay-at-home mothers into the workforce. When Linda Cummings suggests she might like to stay at home, her husband Keith replies, "I'd like for Linda to do whatever she'd like to do. She probably could. It would cut into our budget, but we could make it. But, well, I don't want to knock mothers who stay at home, but a lot of them don't know what's going on in the real world." Linda, who has already confessed a propensity toward feeling guilty, agrees that she would probably only get bored anyway. In truth, the family could not easily sustain their present lifestyle with a drop in income. However, attributing the choice of work over stay-at-home motherhood to personal reasons allows the couple to justify an economic necessity through an acceptably middle class rationalization.

Gossip also plays a role in men's gender identity. Several men who do little or nothing around the house mentioned that they get teased about this, with Josh Walker-- who cheerfully claims his biggest contribution to

housework is to closing the t.v. doors when company is coming-- as a classic example. On the other hand, though women praise men who do a lot, any man would did even close to half the housework is likely to be razzed. "My mom tells me all the time, I'm lucky," confides Gloria, "But my brother-in-law, my husband's brother, he always comments on my husband. Asks why he does all that stuff."

Finally, gossip plays into the availability of day homes as a childcare resource through the call-in campaign against unlicensed home daycare operators. Several parents told me they suspect the calls come from disgruntled dayhome providers who feel that if they have to go through the licensing procedure, others should too. The relative anonymity of larger communities makes this process far less common, but Wheatlanders take it for granted.

Domestic Participation Schemas and Legacy

Wives and husbands interviewed for this project were able to identify quite easily the extent to which their mothers and fathers participated in housework. This participation appeared to fall into three relatively distinct categories:

1) Gender Separate, in which family work was divided on the basis of gender; wives generally did all the "inside work" such as housework and childcare with only occasional assistance from their husbands. Husbands did the "outside" work, such as yard work and car maintenance, if they participated at all. Approximately 63% of all wives and

husbands interviewed reported growing up in traditional families.

2) Transitional, in which husbands participated in "inside work" to some extent, averaging less than 30% of all chores. About 16% of all individuals reported growing up in transitional families.

3) Egalitarian, in which wives and husbands shared the inside and outside work half and half. This legacy pattern was reported by approximately 21% of those sampled; in all cases, the respondent's mother worked or farmed fulltime. Half of the respondents who reported egalitarian upbringings were African American.

These patterns of domestic work participation formed a key aspect of the legacy young women and men received from their families, patterns which they in turn carried into their own marriages and families and which they subsequently translated into actions.

But other key components of cultural legacy in the domains of housework and childcare practices emerged during the course of interviewing Wheatlands family members. These included definitions of which aspects of family work are defined or "seen" as important, as contrasted with family work which is nonessential or "unseen." Also included in legacy were priorities or timetables for completing domestic work. Couples with contrasting legacies often reported considerable friction in establishing mutual priorities. In contrast, couples who matched in domestic participation schemas and definitions of priorities were more likely to be satisfied with their family life even when they reported very traditional (and therefore unbalanced) arrangements for completing housework and childcare.

Seen vs. Unseen: One of the common themes in interviews with women was frustration with the different standards their husbands have regarding housework. "If I would *ask* he was usually very willing to help- but he doesn't "see" those things as needing to be done. We've been married thirteen years, he still leaves the dishes in the sink." This assertion was reiterated numerous times. One of the most commonly cited examples was the handling of laundry. "He's got a clothes hamper, but does he put the clothes in the hamper? No, he just throws them down beside it," says Lucy Stallard. "I hate to hang up stuff, " admits Keith Cummings. "But that's because I hate to find stuff that should have been hung up. We wouldn't grumble at each other near as much about this stuff if it got done right in the first place."

Another "unseen" issue revolved around who would make arrangements for childcare if a child was sick. One woman, calling to cancel an interview appointment because her daughter was sick, pointed out tartly that her husband "didn't even think about it before he left for work." Several women noted husband's lack of knowledge of children's daily routines and special occasion needs, such as sending money for school activities; buying birthday presents for friends and relatives; cleaning dishes and counters; picking up after oneself and the like.

Confronted with his wife's complaints, the husband invariably replied, "That's because it's just how you see it, the way you want it done."

In translation, women and men have learned different cultural standards regarding housework, childcare, yard work and home maintenance and responsibility for arranging for the completion of these tasks. In early marriage, this may be a source of conflict. The person whose standards are highest is faced with one of three options. He or she may accept lower performance standards, simply not doing as much housecleaning, for instance. This is, however, apparently a difficult process, particularly for women, who are often socialized to feel guilty if they let housework slide. The second option is to find someone else-- children, relatives, or hired help-- to do the job. In Wheatlands, however, hired help is expensive and often hard to find. Relatives are increasingly likely to work too. And the choice of involving children in housework and childcare appears to be very class based; poor and working class families, along with farm families, often did so, citing the advantages of teaching responsibility. Middle and upper middle class families, consistent with what New Home Economists would predict, felt that there was too little time for children to engage in what were perceived to be essential after school activities and also housework. In many cases, therefore, women resorted to assuming responsibility for the task at hand themselves.

The conflict may then be institutionalized in the form of a "joking relationship" similar to those described by anthropologists in discussing how husbands relate to mother-in-laws in some cultures. Several couples pulled out stories that had quite evidently been retold to family members and

friends many times, stories which would elicit laughter but which sometimes contained an underlying barb. Hearing husband Keith's laundry story, wife Linda proclaims that she no longer allows him to fold towels. She has an elaborate scheme for how the towels should be folded, and exactly how they should be placed in the bathroom, "because we have such limited space. If you don't put them in right, they all fall out when you go to grab one." This led to a series of jokes, each escalating in emotional intensity. Finally Keith Cummings asserted, "I don't mind folding laundry, but no way am I going to put up with that three-fold towel business. If I do it at all, I do it my way. If Linda can't live with that, it's her problem." Just as the two seemed about to get into a real argument, they backed off, turning the comment into a shared joke for my benefit. Then they laughed, and admitted they have gone through this routine before, always backing off rather than spatting.

These mismatches in "seen" versus "unseen" do not apply solely to household and childcare tasks. When the definition of "family work" is broadened to include car maintenance, home repairs and yard work, it was evident that men also contend with these cultural discrepancies. It is intriguing to consider that because home has been defined as the woman's sphere, however, men's work may be invisible in some of the same ways women's work has been in the paid labor force until recently.

Priorities and Timetables: The same kinds of gender separation seen in visible vs. invisible tasks also pops up in looking at "her" versus "his"

agenda. As one informant put it, "he has his own timetable" that seldom corresponds to hers. "I think that he perceives himself as really helping out around the house-- he keeps track of himself-- but he doesn't see if other people need things. We've been married thirteen years, he still leaves the dishes in the sink." "I feel like he chooses when he's going to help," another said.

From an analytical perspective, the interesting aspect of such observations is that men may indeed have more control over setting their agendas. Part of this is due to cultural definition issues, but part of it may well relate to power issues. It has been fairly well documented that in most marriages, men have more power than wives, especially if children are part of the picture. According to Heath and Bourn, "Actual power, as measured by employed wives' relative earnings for two-wage-earner families, is significant in explaining their husbands' relative household hours."[1] If that is true, then husbands will be more likely to set agendas for how they spend time during non-working hours.

This has, of course, an intriguing interface with cultural definitions of what constitutes acceptable standards. If a woman simply chooses not to do housework-- a strategy several women noted that they had employed at various points in the marriage-- she can diminish sources of conflict within the home. But one woman after another told me how it "drove her nuts," or she felt angry, or guilty-- in several cases to the point of seeking professional

counseling-- if the housework was left undone. "We clean up whenever someone's coming over," one woman told me. "Yep," her husband confirmed, "We cleaned up for you." When I demurred that they did not have to do that, the husband laughed and said, "That's okay. We clean up for everybody. That's why we can't have a maid. We'd spend too much time cleaning up for her."

Counseling professionals, just like community gossips, play right into the sanctioning function, suggesting to women what to do to change their husbands. In some cases, it appears that these suggestions work. Quite often, however, they simply seem to highlight the problem until the couple stumbles onto a more acceptable solution.

Allocation of Tasks in Wheatlands Families

Looking at domestic work in contemporary Wheatlands families, it is amply evident that the home is still "the women's sphere." Overall, women and men agreed that wives complete approximately two thirds of all domestic tasks, with husbands doing most of the rest.

This information was supplied by both interview and survey respondents; a total of forty two families were asked for information on the percent of household tasks completed by wife, husband, child, or other. These tasks were divided into separate categories for housework (cleaning, cooking, picking up, and laundry), home repairs (doing, arranging), other home related (take out trash, shopping for food, shopping for other items, bill

paying, yard work, car maintenance), and childcare (actual childcare, arranging childcare, transportation to school or childcare, making children's appointments, transportation to appointments, scheduling children's activities, transportation to activities, staying home with sick children, and school liaison). Results from this task are presented below:

Table 8
Results, Percent of Tasks Assignment

	%Wife	%Husband	%Children	%Other
Housework	70	17	4	9
Home repairs	40	60	-	-
Other home related	44	49	1	6
Billpaying	44	46	-	-
Childcare	77	22	1	-*
Arranging	88	12	-	-
Arranging appts.	85	15	-	-
Staying home w/sick child	81	15	-	4
Grand Total**	66	30	1	3

*Daycare providers were not included in these figures.
**This total reflects the mean of the total 21 response categories rather than the mean of the summary figures presented in this table.

Wheatlands families reported that women carry out 66% of all tasks; men complete about 30%, children are responsible for 1% and others are responsible for 3%, based on the total overall average of the 21 response categories. These figures are generally consistent with other recent research. For example, using the Panel Study of Income Dynamics conducted by the

Survey Research Center at the University of Michigan, Heath and Bourn, report that men's relative participation in two-wage earner families in a national probability sample of over 5,000 U. S. households was .40 in 1983; their figures do not include response categories for "children" or "others," however (1995).

Several observations can be made about these findings. First, though definite change is evident from the previous generation (e.g., DeeAnn Watson's assertion that "My mom did it all"), there is still a definite gendered aspect to contemporary domestic identities. The home and children are still primarily women's domain, with women assuming responsibility for 70% of the housework and 77% of childcare. Men do "outside work" such as home repairs, yard work, car repairs and paying bills, providing transportation for children. There were definitely exceptions. Billpaying, for example, was not actually a 50-50 affair in general, but was primarily handled either by the husband (a slightly more common arrangement) or the wife; averaging the contrasting arrangements results in the deceptively equal distribution. Also, some husbands did significantly more childcare, and some wives significantly more yard work than the simple averages suggest. Overall, however, there still appears to be a significant carryover from "separate spheres" gender expectations.

Becker predicts exactly this dynamic, suggesting that it is economically more efficient to separate task allocation rather than duplicating family functions (1985, 1991). If women become the primary providers, or

coproviders, he notes, the gendered arrangement of domestic chores is likely to shift toward more egalitarian arrangements. Indeed, among middle and upper middle class families where husbands and wives made more approximately equal contributions to household income, there did appear to be more sharing. In cases of coprovider couples where increased sharing did not take place, women were more likely to report dissatisfaction with existing arrangements, or in some cases, to express the wish to work less and stay at home more. In short, using rational choice interpretation, they felt they were getting a bad deal.

The second observation is that in most areas of domestic work, women are the organizers, men the helpers. This was particularly with regard to childcare. The overall average responsibility for childcare was split 77% for wives, 22% for husbands, and 1% for children. However, asked who actually arranged childcare revealed that 88% of this responsibility fell to the wife, as did 85% of arranging appointments. As indicated by women's comments regarding timetables and priorities, primary responsibility for childcare is often perceived as a significant burden. It was also the area in which the most significant differences existed between wife's and husband's perceptions of allocation of tasks. This may suggest that cultural codes and domestic identities are shifting in response to changing work patterns, but that the shift is occurring faster for women, who are more likely to bear the brunt of the inequity in task allocation. Consequently women are quicker to express dissatisfaction with existing arrangements.

Matches in Cultural Codes and Action Schemas

Despite the evident disproportion in household duties, most couples reported that they were generally quite satisfied with the allocation of domestic work within their marriages. The Walkers typified couples who were satisfied with existing arrangements. When they got married, in college, Lora expected to do it all. She was very straightforward about that, and responded with sympathetic nods when Josh interjected that their friends criticize him. "He gets the money for us," she noted matter-of-factly. "I think it's a fair trade." And the house, Josh pointed out. " Not too bad, huh?" Asked about his contribution to housework, Josh grinned. "I shut the t.v. doors when company are coming." Their young son, hearing his parents laughing about this, rushed to shut the t.v. doors. "See, he's learning what men do!" In describing his minimal contribution to domestic work, Josh acted as if he were proud of himself. Yet underneath there was a shadow of concern. at that point Lora jumped in. "I don't think we're quite as conventional as a lot of people because a lot of people do share things a lot more. But I feel it's all for a common purpose here."

The Walkers' assessment of their household arrangements suggests the importance of the extent to which one spouse's patterns match the mate's. Some of respondents complained extensively, some complained scarcely at all; some bickered and sniped while some jumped in to second each other's assessments. But the degree of cooperation did not seem to stem

from traditionalism or androgyny; more accurately, it seemed to be the product of how well wife and husband's expectations of marriage matched.

Couples with similar gender socialization were more likely to report that their expectations matched. Gender socialization was the best predictor of premarital expectations. For instance, young women who grew up on farms generally reported that they expected "to do it all," or "to do most of it." A woman like this was also most likely to note that the tradeoff was the income supplied by her hard-working husband. Working class women and men also shared this pattern.

In contrast, middle and upper-middle class couples who matched were much more likely to have come from families with mothers in the paid workforce and to expect a much greater degree of sharing. If this sharing was achieved, or if the expectations were renegotiated as the husband's earning power diverged from his wife's, the couple generally reported satisfaction with their present arrangements. Paradoxically, however, middle and upper middle class couples were much more likely to report dissatisfaction with family work arrangements even when the degree of sharing was quite close on the "percent of tasks" worksheet, supporting the idea that a couple's degree of match between domestic participation schema and percent of tasks is at least as critical as the actual amount of work each does.

Negotiation Strategies

Of the couples asked, almost all emphatically denied ever negotiating

domestic arrangements. "It just sort of happened," they said. "That's the way it evolved." "Everything just sort of fell into place." "There was no decision, it was kinda you just did it," Beth Salzberg said.

From the first, this definition seemed implausible. However, this assessment was so nearly universal that it would have been easy to accept. But simply watching couples communicate during the course of the interview belied their words. There was ample evidence of ongoing negotiation- though words, through gestures, through body language and through silence.

Few couples actually negotiated out loud. In our culture, we pay lipservice to the importance of direct verbal communication, but in reality, "talking it out" seems to be the purview of a small number of educated middle class couples. Gradually several standard tactics began to emerge. These ran the gamut from highly positive and psychologically sophisticated to potentially destructive. Common strategies included humor and teasing, endorsement, sniping or nagging, accommodating, withdrawl, arguments, blowups, and at the extreme end, separation-- and, in one rare and exemplary case, talking it out.

Talking it out is potentially the most positive and certainly the least commonly observed negotiation strategy available to families as they sort out who will handle which aspects of family work. Of all the couples interviewed, only the Carters claimed to talk out their problems. "Years ago,

when we were first married, I don't think we ever talked, discussed things like we should have. As the kids got older, seems like we had more time. We talk about everything."

The Carters are exceptional in this respect. Why don't couples talk? For some, it may be too threatening. This may be particularly true when priorities and cultural codes differ considerably. As Keith Cummings put it, "We didn't plan housekeeping. I think if we plan it we don't work very good together." Yet it is ironic, in these days when slews of advice columnists and talk show hosts and pop psychologists advocate better communication, that so few couples actually use this approach to problem solving. That is not to say that these couples do not communicate, and some quite well. The Walkers for example, had never specifically discussed these issues before, yet their mutual understanding was probably even more explicit and effective than in all but the most highly articulate of communication-oriented professional couples. In essence, then, a whole series of nonverbal cues are used as tools to achieve the same end.

Humor and teasing seemed to be a common and reasonably nonconfrontational approach to resolving mismatched expectations. Discussing premarital expectations, for instance, the Linda Cummings claimed she "pretty well felt that it would be a shared type situation." Keith snorted. "After seeing my apartment?" They went on to portray, in graphic detail, what a pigsty he lived in while he was own his own. "Well," she said,

"I made sure I had my tetanus shot before I married him."

The Walkers provided classic examples of the use of humor. They seemed to love to tell stories on each other. "Tell her about how you handled laundry when you were a kid," Lora urges. Josh laughs. "My mom would send it all upstairs-- she never came upstairs-- and me and my brothers would throw it all on the pingpong table in the big room we shared. Guess that's why we didn't play pingpong much." Such stories are amusing, but they often have a moral: "I'm mentioning this because it's a sore spot."

On occasion humor is also used as a sanction by relatives. Gloria Carter's brother-in-law used this tactic to no effect when he teased her husband about contributing too much to housework and childcare.

Endorsement was another highly positive strategy for negotiation. It was also quite rare among the couples who participated in this study. The Walkers and the Carters provided the best examples.

"I don't really work out of the home," Lora Walker told me. But Josh interrupted. "Except for running a daycare and the feed business and doing bookkeeping for all the relatives because you're so dang good at it." Lora smiles. Later Josh admits that he does little in helping transport their children to extracurricular activities. "That's because they won't let you," Lora reminds him. But you coach their teams, and you watch them when I have to run errands."

As for the Carters, Gloria is careful to make certain to explain in detail

how much her husband has helped her, and to explain that if he does not help, it is due to his heavy work schedule. Likewise she matter-of-factly credits her daughters. "Without them, I couldn't have done it. No way."

Mike Stallard used another, more material form of endorsement. When he got too busy to do the yardwork, Lucy took over. Mike's response: "For Mother's Day, I bought her a new lawnmower and weedeater." My cautious response led Lucy to jump in. "Really I was kind of excited. I like to do it. But only if I've got the right stuff." Apparently a riding lawnmower and gas-powered weedeater were more than sufficient endorsement for Lucy to accept assuming an extra chore.

Couples who practiced endorsement as a primary strategy generally had similar gender socialization and expectations. In cases where endorsement was found, couples also appeared to be quite satisfied with existing domestic arrangements-- even if, as in the Walkers' case, the arrangements appeared to be inequitable.

Accommodating was a reasonably neutral strategy to negotiating housework. The most obvious accommodations seemed to be made by wives, who are generally in positions of lesser power with respect to husbands. Talking to Roger and Kate Stanley, it is evident that she lets him set the tone for the conversation. He gives the answers, and she nods.

This does not mean Kate is submissive. When she has a strong opinion, she voices it. "I don't know, things just kind of fell into place, we

just worked it out together," Roger says. "Desperation," Kate interjects. "Yeah, working things out," Roger notes once again. Later, discussing family leave at Construx, Roger says there is none. Yes there is, says Kate firmly, that's a state law, they have to have some provision for handling that. In essence, she listens respectfully while her husband talks, but runs their family life as she sees best, settling the children with a video and a bribe of marshmallows when they interrupt too often, handling specific childcare arrangements. She keeps their lives running smoothly while he brings in the better part of their family income.

This study fits with a number of analyses of gendered ability to "read" body language. Those who are the best readers of nonverbal communication tend to be persons in positions of lesser authority-- generally women and minorities. In families with greater discrepancies in relative power between husband and wife, therefore, one might expect the wife to be more adept at accomodating. This dynamic would be less likely to be observed when spousal income and consequently power were closer to equal. It is also consistent with rational choice theory; it is more logical for a wife to accommodate if she stands to gain from doing so.

Sniping or nagging was less likely to emerge in the couple-interview format, though it was frequently mentioned when spouses were interviewed separately. In several interviews, however, couples who began on their best behavior slid toward a more accurate portrayal of their negotiation strategies

as the interview proceeded. DeeAnn and Rod Watson, for instance, began describing their relationship in perfect good humor. But as the two of them begin to discuss specific arrangements, they start taking jabs at each other. On the laundry: "He messes it up by putting it back after I've washed it." On helping with the kids, "He does the kids' showers, but he never would, unless I instigate it." On picking up: "He never minds clutter so long as it's his." Throughout, Rod protests, at first humorously, then when humor is ineffectual, the two begin to bicker, pulling up short when they recall that they are being watched.

Some couples were careful to tiptoe when the subject of nagging came up. "I would like for him to be responsible for himself. Pick up." Lucy glances at her husband Mike, who is watching to see where this conversation will go. "Like last night, he made nachos, left all the stuff right on the counter. Now how much time would it take to put the bowl in the sink, pour some water in it?" Mike grins. "Seems like I've heard this story before." Then they switch to safer topics.

Sandy Parker, interviewed separately from her husband, was quite explicit about the function of bickering in their marriage. "When he finally decides to help, it's very dramatic. He makes a big deal of it." Later, describing one of the rare occasions when her husband helped with laundry, she noted that their son, watching him, exclaimed, "'Daddy, what are you doing? Dads don't fold clothes.' If I've told him once, I've told him a million times his kids won't learn unless they watch him do it."

Sniping seemed to be practiced by couples with mismatched expectations regarding the completion of domestic tasks. It quite frequently correlated with significant discrepancies between husband and wife on the percent-of-tasks assignment. Except in cases of chronic sniping, this may be one technique to convey to one's spouse that there are problems to be resolved-- "The difference that makes a difference," in Bateson's terms.

Withdrawl was one of the ways Cathy Foster used to cope with growing stress. "I'm to the point-- there was a time when I liked being outside, but I never thought about the fact that I was doing outside and inside work too. The last couple of years, it's been a battle. But I've given up being outside because I never relaxed."

Sandy Parker has also used this tactic. "My attitude toward housework any more is, 'I'll do it when I can fit it in.' My husband, he complains about that. Won't do it, just complains about it. But I can't do it all."

Men often negotiate by withdrawl. Mike Stallard, for instance, never tells his wife when he needs clean clothes. "Just expects me to know. Like this morning, he says, where are my clean jeans. Never told me he was out, just asks for them like I somehow know," his wife says. Like accomodating, one might expect this dynamic in cases where there are significant power differentials. Either spouse may withdraw to avoid having to negotiate further.

Arguments and blowups are apparently a negotiation tactic in even the

best of family relationships. As long as the blow-ups are only occasional, they seem to function as "a difference that makes a difference," in Gregory Bateson's terms (1972); a spouse who is confronted with this kind of blow-up is likely to take heed that this problem must be taken seriously, requires some sort of solution. Lora Walker puts her family on notice when she is having a bad day; then Josh will take their youngest for the afternoon. Gloria Carter broke down when she was trying to work two jobs at once. Her husband responded by helping to pay the bills on a regular basis. Beth Salzberg says, "Overall it's just fine. I get crazy sometimes and fly off the handle. Do we ever holler at each other? Yes."

If arguments become chronic, they lose their force. This may lead to one member of the couple taking more drastic measures. "I would just call my brother, not talk it over with my husband. We just fought about little stuff a lot," says Delia Grey sadly, "So now we're separated."

Separation or divorce is the last resort. For some couples, separation may be one stage in a growing relationship. Cathy and Carl Foster confessed that at one point, the arguments escalated to the point that she left him. For the Fosters, that was the difference that made a difference. Their domestic arrangements are still less than perfect, but they are back on track.

For other couples, separation is the final acknowledgement that their expectations are so mismatched, their negotiating strategies so unsuccessful, that the relationship is at an end. Candice Miller, who has been divorced for

nearly a year, was one of the only women in the entire sample to respond that, "Things are just fine the way they are. I wouldn't change anything. As far as housework and childcare go, being a single parent has not made either one a chore." For Candice, being single is the best revenge.

Family Friction Points

When differences between husband and wife emerged, they often appeared to produce "friction points," or areas of routine disagreement among spouses. These points of friction often seemed to center on the issues of laundry, food, lack of time and problems with childcare.

Laundry, as illustrated by the Salzbergs, was a key friction point for approximately a third of the couples interviewed. Part of this friction may be traced to differing perceptions of acceptable standards in the care of clothing. At a deeper level, however, it is intriguing to speculate on the possible existence of contrasting cultural codes regarding *cleanliness and order* in family life. Social class differences, cultural differences, and possibly differences based on race and ethnicity relating to family order and gendered responsibility for its maintenance may be learned so deeply in childhood that they come to seem natural. If one's spouse does not share similar conceptions of order, this leads to institutionalized conflict unless or until these codes can be renegotiated.

Food also seems to be a key issue for many Wheatlanders. Asked how

often she cooks, Delia Grey pauses, grins. "There's a lot of takeout going on." She later adds, "I can't think of the last time I cooked a meal." This is a confession which came up again and again during this fieldwork. In all the evening interviews I did, only one family had eaten a home-cooked meal the night of our interview. However, it soon became evident that couples were reluctant to mention reliance on takeout food until I brought up the subject, indirectly giving them permission to talk about it. In our culture, we have been raised to believe that shared food is key to social ties and family (see Schneider 1968), and that any family that does not cook and eat meals together can not be a "true" or "good" family. But once I admitted that my own family ate out a lot, many families cautiously confirmed that they frequently at meals not prepared at home. One family, for example, explained that, "Yes, we eat out quite a bit. Of course, we always know where the specials are, we try to be very careful, sometimes we cook . . . " In essence, they appeared to be hedging their answer in with qualifications so they would not be judged too harshly.

Still, there was a sense of something lost. As Sandy Parker notes wistfully, "I really wish we had sitdown meals together at least once a day. But those are few and far between, it seems like."

Time--- or more aptly, lack of it-- was another uneasy subject. Arlie Hochschild asserts that women sit less, sleep less, and have less leisure time than men (1990). Approximately one third of the women interviewed raised

this topic. As suggested by earlier vignettes, some wives justified this circumstance by asserting that apparent leisure activities actually served to advance one's husband's career. Several other couples coped with the problem by agreeing that the husband would take the children out on Saturday morning "to do guy stuff so I can do girl stuff," as DeeAnn Watson put it.

Husbands also lamented time issues, however. For men, the complaint seemed to be that the combination of work and domestic responsibilities meant there was no time left for being a couple or for children. "We never see each other anymore," was the common complaint. Some husbands noted that they wished they could spend more time with children as well, citing the demands of paid work as the reason for their failure to do so.

In essence, the underlying symbolism may be traditionalism versus growing egalitarianism in allocation of leisure time. Women, though uneasily and unevenly endorsing their husbands' commitment to getting a living, may be seeking new gender equity in marriage. Men, in contrast, seem to be searching for more companionate marriages. This may be indicative of the gradual shift in gender identities some analysts believe to be taking place in contemporary U.S. families (see, for instance, Heath and Bourn 1995). When strain is experienced, it may be blamed on demands from the sphere which was previously primary for each gender: men feel stress from work, women from the demands of home.

The time issue also has interesting implications from a New Home Economics perspective. For many families, time seemed to be one of the most sought-after and lest frequently attained commodities. However, few families seemed willing to consider a time-for-money tradeoff; if couples truly wanted time so much, one would stay home, and the family would make do with less. A few women tentatively raised this possibility. But husbands, traditionally the protectors of the instrumental as opposed to affective realm, generally seemed adamant about the need for wives to keep working. This insistence was not generally justified economically, but rather, as the Cummingses illustrated, by referring to how much more "interesting" and "lively" educated women were. In essence, this serves to protect the gendered identity of men in the face of changing economic exigencies. To maintain the chosen lifestyle, women must work; to do otherwise means sliding from upper middle to middle class, or from middle to working class and the like.

And as women move away from affective to instrumental realm, they too are swayed by the arguments. This appears to be particularly true for middle and upper-middle class families. Such families talked about "buying time" or "leveraging time" by purchasing services, fast foods, and childcare. At a deeper level, this might be interpreted as meaning that they want to organize time, make it more rational, in Weberian terms. Domestic work is highly time intensive and, in many respects- such as childcare- inherently "irrational," as any first time parent quickly discovers. Paying for these

services allows parents in the upper ranges of the social class spectrum to organize their time much more efficiently.

Even so, *childcare* stirred up quite a bit of ambivalence among couples interviewed. Here the concerns were not so much a matter of matching perceptions between wife and husband, but rather the shared belief that the children of this generation may not be getting a fair shake when one examines the legacy they are receiving from their parents. There simply is not enough time, parents believe, to teach their children how to be good people and good citizens. Middle and upper middle class parents have turned to paid providers and after school activities to fill this gap, as is discussed in the following chapter. Working class and minority parents turn to relatives when they can. Yet almost all were uneasy about these answers.

Family Work in Macrostructural Perspective

Cultural codes, negotiation strategies and friction points, viewed separately, provide intriguing glimpses into the inner life of Wheatlands families. Placed in a more macrostructural perspective, these dynamics help understand how apparently static institutions such as work and family actually evolve on a daily basis. Domestic identity, then, is only one face of the lives of families in the community of Wheatlands.

Furthermore, as Becker suggests, despite their claims that "it just happens," family members are active participants in decisions regarding the

structure of domestic work. Choices about who cares for children, and who arranges for childcare, when viewed within the context of prevailing economic opportunities and culturally endorsed practices, make considerable economic sense. In cases where they do not, friction points emerge around which disputes are centered. Using available negotiation strategies, couples either resolve these simmering disputes, agree at least temporarily to disagree, or at last resort, separate to form new families.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Also see Baxter 1992 and Kiker and Ng 1990, using relative measures of power. As Heath and Bourn also point out, other studies such as Coverman 1985; Coverman and Sheley 1986 and Kamo 1988 have not found this relationship; this negative finding may well be due to the use of an absolute rather than a relative measure of power.)

[2]See Rubin's Worlds of Pain, 1976, for a very complete description of this experience, as well as her most recent work, Families on the Fault Line , 1994.

CHAPTER 9

CHILDCARE CHOICES AND LEGACY

Asked about children's participation in doing chores, Sandy Parker sighs and says, "They're really good about helping if they're directed to help. I work on it. But my husband doesn't." She shakes her head, remembering. "I would like to have, especially in the mornings, my biggest frustration, I would like to have more help. I get up, I get the kids up, get them ready. Ross just gets up and leaves." I nod sympathetically. This is obviously a sore spot. Sandy goes on. "I mean, I see them picking up bad habits, of mine, of Ross's. And yet, I think it takes both of us-that it has to be a priority- to get it done. Otherwise what's the next generation going to be like?"

One couple after another mention this theme. Parents believe their children need to learn to be competent adults from consistent and committed caretakers. When both parents work, this learning must come from other sources, as they are well aware. In lieu of family, respondents tell me, constancy in childcare may bridge the gap. Carl Foster tells me with quiet satisfaction, "We were fortunate enough to have the same lady for a long time, eight years, I believe. Both Cathy and I knew her from way back, from when she lived next door, went to the same church with us." In contrast, Roger Stanley and Kate Stanley describe with evident dissatisfaction the patchwork of arrangements they had to make before their children were old enough to go to daycare. And even then, "You have the turnover of teachers,

switching them around from room to room, you just really don't know about their day," notes Kate with a frown. Roger tries to put a better slant on the changing shifts. "Well, they're fresher." "Yes," Kate responds, "But the ones we see when we come in at 5:30 to get them have only been there a couple of hours. They may be fresher, but you know less."

Listening to these concerns, it is evident that negotiating childcare is far more complex for most families than is the allocation of other domestic tasks. Many of the same underlying issues are the same; each parent has her or his agenda for childrearing which stems from the upbringing received during childhood. These agendas may or may not match, and are subject to the same negotiation strategies spouses use to hash out who cooks, who does the laundry, and how.

But the ante is upped in considering childcare, because implicit in the raising of children is the stewardship of the next generation. This is how the legacy which parents hope to pass on to their children is transmitted, through the daily act of raising children (Flora 1992: 81). When both parents work, they are less available to act as the primary agents of socialization. Few families stated this directly, yet many seemed to be aware of this dilemma. Some, like the Stanleys, respond by trying to "leverage" their time, squeezing already tight schedules to try to spend "quality time" with their children. A few, like Cathy Foster, apparently make a conscious decision to limit working hours so that they can be home when the children get there. Approximately one fourth of the women with whom I spoke wished they could stay home so

that they would have more time with children.

But most Wheatlands parents believe that they cannot afford the luxury of staying home. Consequently their choices for substitute parental figures-- relatives, daycare, nursery schools or dayhome providers-- must to some extent mirror parents' norms and values to be viewed as acceptable. Since all children attend the same school system in Wheatlands, these choices are particularly evident in the decisions parents, with input from their offspring , make about how children spend their day when they are not in school. Childcare, after school activities, and family time proved to be three key ways that legacy of family and community culture and action schema are transmitted.

The Gendered Nature of Childcare

In the past, mothers or other female relatives were the primary agents of socialization in our society. Even when women go to work outside the home, this pattern apparently persists. Wives and husbands who spoke with me reported that, of all domestic work, childcare was most likely to be provided by mothers rather than fathers, with women responsible for 77% of childcare as compared to men's 22% (the 1% residual being supplied by children). When working women cannot personally provide childcare, they still choose childcare. Wheatlands family members agreed that women were responsible for arranging an average of 88% of all childcare, as contrasted to 12% arranged by men. In essence, then, women apparently retain

responsibility for stewardship of children and transmission of legacy.

This is particularly evident when considering what happens when a child is sick. No daycare in Wheatlands makes special provisions for sick children. This means that in most cases, a parent or relative or neighbor must stay home with the sick child. For the families interviewed, the overwhelming majority of these cases were resolved by the mothers staying home (mean of 81%), with fathers sharing the task on a very limited basis (mean of 15%); relatives account for the remaining 4%.

Families inadvertently confirmed this dynamic when children were present during joint interviews. In all except one instance, the woman was always the one to leave the room if a child was fretful or hungry or too talkative. Fathers sometimes offered admonitions or wry comments, but only one couple actually seemed to share the responsibility for their two young daughters' bedtime routine while I was present.

Childcare Options in Wheatlands

For almost all Wheatlands families, working means finding someone else to care for a couple's children during at least part of the day. This means choosing from a limited set of options which includes relatives, one of the four local daycare centers, one of the two dozen or so available licensed neighborhood dayhome providers or the few unlicensed dayhome operators who have managed to avoid getting reported. To completely cover their work schedules, most families must concoct some mix of these alternatives.

Childcare options are not haphazardly chosen. To a considerable extent, they appear to reflect the intersection of economic resources and the reflection thereof in social class; to some degree, these considerations may be tempered by cultural values which result from race and ethnicity.

Relatives and Neighbors

Of the couples interviewed in this project, all had used family members for babysitting at one time or another, and most still rely on family for emergencies. Many parents were quick to cite the benefits of having family members who lived nearby. "I don't know what I'd do without my mother," Kate Stanley commented. This is consistent with the cultural commitment to family cited by most Wheatlanders.

Still, relatives, including grandparents or aunts or adult siblings, are less and less likely to be able to provide care, despite the local emphasis on family ties. All except one of the women interviewed and most of the men reported that their mothers either worked for pay, or in three cases, on the family farm and were not available to help with childcare unless they had retired. Given the childcare crunch, an increasingly tight economy, and the need for both parents to work, Wheatlands families are having fewer children and once children are school aged, they are trying to avoid using paid childcare providers. This means, according to the school staff (and several of the couples who participated in this study) that there are a growing number of "latchkey" children. For summer, this means children may be at

home tended by teenaged siblings, teenage paid sitters, or untended, a growing trend for children third grade and older. Several of the parents noted the problems involved in using children to watch children. Housework is often left undone, too much time is spent watching t.v. and playing videos, and more squabbles seem to happen-- not to mention the possibility of serious accidents.

A few families have solved this problem by turning to neighbors as childcare resources; about 25% of respondents sampled had used a neighbor woman at one time or another. More often than not, neighbors share similar values and social class, thereby transmitting a similar legacy. But female neighbors, like female relatives, are increasingly likely to enter the Wheatlands workforce. This brings Wheatlands families back to the question of choosing paid nonkin childcare, or, in some cases, paying kin.

The ways families relied on kin connections varied considerably, however. To a large extent, reliance on kin appeared to be determined by social class. Poor and working class parents were most likely to depend on relatives for regular babysitting. The further one goes down the income scale, the more likely it is that children will be cared for by relatives rather than by paid providers.

This is especially true if cultural factors play into the family decision. For Native and African American Wheatlanders, kin comes first. This fits with findings from other research. "Black mothers, in particular, were less likely than white or Hispanic mothers to purchase care, even when the effects

of economic status and family structure were taken into account" (Brayfield and Hofferth 1995, 171). Even when relatives worked, working class parents such as Delia Grey sometimes got around this problem by patching together a "pass the baby" system where a variety of relatives took turns depending on their daily and hourly schedules. For blacks and Native Americans, kin ties would quite likely shape childcare choices even if choices were limitless.

White working class Wheatlanders voiced the same concerns, though not as forcefully or unamimously. Gloria Carter, who now does childcare for other people, has never used formal childcare herself. Until her children were schoolage, she stayed home, or relied on her mother. She began to expand her schedule when her children were older, working longer as they entered school. She began to work nights when the oldest entered highschool, and could watch her sisters. Now, everyone helps.

Middle and upper-middle class parents, though they sometimes used family members for babysitting in the early years, reported that they primarily to use kin to help with school liaison, or to help with transportation to and from afterschool activities.

Childcare in the Daycare Setting

Working Wheatlanders who do not rely on kinfolks to take care of their children must rely on one of the four sources of paid child care available in their community: the Child Development Center (underwritten by Construx), Wee Folks Daycare, First Lutheran Day Nursery or private

dayhomes. Each of these options has a distinctively different atmosphere which to a large extent interfaces with socioeconomic status and class-based preferences. Each of these options also transmits a significantly different legacy to the children who spend time there.

Wee Folks is the option LaRue Chase, a recently widowed African American mother, has chosen for her child. Driving up to pick up her child at 3:00 p.m., the place does not look promising. From the outside it looks more like a lower-middle class home than a daycare center-- a tan frame house, paint peeling, a "no trespassing" sign in front and several broken pieces of playground equipment in the side yard. Only two vehicles sit in the gravel driveway.

The inside of the building matches the outside. Once the atmosphere may have been cheerful. But the primary colored paint of the mismatched child-sized tables and chairs was chipped, the tops stained. The facility rules are posted on sheets of notebook or typing paper, some in pencil, some in pen, some faded. Though there were lots of toys, most of them were stashed in stacks and in knotted plastic shopping bags on shelves a foot or so from ceiling level. Instead of creative materials like blocks and clay favored by the Child Development Center, the toys here ran toward the games advertised on t.v. and sold at Wal-mart. In the smaller of the two rooms there was a piano, but it was locked. On top of it sat a large t.v. with two Nintendo systems. On top of every available surface was a clutter of toys, diapers, art supplies, and

sundry bottles of shoe polish, crepe paper, and forms. The larger room, where the children were napping when I arrived, was better furnished, with sturdy stacking chairs and tables. But the toys were also mostly out of reach, and the cubbyholes were the same chipped painted wood. In the corner, a large t.v. with a VCR and an ample selection of tapes.

But LaRue likes Wee Folks. The Department of Human Resources subsidizes the cost of childcare; this is critical to her, since her husband was recently killed in a drive-by shooting in Tulsa. Her aunt works there, and can take LaRue's son in with her when she goes to work at 6:00 a.m., allowing LaRue to get to work as a waitress at the same truckstop as her older sister Nadine Thomas. That saves on costs for gas, and means she does not have to use her undependable car as much.

Also, the staff at Wee Folks are good to LaRue. Other childcare centers have their fees posted on nifty computer-printed posters, displayed by the door or available in flyer form. They explicitly state their charges, beginning with $2.50 per hour for drop-in, $70 per week for infants, ranging on down to $20 for after school. At Wee Folks, there is a hand-written poster specifying that drop-in rates are $1.50 per hour. Asked about weekly rates, staff members are vague. The bottom line is that if a parent cannot pay the stated cost, the owner will find a way to make it work. That means a lot to LaRue, because sometimes the DHS bureaucracy will only pay part of her hours.

Also, hours of operation at Wee Folks are 5:30 or 6:00 a.m. till 11:30, seven days a week. These hours fit shift work like LaRue's far better than

the schedule of any other center in town. Almost all the Wee Folks clientele are working parents, split about half and half between married and single. Like LaRue, several of the parents of Wee Folks children lived in extended families, or were caring for grandchildren while the teenaged parents finished school or, as one grandmother put it, "got her life together a little."

Besides, as LaRue points out, workers at Wee Folks are cheerful, competent in their interactions with children, and speak knowledgeably about each of them, their circumstances, their needs. LaRue's aunt told me that she brings her own children to Wee Folks because, "all the staff, they really care about what happens to the kids. I had my son here before I got this job and I was real impressed." For the parents who work at Pac-N-Sak or the Texaco or the graveyard shift at the hospital, this may be the only option open to them.

Looked at from a different perspective, the legacy offered at Wee Folks may suit the clientele. Flora et al. suggest that "the most important legacy working-class parents believe they can give their children is discipline, not creativity" (1992: 90). Children are taught to conform and to work hard rather than how to reason independently. This is the message LaRue's child would get if raised by mothers or other female relatives. This is the message she gets at Wee Folks.

Nadine and Neil Thomas, also African American, send son Neil to The Child Development Center in Wheatlands, a publicly-funded facility

explicitly organized for the benefit of low income children; middle class children are not eligible. This center is markedly different from Wee Folks. Because it is required to conform to standards which are more stringent than the normal state codes, one might reasonably expect it to be safe and at least nominally well organized. But one might also expect the institutional drabness and uniformity too often in evidence in state-run programs.

The CDC, however, is a pleasant exception. Outside, it is charming, exactly the sort of place middle class parents might choose for their children. The new one story brick building is very obviously built to code; the premises are clean, with a neatly mowed yard shaded by tall trees. Two apparently brand new vans were parked in the cement circular drive in front, in marked contrast to the situation at centers in nearby towns, which are struggling to replace old and fairly battered vans. The play yard in back is filled with bright-colored durably made "big toys," plus sand and water play areas all surrounded by a sturdy cyclone fence.

The Thomases learned about the CDC because Neil works at Construx. This is the facility Construx owner Gus Gerhart has chosen to support. It shows. Peeking inside the windows one sees a neat, new, nicely decorated facility with stacks of brochures in neat displays. There are bulletin boards for everything. On one of them, the inspection report is prominently displayed: "Looks real good! Thanks!" Shelves of "developmentally appropriate" toys like Lincoln logs, art supplies, a doll corner and building blocks, bright and well-cared for, are strategically placed in the four spacious

classrooms.

Neil loves the CDC, Nadine tells me. They are lucky he can go there, she adds. Most two-income families would not have this option for their children. Based on Nadine's erratic salary as a truck stop waitress and the fact that they have four children, they are able to qualify as low income. Though the Thomases do not realize it, low income Wheatlanders who attend the CDC are much more fortunate than underprivileged children and families in other towns, thanks to the generosity of Construx and Mr. Gerhart. the legacy children receive here is upbeat, hopeful, aimed at achieving maximum independence through problem solving inherent in the developmentally appropriate toys. They will also have opportunities to learn creativity through the art materials the CDC supplies, and will get plenty of exercise on the play yard equipment. Also, as Nadine and I watch, a group of young women are being trained for the fall, told how to discipline to the maximum effect, stressing rewards and reinforcement.

But there is a catch. The center is closed for the summer, because the program of which it is a part is set to coordinate with the standard school year. Folks who have to work year round must find other options for the three months the center is not open; Nadine relies on her teenage daughter Tamara. Even during the year, the program is available only to toddlers and preschoolers, not to babies or older children, and then only during the hours of 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Given the schedules of many Wheatlands employers, including Construx, the CDC can at best only provide part of the childcare

families like the Thomases must find. Then too, only a limited number of children can be accepted. Because the CDC is closely tied to state funding, they are not disposed to bend the rules when their quota is filled.

The Parkers, who are white middle-class, and the Stanleys, a white upper-middle-class, send their children to the First Lutheran Day Nursery. This program is considerably bigger than Wee Folks or the CDC, licensed for about three times as many children. They accept children ages birth through fourth grade, and toe the line in following licensing requirements. This means that children older than nine years old are very likely to be latch-key children unless they have other arrangements. Sandy Parker gets off work early enough to be able to be home by the time the bus delivers her children to their doorstep. Kate Stanley has approached the gap in childcare by enrolling their children in a series of afterschool activities including scouts, sports, and dance.

Fees at First Lutheran are quite explicit, ranging from $70 per week for infants, $65 for potty-trained toddlers and preschoolers, to $60 for school age children during summer, with a 10% sibling discount; this is attractive to both the Parker and Stanley families, since they each have two children, one in school and one in preschool. During school year, children like the Parkers' and Stanleys' oldest offspring may ride a bus from the center after school; the fee is $20 for after school care. There are also part time or drop in rates. Fees are to be paid in advance (at the end of the day for drop-ins). This means, of

course, that parents must have up front money before they start working. This poses no major problem for the Parkers or the Stanleys. When LaRue Chase was just beginning her new job, however, she had no cash and was not certain whether DHS would help her with funding for childcare. For that reason, and because her aunt already worked at Wee Folks, she never seriously considered First Lutheran.

Like Wee Folks, First Lutheran opens early, at 5:30 a.m. When I comment on the earliness of the hour, the director points out that Construx starts one shift at 6:00 a.m., "So we get all those." Because the center closes at 6:00 p.m., however, workers with late afternoon or night shifts or variable hours must choose other options for childcare. This jibes with what the parents I interviewed noted; middle class parents choose First Lutheran, along with a few single parents who receive subsidized daycare. Working class parents generally go elsewhere.

This is also consistent with the legacy offered at First Lutheran. Several parents cited the benefits of a moral education offered in the Germanic Christian tradition of First Lutheran. Others, like Roger Stanley, noted that this center "helps them build their character at an early age. They learn to be good negotiators at an early age. They become more independent." Several parents mentioned that First Lutheran gives children a chance to be around others like themselves, in a very pro-education atmosphere. Middle and upper-middle-class families, who are likely to believe in success based on education and social ties, can easily rationalize

choosing First Lutheran for their children.

After school, the Stanley's older child goes to the Community Center for sports and crafts classes. This facility, also supported by Gus Gerhart, offers a wide range of after school activities for school-age children. Because it is not licensed as a childcare center, however, these activities are not offered as an organized daily program, and are primarily available as an after school alternative. Middle and upper-middle-class children learn a legacy of art, music, and sports through the programs offered here. A few scholarships are available for working class and poor children; however, this does not solve the transportation and ongoing childcare difficulties faced by most low income families. For that reason, this legacy is most available to more privileged youths.

Licensed Day Homes

Linda and Keith Cummings, a white upper middle class couple, send their children to the home of Gloria Carter for child care. Licensed day home providers like this one are the final source of paid childcare for Wheatlanders. The two dozen dayhomes range in size and cost, and fluctuate from year to year, in part because women with young children often decide to take in a few extras while their own offspring are still at home, then return to the outside workforce after their children enter school.

Gloria Carter, interviewed for this study, typified the sort of in-home

daycare most middle and upper-middle-class parents described as ideal. Her spacious older but spacious home was impeccably cared for but paradoxically chock full of toys, creative play supplies, and oldfashioned outdoor toys like swings and bikes. The children here are neatly dressed, recipients of many hugs and a few chidings. Today, at least, there are few arguments, and the ones that arise are quickly and cheerfully resolved as Gloria encourages them to "talk it out" with each other in quintessential middle class counseling style.

Gloria has run a dayhome for five years now. She began when her own kids got older. "When they were small, I thought, will this ever end? Then I got bored, and went into daycare." Her first client was one of my other informants. "We think of their kids as ours, because they're right with us." Families for whom she sits feel the same way about her. "Like family," her first client told me, "She's got our kids' pictures all over the walls, from six weeks old to sixth grade. I never have to worry when Brandy's there." Right now Gloria sits for six families. The parents of "her" children work at banks, in law offices, in real estate, and at the hospital. "Almost every one has told me there's no way they're going to stay home. A lot of them are like that." This is a middle-class working parent's dream, as Linda Cummings points out to me.

With many dayhomes, however, there is an inherent tension between the provider's own children and home life and the daycare setting. As Roger Stanley describes it, "Well, you know, we've tried different things. I've

always said there are pros and cons in every one. For home daycare, with them there all day long, no relief, trying to do their own housework, well, it's very rare to find someone with a home daycare who's running it very separately from being a mom." For that reason, parents who find a dayhome like Gloria Carter's are likely to feel extremely fortunate. Though they may pay more (in-home daycare fees average about $10 per week more than daycare center fees), they also bring significantly greater benefits to those who are lucky enough to find them.

Working class parents Cathy and Carl Foster also send their children to a licensed dayhome. Doing so poses a considerable financial strain, but they believe it is worth it. Cathy, who takes night classes toward her B.A. degree, says she learned in her Child Development class that education was the best gift you could give a child. "Where our kids go, the lady who watches them really cares about them. It's not like they just sit in front of a t.v. and eat junk food until I pick them up. She's got books, a computer, she makes them play outside if the weather's nice. And if they get in fights, she sits them down and makes them work it out." Translated this means that the working class Foster children are getting a middle-class legacy which may help them move half a step up the ladder of social class as they approach adulthood.

Class, Culture and Child Care

In summary, when parents choose childcare for young Wheatlanders, the decisions are grounded in social class. Cultural considerations derived

from race such as the African American preference for using kin as caretakers also shape the negotiation of childcare. For all families, choices are constrained by the community's structure of economic opportunity, including salary, working hours and benefits. Gender interfaces with these negotiations because women are most likely to be the ones who make childcare arrangements.

Once chosen, childcare arrangements act to shape the legacy a child will receive. Some dayhomes and at least one childcare facility-- Wee Folks-- are designed to inculcate conformity and obedience, skills which are consistent with the types of jobs working class women and men are likely to obtain as adults; as a waitress, LaRue Chase is not expected to act independently. Other centers and dayhomes are structured to enhance more creative, more independent learning, teaching the skills that the Stanley children, the Parker children, the Cummings and Foster children will need for college, and later, in the white collar workforce.

One aspect of all daycare centers is the reinforcement of gendered notions regarding childcare. Without exception, dayhomes and daycare centers in Wheatlands were run and staffed by women. Likewise, with the exception of African American families, if children were left with relatives, the relatives were almost always women. This means that the cultural codes and action schema which are being transmitted to young Wheatlanders are quite gender-separate and therefore traditional in nature. In examining why women mother, Nancy Chodorow suggests that women mother because

historically children have been raised by women (1978). Contemporary childcare options, though paid rather than home-based, are likely to teach the same lessons to the youth of today. Women may not mother in the home, but they may well continue to accept responsibility-- and concomitant guilt, if the responsibility is impossible to handle-- for child care.

Though parents do not consciously articulate these reasons for choosing one center over another, they certainly express strong class-based preferences for one type of care over others. Through the process of these negotiations, one can see the legacy of gender, social class, and ethnicity being passed from one generation to the next.

CHAPTER 10

FAMILY WORK OVER THE LIFE COURSE

Beth Salzberg, cup of coffee in hand, is thinking back on the days before she married. Her mother worked when Beth was growing up, she tells me. But her folks were quite traditional back then, with her mother doing the inside work, her father helping occasionally. Now he helps quite a bit more.

Growing up, Beth and her brother patterned their domestic responsibilities after their parents. Beth helped with the housework; her brother did no more inside work than to take care of his room and do yardwork. But having lived on her own before marriage, she had other ideas about how to split housework, expecting to share equally. "You have ideas of your own, even though you're raised differently," she notes. "Still, any time things got in a mess, I assumed it was my fault."

This guilt, plus her husband's more traditional socialization, meant that they did not start marriage on equal terms with respect to domestic work, Beth tells me. "Back in college when we first married, John was working part time, we lived in this tiny apartment. Housework, well, I did most of it because John was working and commuting to school." She smiles, looking back on it. "It's not like we made any decisions about it. And it wasn't a big deal. There wasn't much to do, two people and all. It was kind you just did it. And John enjoys cooking, so he did most of that." Still, this inequality laid the foundations for what was to follow.

Just out of college, John got his first job, as a salesman in the oilfields. Shortly afterwards, their first child was born. Beth sighs. "That's when it started to get complicated. I was working full time by then, for a local lawyer. I loved my job. But you know, there was more laundry, more dishes, we'd moved into a bigger house. And John was traveling then." She pauses, shakes her head. "I guess I picked up a lot of extra then. It made sense, you know. John was on the road a lot. Your schedule, well, you just have to consider his schedule. Sometimes I got angry, griped that he wasn't participating a lot. But he was out there trying to make things better for us. If he were just out goofing off, it would be different. But his job requires a lot more of him. My friends, they would give anything to have a husband like John. He's a good dad, he's a good husband."

What Beth does not mention is the growing disparity in their salaries. Right after marriage, their incomes were close to equal, though even then, John earned a little more than Beth. Gradually, however, the gap widened as John grew more successful. The mounting financial pressure of parenthood and home ownership meant his salary had to be carefully protected.

Then their second child was born. "Boy, that was the pits," Beth says. "John had just lost his business to the oil bust. I took off four weeks, but without my job, well, we couldn't have made it and that was all the leave I had. And our second was a pretty fussy baby. Thank God John was willing to pitch in a little more that round."

Gradually, however, the economy improved and John was able to

begin his own real estate business. "Then he got really busy, and I was back to ground zero, two little kids, with the baby into everything. He doesn't sleep as much. Sometimes we don't know what to do with him. In the summer, it's awful."

And John? I ask. Does he still help? Beth shrugs. " A little. When he can. But you know, I don't think husbands realize that our life needs to change when kids come along. Now, well, I love my work and all, but I've always wanted to be the perfect mom, to stay home. Not in the house all the time. But there are lots more things I'd like to be doing.

Family Work and Life Course Changes

If one were to ask young people in Wheatlands, on the eve of their marriage to write a script for what their family lives would look like, then fast forward their lives by a decade, the resulting movies would look like the difference between a Sleepless in Seattle and a daytime drama. These changes in script reflect predictable changes in the progression of the life course, from newly-wed to birth of first child to maturing marriage and later empty nest and retirement. They also reflect the impact of unanticipated structural events such as war, depression, inflation and other political and economic cycles and upheavals.

As part of the interview process, Wheatlander couples were asked to reflect on these changes over the course of their married lives. Probes to elicit this information included asking wives and husbands to report on

chores and expectations for girls and boys in the family in which they grew up, expectations regarding household and childcare responsibilities before the couple married, division of responsibilities in early marriage, and experience after children were born. Couples who were interviewed were given the opportunity to answer the probes and to raise related issues; couples who were surveyed were asked closed-ended questions. In each case, responses were coded into the categories of "gender separate," implying that family work is accomplished by wives doing all the "inside work" with only occasional assistance from their husbands, and husbands doing "outside" work if they participate at all; "transitional," where husbands participate in "inside work" to some extent, averaging less than 30% of all chores; and "egalitarian," where wives and husbands shared the inside and outside work approximately equally.

Of the couples interviewed and surveyed for this project, none believed their marriages today matched their premarital expectations, as evidenced by the figures in the chart below. Nearly two thirds of the wives and husbands who participated in this project reported that they grew up in traditional families; this fits what one might expect, since the average respondent was born and raised in the late 1950s or 1960s. Premarital expectations reflected the prevailing changes of the later 1960s and 1970s, with "traditional" expectations down to slightly less than half of all respondents. Even fewer couples reported highly traditional domestic identities in early marriage.

Table 8
Gendered Work Over the Life Course

	Childhood Socialization	Premarital Expectations	Early Marital Experience	Post-Child Experience
Gender Separate	63.00%	47.00%	32.00%	32.00%
Transitional	16.00%	32.00%	42.00%	42.00%
egalitarian	21.00%	21.00%	26.00%	16.00%
N/A*				11.00%

*Respondent divorced or widowed

Examined superficially, one might gather that these figures reflect a definite change overall from traditional through transitional toward egalitarian over the life course for most couples. However, that conclusion would be misleading. Looking at the total progression from gender socialization through early marriage and childbearing using information from open-ended questions, eleven families showed little if any change from start to finish (though they may have changed at particular stages, such as early marriage); eight families moved in the direction of greater equality; and three families actually traditionalized overall.

Scrutinized more closely, these figures seem to indicate that, while the overall trend is certainly toward less traditional arrangements within marriage, there are definite patterns in terms of which couples are most likely to become less traditional, and in terms of which stages in a family's life cycle are most likely to be change-producing. In simple terms, working class and farming couples seem most likely to enter marriage with traditional expectations, but, in response to the pressures of dual earner family life, may

gradually become more egalitarian. In contrast, middle and upper middle class couples sometimes actually traditionalize from idealistic premarital egalitarian conceptions of what life will be like. African American respondents were most likely to enter marriage with egalitarian expectations, and to maintain those expectations through all stages of marriage. Temporary or longterm economic adversity, especially if it affects the husband's salary, may create more egalitarian situations for couples of all social classes and races, at least on a temporary basis. Closer examination of family life cycles clarifies the operation of these dynamics.

Legacy and Premarital Expectations

The majority of Wheatlanders interviewed or surveyed for this study reported that they grew up in traditional families, despite the fact that most of their mothers worked. "Dad had a very certain few little chores, but he wasn't much of a housework husband," Kate Stanley says, typifying most of study respondents. Asked about gender segregation in household tasks as children, respondents were about equally divided as to whether sons and daughters had different tasks. When queried more closely, however, it almost always emerged that boys were the ones who did the yardwork, girls the babysitting; on farms, boys did farm chores, girls helped inside. Respondents often had some rationalization for this gendered division of labor. "My brother was older, so he did the lawn." "My sister was the oldest, so she babysat us." Regardless of the justification offered, however, in the

couples surveyed, girls generally learned to emulate their mothers, boys modeled themselves after their fathers. The major exceptions to this division of labor were African Americans, who reported more truly egalitarian upbringings, and women who grew up on farms with no brothers to help with the outside work; these patterns are consistent with other literature (see Salamon 1992 on farm families, and Heath and Bourne 1995 on African American families).

Generally speaking, gender socialization appeared to coordinate with what young women and men expected when they entered marriage. Traditional upbringing was associated with traditional expectations; transitional upbringing with transitional expectations; and egalitarian upbringing with egalitarian expectations. The most common exceptions to this pattern occurred when both members of a couple had lived independently, for example in an apartment at college or in a city setting. (Goldscheider and Waite 1991 describe similar patterns for young folks who have lived away from home).

Life After the Honeymoon

Sometime in their late teens or early twenties, all the Wheatlanders interviewed for this project entered into what they hoped would be a lasting relationship, their chance to play out their legacy through marrying and raising a family. Like newlyweds everywhere, they soon discovered that their expectations did not completely coincide with the reality they faced. The

greater the degree of discrepancy in expectations between each wife and husband, the more extensively couples were likely to have to resort to negotiation strategies during the first year or so of marriage.

For couples with matching legacies, like the Walkers and the Carters, the first year of marriage was fairly easy. Often there was little housework. "We lived in just kind of a little bitty old apartment with three rooms," Josh Walker noted. "He helped with the vacuuming, he's always been neat, picking up after himself," said his wife Lora. That was considerably more than she expected; like her farmboy husband, Lora came to marriage with very traditional schemas regarding domestic participation. The Salzbergs told much the same story.

Couples with more divergent expectations may report more of a jolt in getting accustomed to accommodating each other. The Cummingses began their ongoing laundry skirmishing. The Parkers started well. "The man I married knew how to clean better than I did, how to iron clothes. He was very meticulous. I really though he would help. But his father never did, and I always felt real guilty when he helped." In each case, the couples resolved mismatched expectations through a series of negotiations, generally unspoken, which allowed them to reach a compromise.

Delia Grey also encountered mismatched expectations. Her husband was very supportive in doing housework, but at twenty three years old, and with five years of being more or less on her own to her credit, "I was so independent, so used to making my own decisions." That posed problems.

Also, her ties to her biological family got in the way. "Because my brothers and I are so close, it's easy to call my brothers to help. I guess we didn't talk enough."

For all the families interviewed, both wife and husband were working fulltime when they first married, or began shortly to do so shortly afterwards upon the completion of one spouse's education. In many cases, salaries in these entry level positions were relatively similar, only slightly favoring husband over wife. In terms of distribution of marital power, this meant there was only a small edge for the husband. However, from the beginning, the guilt feelings described by Beth Salzberg and others, along with the sanction of gossip, for working class families, served as traditionalizing forces in the negotiation of domestic work.

Bringing Home Baby

For nearly all couples, birth of the first child brought about a major rearrangement in domestic responsibilities. All of the women interviewed were working when their first child was born. Says Dee, "I was real shocked when I had Mac. I hadn't done any babysitting since I was fourteen." Kate Stanley explains, "It seemed like you didn't have the organized time. It seemed like it took all the time we had."

For some couples, birth of the first child was perceived as less traumatic. "I didn't clean as often or as thorough," one mother noted, "But otherwise it wasn't much different." Respondents who had good childcare

arrangements seemed particularly likely to respond this way. Surprisingly, amount of time off after birth was not reported as a critical stressor; even women who had to return to work within four weeks due to lack of paid leave were split on their reactions to whether having children changed their domestic arrangements.

For others, like Cathy and Carl Foster, childbirth was a major stress. Part of the problem for the Fosters was an individual medical emergency, with Cathy in the hospital for six weeks. Part, however, was due to the impact of the oil bust. For a working mother to lose salary during that time was potentially devastating, with repercussions that reverberated through the family in waves beginning with unpaid bills and spreading to marital tension which inevitably affects all family members (Conger and Elder 1994; Rubin 1994).

Even for those who found having one child to be reasonably easy, birth of a second seemed to change their assessments of the situation. As Roger Stanley noted time pressures increased substantially. "We had a lot of time that we devoted to the single child. The second really squeezed that." Couples were more likely to report that between the dual pressures of work and parenthood, there was little time left for anything else.

Infants, of course, are time intensive. But at least by middle and upper middle class standards, as parents pointed out, the demands simply change rather than disappearing as time gets older, particularly if families buy into the notion that children should be enrolled in sports and scouts and private

lessons. With preschoolers, the Stanleys lament, "Time constraints seem to be getting shorter and shorter." Keith Cummings added, "Like softball, the older kids get, the more time you spend toting them around. When do you ever get your own time out of the deal?"

About 25% of the mothers interviewed stated that they wished they could stay home with their children, at least for a while. Linda Cummings typified the middle class response, commenting frankly that "I feel like my children don't get to participate in as many activities. The sitter won't take them. My folks help out when they can, but I'd just like to do it myself." Several working class mothers echoed these sentiments, though citing different reasons. "I always wanted to stay home with my babies," one mother told me. "Maybe one of these days I'll be able to do that. But for now, we're getting by as best we can."

Delia Grey, in contrast, typified the response of mothers with a high degree of workforce attachment. "I can't see myself as staying home. Never have. It's just not me, I'd get bored and fat." This response is consistent with dynamics reported by Perry-Jenkins et al. (1992), as well as Hock et al. (1988, 1984). Women with greater ties to the workforce are less likely to feel guilt about working, more likely to enjoy work, and more likely to expect that husbands will participate in domestic work; their husbands are also more likely to help out.

Traditionalization versus Equalization

For some middle class couples, the extra demands of children lead to a gradual process of traditionalization within marriage. Cathy Foster describes a classic case of this process, "I'm to the point-there was a time when I liked being outside, but I never though about the fact that I was doing outside and inside work too. The last couple of year's it's been a battle. But I've given up being outside because I never relaxed, I always thought I should be doing this, I should be doing that. I tried to let it [the inside work] go. But I can't lie with that. So I just have to do it."

Couples also traditionalize when women gradually assume more household responsibilities. Dee explains by saying, "Any more, Rod travels a lot, nationwide. Last month he was gone three weeks. That's a lot of stress. Then when he comes back, he's King Daddy." She pauses. "But then, you ought to see the new house we're building. Built in everything you can imagine. No way we could manage anything like that on my salary." Translated this means that because women, on average, earn less than men, and because this gap tends to widen when children are added to the equation, many middle and upper middle class couples appear to pin their hopes on husband's salary to an increasing greater degree over the course of the marriage. Women who maintain a higher degree of workforce attachment may avoid this dilemma (see, for example, Avioli and Kaplan 1992, and Perry-Jenkins et al., 1992). But in a family and community-oriented town like

Wheatlands, there is a considerable amount of pressure for a couple to lapse into a more traditional identity if the family can afford that luxury.

The working class response to this dilemma appears to be somewhat different. Working class parents, like farmers, are more likely to report that they entered into marriage with traditional gender-separate expectations. From the first they also assumed that life would be hard work for everyone concerned, entailing consistent work for both wife and husband.[2] As children come of age, they too are drawn into the family work. This has been well documented with farm children (see Salamon 1992, for example). Sandy Parker says her two kids "pick up their dirty clothes, they have responsibilities outside, feeding the pigeons, chickens, pigs, cat and dog. They're real good about helping if they're directed to." Lucy Stallard's dad told his daughters, "Just get mad at it. You'll get it done." Many working class parents also report that children are expected to help extensively. "They're expected to do the whole house- laundry, rooms, living room, dishes," one working class father said of their eight and twelve year old offspring. "It's a lot, we know. But we set goals higher so they try a little harder. Might as well learn to do it early." "Without them, I couldn't have done it," Gloria Carter says in admiration of her teenage children. "They do it all."

African American families appear to take this pattern even further. Women and men enter marriage with considerably more egalitarian

expectations; in this study, in fact, they accounted for half the total egalitarian responses. Throughout the family life course they consistently expect and achieve family work participation that is much closer to parity. Heath and Bourn suggest that this may be because black men have traditionally had lesser labor force attachment than white men, or because black women are in a relatively stronger position in the family (1995). However, given the employment situation in Wheatlands, it seems quite possible that African American women have had better luck getting and keeping jobs, given the limited opportunities. This situation would in turn reinforce cultural presumptions that black women have relatively greater power within their families-- derived from economic input-- than do white women.

Growing importance of women's salaries in working class families may gradually lead to detraditionalization of gender identities, in some cases. This is particularly true for African American women. In other cases, it may lead to growing family conflict (see, for example, Rubin 1994, 1976) or under some circumstances, to the invisibility of women's work (Sachs 1983). The Walkers, for example, could not at first see that Lora Walker was actually working on the farm because her efforts were not salaried. In my own family history, my paternal grandmother always classified herself as a housewife despite the fact that her salary was the primary source of family income during much of the Depression. Her definition of the situation allowed the family to protect their mutually agreed upon gender identities during adverse times. As national codes for acceptable gender identities slowly shift, it seems

likely that working class definitions of acceptable standards will begin to change.

Housework and Childcare in Tough Times

Several couples reported a mid-marriage shift toward egalitarianism in the negotiation of domestic identity, and a later shift back in the direction of traditionalism. Though initially perplexing, these shifts made sense when examined in the context of economic opportunity. Like the Salzbergs, many Wheatlands families were hard hit by the oil bust and the farm crisis. Even Construx workers, traditionally the most secure of Wheatlands employees, felt the fallout from the oil bust.

Confronted with shrinking family income, many couples resorted to working longer hours or second jobs. The less fortunate, however-- like John Salzberg and Carl Foster in the oil fields, Josh Walker on the farm-- went bankrupt or lost their jobs to the bust or staggered under the falling price of crops and livestock. When this happened, their wives sometimes became the primary breadwinner, at least for a time. Such shifts in gender identity meant housework and childcare often were renegotiated, with husbands pitching in considerably more.

In most cases, however, this renegotiation was not permanent. John Salzberg got back on his feet, and now works longer hours than ever, as does Carl Foster. Both their wives feel the impact of this shift. Though their husbands have given up their extra chores as they worked longer hours, both

wives are still working as hard as ever. This means there is a gap between what needs to be done at home, based on Beth and Cathy's assessment, and available personnel to carry out the domestic tasks. Given their traditional gender socialization, both women feel guilty about what is left undone. Asked individually, each woman confessed that she wished she could work less, stay home more. Over the long run, it seems likely that these feelings will ultimately result in continuing traditionalization, especially as their husbands' incomes continue to grow as a proportion of the total family income.

Negotiating in Later Life

Because study participants were required to be 45 years or less in age, information on later life was not directly gathered; it therefore only possible to speculate about what the future will bring for these couples. However, the tensions which predominate in earlier years as the result of high-intensity childcare and child-toting problems certainly lessen somewhat. There are some hints that a family that can survive the teenage years may actually begin to detraditionalize in some cases. Rod Watson, for example, noted that his father began to help with dishes. Lucy Stallard commented that for thirty years her father did next to no housework at all. Now mostly retired from farming, "he does help around the house, because now my mom works." Before, "It's not that he was being rebellious, it's just that he worked outside all the time."

This trend may interface with a very slow shift in gender identities, and a corresponding shift in men's participation in housework. Examining data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics conducted by the Survey Research Center at the University of Michigan, Heath and Bourn report that from 1969 to 1983, "men's relative participation in home activities rose dramatically in both family structures [working and nonworking mother], increasing from 0.03 to 0.25 of wife's hours in one-wage-earner [nonworking mother] families and 0.13 to 0.40 in two wage earner [working mother] families" (1995, 198). This may mean, Ferree suggests, that wife-husband conflict over who will do housework and childcare has gradually diminished, indicating a loosening of traditional gender identities (Ferree 1990).

Rational Choice Over the Family Life Course

Asked how they figure out housework and childcare, Wheatlands couples claim that "it just happens." Examined more closely, however, it becomes evident that supposedly haphazard patterns are the product of the intersection of sociohistorical forces, economic and social contexts, cultural codes and corresponding action schema. Within these constraints, wives and husbands and later children act and interact to maximize culturally defined benefits. These choices are in turn perpetuated in the form of cultural legacies in the process of socializing children.

For all families, the parameters of domestic negotiation are shaped by differing demands of each life stage. Before children, couples are not limited

by childcare constraints, and have concomitant freedom to negotiate more androgynous identities if their legacies allow them to consider such prospects. With the arrival of the first baby, someone generally assumes primary responsibility for arranging childcare. The gendered nature of childcare interfaces with economic realities such as the likelihood that husbands have higher salaries, and often more extensive job skills and workforce attachment; thus more often than not, women become primary childcare providers and arrangers from the first.

In like fashion, if one spouse stays home, it is more likely to be the wife, since the loss of salary is smaller. This reinforces her attachment to mothering at the same time as it may decrease her workforce attachment, if the family is privileged enough to allow this to happen. This works in a cyclical fashion to further enhance the importance of husband's salary and to increase the gap between earnings of wife and husband. Employers, Schwartz suggests, play into this process by assuming most women view themselves as secondary rather than primary providers, further favoring men in the workforce, as is evident at Construx. This dialectical impetus toward traditionalization is likely to continue until the later years of marriage, when children leave home. At that point there is some suggestion that couples may actually androgynize in their domestic behavior and identities.

Faced with identical sociohistorical and economic frameworks, and given the choice of similarly socialized mates, one might expect that a given couple's children would more or less recapitulate the cultural codes and

action schema evidenced by their parents, including expectations regarding domestic identity and childcare. In a society in the throes of change, however, evolving frameworks will interface with evolving cultural codes to produce changing expectations and changing behavior. Couples who successfully negotiate these transitions, like the Carters, are likely to find new ways to balance domestic responsibilities in ways which are perceived as mutually equitable; this rebalancing will be the product of more positive negotiation strategies, and to be reflected in more positive outcomes. Couples like the Cummingses, who have not yet found a mutually agreeable balance, may continue to bicker or withdraw from each other. As a last resort, couples like the Greys may find separation to be the only mutually acceptable resolution to failure to negotiate family work.

CHAPTER 11

INTERSECTIONS:

METHOD AND THEORY, COMMUNITY AND IDENTITY

Geographically, Wheatlands is located at the intersection of two highways. Economically, with its base of farming, oil, and industry with international ties, the community exists at the intersection of pre- and post-industrial society, a small town grounded in an agricultural past on the brink of the high-tech twenty-first century. The cultural values of community residents are rooted in the frontier ethic, religion, in small town neighborliness, and in family. These values are reflected in domestic identities, which are shaped in turn by economic realities.

The contributions made by this study of Wheatlands are also located at a different kind of juncture: the intersection of a specific combination of sociological method, theoretical perspective, and substantive findings. Both the findings and the intersections offer useful insights.

Theoretical Underpinnings

In reviewing the literature on how family work is negotiated, the following key insights emerged:

1) <u>Domestic identities are firmly grounded in history.</u>

2) <u>Domestic identities are contextual.</u>

3) Domestic identities are an interplay between attitudes and behavior.

4) Domestic identities are processual.

These key insights were used to formulate a model of how domestic identity is negotiated in the community of Wheatlands and elsewhere. The underlying model was derived from Giddens' theory of structuration, or the process by which social actions such as the completion of housework and childcare and other family work, are created through the interaction of individuals (in this case, wife and husband), and how these social actions become ordered over time and space. As Giddens sees it, this process is in reality continuous and fluid. However, as an analytical device, four levels or lenses were suggested for viewing structuration of domestic identity. These were:

Sociohistorical/economic framework= constraints which shape family interaction, such as employment prospects within the community, class structure, gendered division of labor and the like which have already shaped community culture and thereby individual legacies, and which constantly shape everyday experience.

Social context= the immediate context of interaction, including status differences between wife and husband, ratio of wife's salary to husbands, age and number of children, class and race / ethnicity.

Cultural code= what goes on in each individual's internalized conversation; legacy, or all the ideas each learned about what women and men (and boys and girls) are supposed to be.

Dynamic interaction= how each individual puts cultural code into play, each shaping the other as identity is negotiated. The dynamic processual interaction may be most immediately

evident in daily behavior, but is equally essential in understanding the life course of the family.

A model like this is, of course, inherently processual and contextual. Often such models are cited as intriguing heuristic devices, but are never applied to empirical settings because of the difficulty of formulating a workable research design or in later stages, in interpreting findings. For that reason this research was conducted in a small town, where the intertwined processes could be more easily identified.

Intersections: Method and Theory

The community of Wheatlands was chosen as an optimum location in which to apply this model because its size, proximity, and demographic characteristics provided an excellent opportunity to collect detailed data on a community which in many respects (though certainly not all) was arguably typical of many contemporary rural communities today. The community studies format made possible the holistic examination of the interaction of the forces which shape the negotiation of domestic identity; this goal might have been more difficult to accomplish in a larger setting.

Triangulation

This study relied on triangulated methodology, using multiple methods, both qualitative and quantitative-- demographic analysis, family and community interviews, surveys, and a percent-of-tasks assignment

along with observation of community and family dynamics-- to gather information on domestic identity negotiation. The results demonstrate the value of triangulation in examining such inherently dynamic phenomena as the negotiation of identity.

For example, the use of demographic and historical data combined with interview information suggest why African American families may tend toward more egalitarian domestic identities than do caucasian families in Wheatlands. Community cultural values favor kinship and neighborliness; this means jobs are often allocated to friends and kin. However, given historical settlement patterns, the African American population in Wheatlands is quite small, resulting in a limited number of black families and correspondingly small social networks. Consequently young black Wheatlanders have few job opportunities, and are even more likely than young white Wheatlanders to go elsewhere for job opportunities. This appears to be particularly true for young black men. This "black flight" combines with already unbalanced gender ratio favoring men, with the result that African American women are more likely to have to support themselves.

Based on national data sets, it appears that in African American dual earner families, women often supply a more nearly equal contribution to family income than in caucasian families, partly because discrimination and other factors result in lower salaries for African American men than for white men in comparable jobs. As previously noted (and consistent with

other research), men in African American families are more likely to take responsibility for a more nearly equal share of domestic tasks. These choices are further reinforced by cultural values favoring kin-based child care. Taken together, history, demography, the structure of economic opportunities, social networks and cultural values lead to significantly different patterns of identity which would be much less evident if data had simply been gathered from one or two sources. Combining methods allowed for an analysis of the negotiation of domestic identity which was both descriptively rich and deep, an essential component of any study of process.

Indepth interviews with families proved particularly productive. Listening to the interviews gave me one source of information-- or sometimes two, when couples disagreed. Watching provided a third source, granting access to insights which were behavioral rather than simply cultural. As Mary Catherine Bateson points out in Composing a Life, we constantly edit the past. "As memories blur, we supply details from a pool of general knowledge" to make our recollections more consistent with our cultural beliefs. Survey and interview information cannot transcend these limits on memory, but observation can. Using the combination of approaches, the resulting portrayal of the identity negotiation process is considerably richer in detail and depth than it would have been otherwise, taking account of personal narratives which could then be juxtaposed upon demographically and observationally documented behavior.

The Walker interview provided an excellent example of the results of this observation. By talking to two family members about the same topic, and by observing family interaction during the course of the interview, I was able to understand much better how their gender-separate domestic identities complement each other. Watching and listening to the Walkers helped me confront how my personal bias toward egalitarian domestic arrangements might interfere with my ability to understand markedly different approaches, and to help me come to understand how a couple with such avowedly imbalanced domestic responsibilities (95% for Lora versus 5% for Josh) could sincerely and quite "rationally" express satisfaction with what to an unenlightened outsider initially seemed so unfair.

Watching the Walkers also demonstrated legacy in action. When Josh laughed about his contribution to domestic work- closing the t.v. doors- his young son jumped up to close them. If his son grows up to become a farmer, this will be part of his legacy. If not, he will quite likely spend a good bit of time during his first year of marriage learning to "see" what his town-bred wife takes for granted. Indepth interviews highlighted how this process works at multiple interactive levels.

Feminist Methodology

The methodology for this project was nurtured by my readings of feminist researchers. This influence is evident in several respects. First, I have openly acknowledged the interface of my own experience with my

research in this project and have used my own reactions to the research process as an explicit source of data. This is typical of much feminist research (Reinharz 1992: 240). Bateson calls this process "reflexivity," or "looking inward as well as outward." She argues that female researchers and social analysts seem more likely than males to use it, "Perhaps . . . because we are not caught in the idea that every inspection involves an inspector and an inspectee, one inevitably dominant, the other vulnerable (Ibid. 101-2)."

Second, as noted in the methods section of this work, I have interacted with family members on a much more equal, give-an-take basis than is generally regarded as acceptable in traditional research. This was a conscious decision on my part. As Bateson notes:

> The words used by social scientists for those they involve in their research feel wrong to me . . . . I believe that the people we call our "informants" are our truest colleagues. These women [and men] are not "interviewees," not "subjects" in an experiment, not "respondents" to a questionnaire. There is a symmetry in our mutual recognition but there is asymmetry in that I am the one who goes off and weaves our separate skeins of memory into a single fabric. But they weave me into their different projects as well (Bateson 1989, 101).

Though I have used the words "respondent" and "interviewee" to follow dissertation conventions, I have regarded conversations with family members as just as enlightening as discussions with academic colleagues. In keeping with that belief, I have presented considerable chunks of our conversations intact in this analysis, rather than distilling them into the occasional sentence which supports my preformed conclusion. In this

respect, interviewees'-- in this case, family members'--interpretations may serve as one critical test of validity.

Feminist methodology is often multi-disciplinary (Reinharz 1992, 240). This is intentional. Bateson suggests that:

> . . . the most creative thinking occurs at the meeting places of disciplines. At the center of any tradition, it is easy to become blind to alternatives. At the edges, where lines are blurred, it is easier to imagine that the world might be different. Vision sometimes arises from confusion (73)

By using data from multiple sources, and theoretical insights from a variety of disciplines, it has been possible to incorporate considerable contextual complexity into this analysis of domestic identity, creating a more accurate picture of how real wives and husbands negotiate identity on a day to day basis.

Finally, feminist methodology has informed this work in that the families of Wheatlands have been examined as unfolding entities which grow and change over the life course. Much of previous research on the topic of domestic work focuses on a single aspect or stage of life. An approach which is sensitive to process enriches our understanding of dynamic and life-stage related aspects of family experience in Wheatlands.

None of these insights is exclusively feminist, of course. Many methodologists, particularly those from qualitative traditions, have espoused similar positions; cultural anthropologists in particular have influenced thinking on these topics. In my case, however, reading feminist social

analysis was the primary source of my awareness, and as such had the most significant impact on this project.

Sampling and Diversity

The final methodological contribution made by this project is the demonstration of the considerable difficulty in obtaining adequately diverse samples to examine class- and race/ethnicity-based differences in behavioral and cultural patterns. If a simple snowball sampling technique had been used, the result would have been a study of caucasian middle and upper-middle-class families. The same would quite likely have been true using survey techniques, since the refusal rate was considerably higher among minority and lower class family members.

Using purposive sampling, I was able to reach a wider variety of families. I suspect that a different interviewer-- nonwhite, for example-- might have been able to gain the confidence of an even more diverse population. This would allow social analysts to have a considerably more wide-ranging understanding of how family members negotiate domestic identity in diverse settings. Future research by nonwhite, non-middle-class researchers would certainly contribute to knowledge of domestic identity negotiation in the community context (Rubin, from a working class background, provides one example of how legacy informs social analysis).

Intersections: Theory and Substance

Structuration theory, it has been argued, makes it possible to portray simultaneously how social order evolves, and how it is maintained; how the actions of individuals are shaped and constrained by social structure, at the same time as portraying how social structure is dynamically constructed through the agency of individuals in the process of identity construction. At the individual and family level, New Home Economics theory has proved particularly valuable in making sense of how families negotiate housework and childcare.

The impact of national and international economic trends of the 1980s on the community and families of Wheatlands provide fruitful examples of the operation of structuration and rational choice. The oil crisis battered the Wheatlands economy in the 1980s. First oil related businesses, then farmers and other oil-dependent industries (including Construx), then service people, and finally the community as a whole were jolted by these internationally-based trends. No matter how determined Wheatlands families might have been <u>not</u> to let the oil bust influence their lives, they invariably did. Often these impacts were experienced in predictable ways. Women went to work, and more men pitched in with domestic chores and childcare, at least during the height of the crisis.

Looking only at the structural events, however, one loses sight of the contextual diversity of how individuals within families struggled to keep their heads above water. Couples with effective negotiation strategies in

place, couples whose jobs were least tied to oil, and couples who were most financially secure when the boom fell were most likely to survive. Working class couples like the Carters and the Fosters and the Greys, closest to the margin economically, had to work night and day to make ends meet. Examined through the lens of micro-level dynamics, a picture emerges of considerable family-by family diversity and constant change.

Using a more macro-structural lens, the diversity and flux disappear, leaving the impression of the slow but inexorable grinding away of natural events on hapless humans, much as the glaciers apparently crept across the landscape years ago, leaving mountains and moraines in their wake. But humans, unlike rocks, can move proactively. Though inevitably shaped by natural and human-made disasters, we still have a far wider range of choices. Both lenses, macro and micro, give valuable perspective to the understanding of family dynamics.

To capture the interactive features of domestic identity negotiation, social and cultural behavior in Wheatlands were analyzed at four levels: enduring sociohistorical and economic frameworks, less crystallized social contexts such as gender, race, and social class; cultural codes and corresponding action schema; and finally, the highly interactive process of negotiation. These levels were arrayed from most macrostructural and enduring to most microprocessual, most volatile, most tied to individual agents.

In reality, it has been argued, all four "levels" are more accurately

lenses for viewing the process of structuration. The oil crisis represents a framework which affected all Wheatlands families. Social contexts such as class and race and gender shaped how individuals and families experienced this event. Cultural codes determined how the experience would be interpreted, and what responses would be viewed as acceptable options. Putting codes into action would in turn lead to changes in codes and in corresponding social behavior in a dynamic fashion. When women worked, and when their husbands pitched in with slightly greater contributions to domestic work, cultural codes began to change.

In the long run, however, these changes only endured when women's salaries continued to be essential to household income, as in the case of the working class Carters and Fosters. In other cases such as the middle and upper-middle-class Cummings and Salzberg families, wives continued to work; however, as the oil crisis receded, the husband's salary rose as a proportion of the total family income. As men resumed primary provider responsibilities, their contribution to family work decreased. In such cases, wives appeared to become increasingly dissatisfied with carrying a disproportionate share of the load; in rational choice terms, the costs of working were almost too high to justify the benefit they received. For middle- and upper-middle-class families like the Cummingses and the Stanleys, this could lead to simmering discontent on the part of wives who often yearned to spend more time at home. For non-white or non-middle-class families like the Greys, this could lead to separation. White wives, in

contrast still had a tad too much to lose to abandon marriage.

For farm families, the oil crisis served to reinforce the effectiveness of gender-separate identities. During the 1980s, Josh and Lora Walker both worked nonstop to keep their farm from going under. He worked in the fields, she worked at home, and both accepted the inevitability of this division, partly, in seems, because their German ethnic and farm-based legacies predisposed them to do so. Today both are well satisfied with their superficially lopsided domestic arrangements, which saw them through tough times and earned them a very prosperous life.

Rational Choice and Domestic Identity

In this analysis, it has been argued that rational choice theory can be productively used to understand the day-to-day negotiation of domestic identity, with several caveats. Taken alone, rational choice theory is too simplistic. We make choices because their benefit exceeds the cost. But both benefits and costs are culturally defined. Without specifying these definitions, the argument becomes circular: we make choices because they are valued, but they are valued because we have made them. Related, and equally essential, is the recognition that culture is not set in stone, nor is society unchanging. When fast food first became available, families who ate out too often were characterized as having no center, led by mothers who did not nurture. Now, stay-at-home mothers clip coupons to purchase convenience foods and fast foods that their children regard as "status" items.

What is valued changes with time in a processual fashion in tandem with how we actually behave.

Finally, "rational" rarely means "explicitly reasoned." Time after time, wives and husbands told me that domestic arrangements were not negotiated, but "just happened." Examined more closely, however, domestic identities and corresponding arrangements generally corresponded quite closely to the models valued by others of equivalent race / ethnicity, social class and occupation.

At any given moment, choices individuals make, consciously or otherwise, reflect the intersection of sociohistorical and economic frameworks, social contexts and their cultural reflections. For example, choices are constrained by legacy. Legacy tells Wheatlanders what a "good life" looks like, what a "good spouse" is, and what a "good marriage" will be. A good husband works- but what hours, and how much he must make, are shaped by contexts such as race and class-based expectations, along with the constraints of sociohistorical frameworks. A good wife works "because she wants to," or "because she has to." In either case, "wants to" and "has to" are defined within specific class-based, gendered expectations. The Stanleys lament the need to leave home to drop off their preschool children before dawn, picking them up just before supper-- often after dark, in winter. But they see this practice as essential rather than conditioned by class-based expectations, just as they regard their dual income as necessary. They see no paradox in using their second salary to "leverage" their time by paying for

daycare, a housekeeper, a yard man, and to purchase a new home, filled with matched furniture, two nearly new cars in the drive- all of which would be considered luxuries by many. In contrast, the Fosters strive to arrange their schedules so that one of them can be home shortly after their near-teenaged children get home even when that means "doing without," living in a smaller home in a less fashionable section of town.

Constancy, Legacy and Change

Legacy is a major source of constancy in the shape community and domestic identity take from one generation to the next. All things being equal, wives and husbands in Wheatlands and elsewhere negotiate identity on the basis of what they know, which reflects, to a large extent, what they learned from their parents. This might be called "default option" socialization, unquestioned and unchanged from the prior generation. Adults resort to default option socialization in making decisions about domestic identity and in raising children unless-- and even sometimes when-- they perceive that legacy to be maladaptive. Default option choices perpetuate social order and tradition.

But because humans are sentient beings, they may change beliefs and behavior in response to perceptions that what they learned is problematic. For example, child abusers are generally the children of abusive parents: but the majority of abused children do not grow up to become abusive parents. The key here may be, in Bateson's terms, "The difference that makes a

difference." Any difference which is significant enough to jolt us out of accustomed ways of accomplishing domestic work, for example, may cause parents to renegotiate their identities, and ultimately to pass on different legacies. Such changes may come at the level of structural frameworks such as the Oil Bust or the growing need for two-income families. It may also come as the result of individual family changes brought on by life course transitions. As the Salzbergs and the Cummingses move up the social class ladder, the husbands are more likely to negotiate lesser responsibility at home as jobs make increasingly greater demands, and as the discrepancy grows between wife's and husband's salary. In response, wives are more likely to question the increasing traditionalization of housework, lobbying for concomitantly lesser responsibility outside the house in the workforce.

Structuration and Legacy

Structuration is perpetuated across generations through the transmission of cultural legacy. At the level of social context, middle and working class families transmit very different cultural legacies to their children, both directly by their teachings and indirectly by their choice of childcare. Farm children like the Walkers come home after school because their parents work in or near home. After school, they help their parents, or learn farm skills through 4-H and FFA, along with the gender-separate identities to go with them: women work inside or close to home, men work outside.

Working class children do much the same. Their parents and family look after them, or they may go to Wee Folks Daycare, where the toys and activities reinforce the identities they see at home. They learn that nonstop work is part and parcel of life, for both women and men. At school, the curriculum for all children will initially be much the same. By middle school, however, young Wheatlanders will begin to separate out into class-based tracks. Working class youths will learn shop or home ec or farming; middle and upper-middle class children will learn pre-college skills. Minority and lower class children like Delia Grey are more likely to have interrupted high school careers, or to drop out.

By choosing paid providers and after-school activities for their children, middle and upper-middle class parents send the message that developing social graces-- dance for girls, sports for boys and some girls, lessons for girls and some boys, scouts for both-- is more critical than helping out at home. Once learned, these middle class skills combine with academic achievements to prepare young middle-class Wheatlanders for college, and later, for careers that parallel those of their parents.

Lower class, working class and farm children have learned that hard work is essential, and that family is the unit of economic survival. For farm children, gender separate identities make sense. For working class youths, and particularly for non-white working class children, this legacy may not be as adaptive. To survive in working class families today, it is increasingly essential that both wife and husband must work, and increasingly likely that

spouses' salaries will be closer to equal than in the past, particularly in light of wives' growing workforce attachment. If this scenario unfolds as predicted, either cultural codes must change or growing instances of family friction points seem likely.

When youths grow toward marriage, they carry these legacies with them in the form of premarital expectations regarding housework and childcare. Over the first few years these expectations will be translated into new patterns via negotiation strategies. Family friction points will emerge around key issues-- including those of time, order, food, and children. Spouses from similar class and race/ethnicity backgrounds are likely to experience less friction, and to report greater satisfaction. In all cases, however, predictable life course events and unpredictable structural changes will influence how negotiation strategies are implemented, how well they work, and the extent to which they are likely to change from one generation to the next.

Family Friction Points and Social Order

Some of the most critical arenas of negotiation, it has been suggested, revolve around time, order, food, children, and gender. In each of these cases, family members must negotiate on the basis of what is seen versus what is unseen, and must set priorities and agendas for the day-to-day handling of these cultural issues. In the case of conflicting agendas and priorities, family friction points are likely to arise.

With respect to <u>time</u>, all Wheatlands families must resolve a series of related issues. How much free time may each parent- and each child- have? How may "free" time be spent? And perhaps underlying all these decisions is a key question: What will be defined as free time?

Time is money, Western society tells Wheatlanders. Therefore, all things being equal, the optimum use of time is to earn more money. "Free" time comes at cost. Translated in gendered terms, this means the spouse whose earning potential is highest is most likely to be granted greater access to time, and greater latitude in arranging family agendas. Other family members-- generally wife and children, given institutionalized gender differences in compensation-- take up the second shift slack.

From another angle, as Becker points out, domestic responsibilities have a "shadow value." If a family has to hire help for housework and childcare, they "buy" time, but at cost. Unless wife or child can supply compensatory income, the cost is likely to be regarded as too high. Therefore families like the Watsons and the Salzbergs and the Fosters justify traditionalized tradeoffs by referring to the material benefits conferred by the gender-unequal time arrangements. But in middle and upper-middle class families, like the Stanleys, the wife may increasingly come to feel that the tradeoff is inequitable.

Farm families represent the uneasy exception to this maxim; ultimately their time is money too, but because time is profit-based rather

than wage-based, the connection, particularly for women, is less obvious. For that reason, Josh Walker is concerned that outsiders believe he fails to appreciate his wife, or expects too much of her. Indeed, teasing from outsiders has led the Walkers to develop their own "parables," like the closing-the-t.v. door story, to make light of their behavior. As the number of farm families continues to dwindle, however, families like the Walkers are likely to seek out interpretations of their behavior that are couched in more culturally acceptable "cost-benefit" terms.

With respect to food most Wheatlanders expressed a token lament for the "good old days," when mother cooked and families shared commensuality. To some extent, one suspects that the good old days may have been mythical. Like most of us, Wheatlanders carry with them the Americana images of harvest kitchens at mealtime. But for many, perhaps most of us, the days of well-cooked comfort food alternated with hasty suppers of burnt toast and scrambled eggs or meals from an apparently bottomless pot of beans or soup.

Today the standards have changed. At one home, the teenage daughter called out from the kitchen, "Can't somebody take me out to pick up a hamburger? We don't have anything to eat in here!" Her mother answered, "Sure we do. I just went to the store. There's lunchmeat, and English muffins. There's some leftover spaghetti." "But I want a hamburger." "Make yourself one," her mother answered, her temper fraying. "But it's not the same!" her daughter expostulated.

Our tastes have been redefined. Food preparation is increasingly relegated to our "communal kitchens" (Dorothy Durrenberger, personal conversation). Ritzer suggests this has occurred as the result of the increasing rationalization of society, in Weberian terms (Ritzer 1994). It may also, however, reflect a cultural shift that parallels a shift in social behavior which in turn reflects shifting economic frameworks. As Hochschild has noted, fast foods make sense in two-earner families, especially if husbands are reluctant to participate in food preparation; once what is valued changes, however, even single-income families will attempt to emulate that change (1990). Families who cannot afford valued items may come to consider having the wife work, ostensibly to supply luxuries, which ultimately come to be regarded as necessities.

With respect to order, all families must determine whose agenda will prevail. In the past, when women's domain was the home, it seems likely that women's agendas and priorities represented the default option, because women accomplished or managed these tasks. In essence, women exercised control unless husbands requested otherwise.

Today as women enter the workforce, and particularly as more become coproviders rather than secondary providers, many have increasingly come to regard the 70-30 split of housework and childcare as inequitable, and have begun to expect participation from men. This expectation is, however, complicated by the reluctance to abdicate control over "minimum

standards" of housework and childcare, along with control over establishment of priorities. Despite Linda Cummings' towel policies, there is no intrinsic logic to folding or storing laundry in one specific way. Except where clutter is downright unhygenic, there is no written rule that specifies that all possessions must be picked up before family members leave home for the day. After all, more and more U.S. dual earner homes sit completely empty-- except for pets-- from daybreak until shortly before dinner. Who will see clutter?

Yet almost all women-- in Wheatlands and elsewhere-- carry with them elaborate cultural strategies and corresponding childhood training for how a home "ought to be" maintained and run. Given that women's domestic strategies are almost universally more developed than those possessed by husbands or children, wives are much more likely to be left holding the towels. Keith Cummings joked that they could not have a housekeeper because his wife spend too much time "cleaning up for the cleaning lady." I laughed, but did not confess that I do the same. In a community with strong Germanic roots, any self-respecting woman who did not keep her house would be leaving herself open to sanctions from relatives and neighbors. No one would think to blame her husband or children or cleaning personnel.

Women who hope to modify the 70-30 housework split will inevitably have to relinquish some of these standards. This transition may be threatening, however, given that the domestic sphere has been one of

women's few privileged arenas since the separation into men's and women's spheres as a result of wage labor in Western society. Attempts to change these deeply entrenched sociohistorical practices and cultural codes may therefore result in ritualized conflict in the form of the "towel wars" mentioned by the Cummings family, often accompanied by stories which function as parables for children and outsiders.

With respect to children, Wheatlanders, like all families since the onset of the demographic transition, must begin by deciding how many children they want. Here the numbers are already in. Median family size in Wheatlands is 2.94. Families interviewed had an average of two children, which they generally reported were planned rather than unplanned; they did not expect to have any more. This suggests that Wheatlanders have decided that small families are the best families.

Rational choice theory interfaces quite neatly with demographic transition theory to explain these fertility decisions. In Western society, families apparently desired many children under conditions where children were perceived as highly valuable assets, providers of spare labor and later social security. With the advent of wide-spread wage labor, accompanied by more effective sanitation and protection against infectious disease, children came to be viewed as liabilities, and family size shrank. As this occurred, "quality" children were redefined. As families shrank, more women were available to enter the workforce, and gender identities have begun to shift.

One might expect that this would change the gender legacy of Wheatlands children, since most now spend far more than half their waking hours outside the home, in paid childcare or school. But paradoxically, child care, while shifting outside the home, has remained the nearly exclusive domain of women, both in arranging and providing. In Wheatlands, I did not see a single male working at a daycare center or elementary school (with the exception of the principal). If this pattern continues in Wheatlands and elsewhere, our culture may shift the locus of legacy transmission but retain the notion of gendered responsibility for childcare. Is this the last bastion of gender-separatism?

And what are the long-range implications? Talking with the Watsons and the Cumminges and the Fosters, I watched one mother after another jump up when a child was hungry or fussy or hurt, when my iced tea glass was empty or when the phone rang. In each case, the father kept talking as if nothing was amiss. This is what little girls and boys see at home; it is also what they see in daycare and school. Women nurture; men, if they are present, discipline.

Women could, of course, lower their standards. Beth Salzberg knows that if she waits long enough, her husband will intervene in their children's quarrels. If she points out that one is sick, he will, though possibly reluctantly, offer to help out. Linda Cummings could send her children to school in unironed clothes. Kate Stanley could watch as their youngest disintegrated into a temper tantrum from lack of attention, at which point

her husband would probably pitch in. But women's "default option" socialization has been set so high that waiting is difficult.

Furthermore, as with control over order, relinquishing control over childcare may bring unwanted consequences. In a small town like Wheatlands, neighbors and kin are quick to chide and gossip, as mothers know. They also know that in Western society, mothers, but rarely fathers, are blamed for problems exhibited by their children. The flip side of this coin is less evident. Mothers take the blame, but they also get the praise when children succeed. Sharing responsibility for child care would also mean sharing this credit. For women who have had more limited access to economic rewards, giving up this small shot at glory may be more than mothers want to risk.

Legacy and Change

In a society where worth has traditionally been defined economically, men's traditionally advantaged status in the workplace has conferred higher status and correspondingly higher power in the home. Recently, however, that advantage has gradually begun to deteriorate for a variety of reasons. Women's income has increasingly come to be regarded as "essential," in cultural terms, to family subsistence. At the same time, more and more women are being raised to view paid work outside the home as "natural" in the context of marriage, increasing workforce attachment, which in turn leads to higher wages as a percent of men's.

Taken together, these changes are likely to lead to growing pressure on husbands to renegotiate domestic responsibilities. There are, as suggested, some hints that this is-- very gradually-- beginning to happen. The conservative drag of culture, taken together with the challenge of resetting "default options" in socialization, make change appear to be moving at a snail's pace. Any change in domestic identities which does occur, however, will affect future family negotiations in a dialectic process. Wives who have settled for "the going rate," in Hochschild's terms, are likely to lobby for more help and more free time if other wives are perceived to be in more fortunate circumstances. Women who continue to see themselves as being slighted, such as Delia Grey, may opt for divorce.

The real change, however, will be transgenerational. Children who are raised with more gender-equal expectations regarding domestic identity are more likely to form more egalitarian households. This seems particularly likely if young women expect to work from the time they leave home onwards, with only brief interruptions for childbirth. Growing materialism in contemporary society might then proceed in tandem with growing rationalization of services such as cleaning services, fast food restaurants and the like as social concomitants to the cultural belief that women "have to" work. Society-wide change, therefore, would be not be expected for at least a generation, and then only if two-earner families continue to be perceived as necessary based on contemporary cultural codes, shaped by existing sociohistorical and economic frameworks.

Recommendations for Further Study

This project raises a number of intriguing questions which would benefit from further examination. First, as suggested earlier, it would be useful to expand the base of families interviewed and surveyed to include a greater representation of minority and working class families. Ideally at least some of this information should be gathered by a non-caucasian and/or non-middle-class researcher to encourage diversity of response.

Second, understanding of differences between cultural code and actual behavior would be enhanced if some or all of the original families could be recontacted at a later time. In this study, family members were asked to recall gender socialization, premarital and early marriage expectations. However, as Bateson points out, memory is constantly edited to produce a consistent narrative. Asking about the past is therefore less indicative of actual behavior than asking about what is occurring in present family negotiations.

Third, this study was designed to consider only two-parent families, despite the fact that increasing numbers of Wheatlands children, like children all over the nation, will spend at least part of their lives with only one parent. The choice to omit single parent families in the first round of this study was intentional; I reasoned that the most common pattern at present is still two-parent families, whether blended or not. In the long run, this study would be stronger if it were expanded to consider how divorce affects domestic work in general, and how blended families differ from

families with two biological parents regarding the negotiation of domestic identity.

Finally, at a more macro level, this study and others like it would benefit from a more extensive analysis of community political process and its interface with the town's economic structure. Local elites set the "master frames" for community culture, as well as the structure of economic opportunity from available jobs through charity efforts. These in turn shape the daily lives of Wheatlands residents, both in terms of work but also in terms of childcare options and acceptable family values. It is fascinating to consider, for example, how Construx' contribution to childcare has served to further remove the care of children from families, to "rationalize" childcare as a commodity, and therefore ultimately to represent the primary source of norms and values for the youth of Wheatlands. In the school system, contributions from Construx to the curriculum do much the same. Thus in the long run, womens' resistance to ceding responsibility for arranging childcare may be subtly co-opted by local elites. The more we know about the relationship of politics and elites to community structure, the more we will understand about changing domestic identities.

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APPENDIX

FOCUS AND FINDINGS OF RESEARCH ON DIVISION OF FAMILY WORK

Focus and Findings: Role Negotiation Studies

Author	Study Date	Aim of study	Findings
Hoffman	1961	relat. attitude/empl/child relat	mother's attitude key to impact of mat. emp.
Avioli and Kaplan	1992	impact of changing norms on married women's work patterns	Empl. patterns best predicted by past work history, not att. or fam. charac.
Kandel, Davies & Raveis	1985	replication of Pearlin (but with opposite results)	Multiple roles both aggrevate and buffer stress
Piotrkowski	1978	family as integrated work/ home spheres	role enhancement, role combination
Downey and Moen	1987	impact of multiple roles on psych. health	supports role combination hypothesis rather than role enchancement or sex role
Ross et al.	1985	relat. of husb. and wife's pref re wife's empl. and depression	wife: empl pref + empl =< depres. & vice versa husb: same, but strongest when opp. to wife's employment
DeVault	1987	underlying meanings of housework	
Gerson	1985	lifecourse development of roles	importance of attitudes and experiences affects role satisfaction
Mederer	1993	perceptions of family work task vs hh management	management" is valued (=power) but tasks aren't
Hock and DeMeis	1990	psyc. factors mediating between emp., motherhood, mo's m.h.	Work pref + stay home =>depression
Shuster	1993	develop typology of mat. responses to integrating parenting and empl	found 4 distinct types of mo/child interact. based on complex relat. w/ empl.
Volling and Belsky	1993	parent, infant, & contextual charac. of maternal empl. decisions	SES < impt. for< income; others >ego strgth/ <trad./ >prenatal work comm=>career dev.
Schwartz	1992	obstacles women face in upper level careers	role overload leads to glass ceiling, and empl. dropout

Studies are listed from oldest to most recent based on year of data collection; or, if unstated, by date of publication

Focus and Findings of Role Enhancement Studies

Author	Study Date	Aim of study	Findings
Thoits	1983	Impact of multiple identities	Multiple identities decrease personal distress
Lerner and Galambos	1988	Relat. role strain, husband's help, job flex. and # children	Significant correlations for all three
Gove and Geerken	1977	Employment and mental health	Empl. improves mental health for both sexes
A. Gottfried et al.	1988	Role strain and child development	No significant effects (or slightly positive)
Kessler and McRae	1982	Employment and depression	Empl. can improve m.h. for mother, no effect on father
Gore and Mangione	1982	Employment, role perceptions, and mental health	Positive impact of employment regardless of gender
Baruch, Barnett and Rivers	1983	Overload or underload	Employment as enhancing, but att. important
Barnett and Baruch	1987a	Fa's participation in family work as % of mo's	Wife's empl and attitude. increased men's participation
Alvarez	1985	Mo's empl., reason for working, percept. of children as system	Interaction of behavior and attitude in perception of children and family
Pistrang	1984	Prior work involvement and experience of motherhood	Paid employment enhances motherhood
Rosen et al.	1990	Path analysis to examine role satis. and empl. relat.	Time spent empl and role fit =role satis.= =general well being
Conger et al.	1993	Gender differences in response to stress	women exp. >family crises men >financial events

Studies are listed from oldest to most recent based on year of data collection;
or Studies are listed from oldest to most recent based on year of data collection;
or, if unstated, by date of publication

VITA

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OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW

Date: 08-03-94 **IRB#:** AS-95-007

Proposal Title: NEGOTIATING DOMESTIC ROLES IN A RURAL COMMUNITY: GENDER, WORK, AND FAMILY

Principal Investigator(s): Richard Dodder, Ken Kiser, Andrea Fisher Maril

Reviewed and Processed as: Exempt

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

APPROVAL STATUS SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY FULL INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD AT NEXT MEETING.
APPROVAL STATUS PERIOD VALID FOR ONE CALENDAR YEAR AFTER WHICH A CONTINUATION OR RENEWAL REQUEST IS REQUIRED TO BE SUBMITTED FOR BOARD APPROVAL.
ANY MODIFICATIONS TO APPROVED PROJECT MUST ALSO BE SUBMITTED FOR APPROVAL.

Comments, Modifications/Conditions for Approval or Reasons for Deferral or Disapproval are as follows:

Signature: Date: September 20, 1994

Chair of Institutional Review Board

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