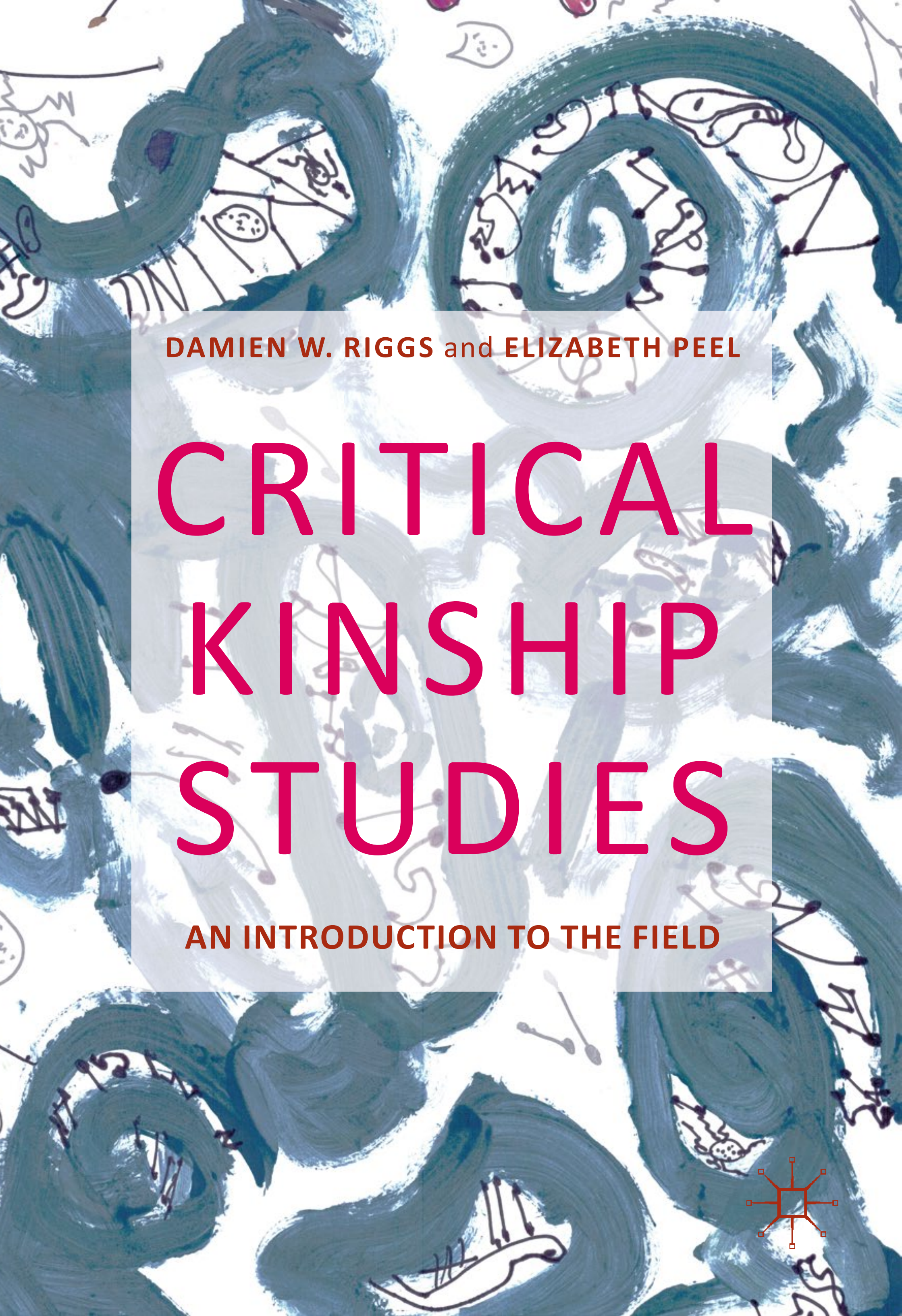

DAMIEN W. RIGGS and ELIZABETH PEEL

CRITICAL KINSHIP STUDIES

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE FIELD

Critical Kinship Studies

Damien W. Riggs • Elizabeth Peel

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To Harry, one of the true loves of my life.

—Damien

To Rosie, Katie, Bramble, and Frodo.

—Liz

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Introduction

A Story

In each of the chapters of this book, we begin with a story. These are stories we have collected over the years, stories that speak of kinship across a range of settings, that speak of diverse groups of people and species, and perhaps most importantly for this book, speak of how kinship is naturalized through often mundane, everyday, depictions of life.

The first story is an actual story, or more precisely a children's storybook: *King & King & Family* (De Haan and Nijland 2004). The book is a sequel to the authors' first book, *King & King* (De Haan and Nijland 2002). The first book has been praised for its sensitive and endearing depiction of a prince who is looking to find someone to marry (at his mother, the queen's, behest), culminating in him meeting another prince whom he marries, whereupon they both become kings. Despite this praise, the first book has also been met with considerable controversy, with a number of American states attempting to ban the book, in some locations it being shelved in the adult section (Wachsberger 2006). In 2007 the then US democratic primary front runners were asked for their opinions on the book, with both John Edwards and Barack Obama

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supporting it, and Hilary Clinton indicating that she felt the book was a matter of parental discretion.

Perhaps surprisingly, the sequel book, which we focus on here, has met with little controversy. Surprising, we suggest, not because such a book should be met with controversy, but because the sequel tells the story of the two kings welcoming a child into their family. Given widespread and ongoing opposition to gay men having children, it is thus surprising that the book has not been more of a cause for public concern. One explanation for this discrepancy in reactions may be that in the first book the two kings are shown kissing—a scene that provoked outrage from some—and the sequel does not include this type of intimacy. Indeed, this sanitizing of gay couples who have a child is commonplace in public representations of gay families (Riggs 2011).

So why is *King & King & Family* of particular interest to a book on critical kinship studies? It would be fair to presume that the topic—gay parenting—and the responses to the first book—homophobia, moral panics—are the reason why we chose to open this book with a discussion of *King & King & Family*. This, however, was not our primary reason for focusing on the storybook. Rather, our choice of this storybook was due to the particular ways in which it represents kinship. Specifically, the book is of interest to us given that it depicts kinship through characters who would typically be considered marginal (i.e. gay men). Yet in so doing it demonstrates one of the key points of this book, namely that the naturalization of kinship as a dominant trope or, indeed, perhaps a founding logic of Western societies—our focus in this book—is flexible enough to encompass all forms of so-called 'family diversity' that come along. To put it another way, Western kinship categories as they are normatively understood are fluid enough to incorporate gay male parents into a standardized narrative precisely because kinship *as a technology* serves to locate itself within nature (i.e. it is naturalized).

Let's then turn to *King & King & Family* and explore these claims in a little more detail. The book opens with the two kings leaving for their honeymoon, to a 'land far from their kingdom'. From this first page, then, notions of home and away, familiar and strange, are evoked. A fear of the strange is voiced by King Bertie on the second page, where he says 'I must admit I'm a little worried about the jungle animals', a statement he makes to King Lee who is holding a book titled 'Exciting wild life', written by a D. Anger. Here, then, difference becomes a source of fear, a source of potential 'DAnger'. When they arrive at their destination, however, they find that their unusually heavy suitcase contains Crown Kitty, their cat. The strange is therefore neutralized by her familiar presence.

Once the party of three leave for their hike through the jungle, they encounter a range of animals, through which again the strange is made familiar through the operations of anthropomorphism. So, for example, we see two birds who are feeding a worm to a baby bird referred to as 'such good parents!', a 'papa [monkey] and his baby', and a 'hippo family'. Through these terms, the potentially radical difference represented by 'wild life' is domesticated through the human language of kinship. Of course, our point here is not to suggest that there would be another, readily intelligible, way of talking about non-human kinship. Rather, our point is how human language of kinship can so readily incorporate 'wild life', animals who had previously been represented in a fearful way.

In the pages that follow King Lee and King Bertie continue to enjoy their holiday, though they are concerned at every turn that they are being watched or followed. King Bertie's travel journal recaps 'rustling in the bushes', 'something following us in the water', 'footprints in the mud', and a snorkel 'pipe in the water'. On the last night of their holiday King Bertie sighs '[a]ll those animals with their babies…I wish we had a little one of our own', evoking a standard developmentalist logic in which humans grow up, get married, and have children. And in so doing they extend this same developmental logic, and indeed desire, to non-human animals. When they arrive home, their suitcase is again unusually heavy, though this time because in it there is 'a little girl from the jungle', to whom King Lee and King Bertie state 'you're the child we've always wanted'. The story concludes with scenes in which, in a rush, the kings 'adopted the little girl who had traveled so far to be with them. This took lots of documents and stamps'. Then there is a party to celebrate the official arrival of Princess Daisy where 'her daddies make a big fuss', and the final image is one of the child and the cat embracing under the caption '[w]hat a happy little one!'.

Here again, in both the surprise arrival of the child, and her envelopment in a standard narrative in which she is the child the two kings have always wanted, difference is assimilated into a logic of the same. While at the start of the story the country to which the kings travel is depicted as 'wild' and something to worry about, by the end of the book these concerns are gone, with the little girl depicted as able to share her stories with the two kings (using, presumably, the same language), and where she is given a name that arguably reflects the culture of the kings, perhaps less so than her own. The adoption seals the deal, wrapping the new princess in the logic of sameness in which the ever-expansive Western narrative of kinship is able to incorporate any difference.

King & King & King, then, is not simply a story about gay parenting, nor is it simply an example of the domestication of gay parenting into a standard developmental logic that evokes an incremental rites of passage narrative. Rather, it is also a story in which human kinship norms are able to encompass, indeed domesticate, animal kinship practices. Furthermore, it is a story in which difference is assimilated into a logic of sameness, cross-culturally, cross-species, and unregulated across borders.

As we shall see in the sections that follow, the incorporation of what is considered 'nature' into what is referred to as 'culture' is a common theme across this book, just as the cultural is naturalized in ways to make it appear pre-determined. And, as we shall argue, concerns about incorporation and naturalization sit at the heart of critical kinship studies as we understand it. The aim of critical kinship studies, then, is to examine practices of naturalization, to think of kinship as a technology rather than as a taken for granted social structure, and to think about the 'human' in human kinship in ways that destabilize the centrality of humanism within kinship studies.

The Study of Kinship

In this section we provide a brief overview of some of the core tenets of the field of kinship studies, primarily as it has been conducted within the context of anthropology. Importantly, in outlining the field as it has historically been constituted, our intention is not to suggest that there is a clear break between 'kinship studies' and 'critical kinship studies'. Much of the previous work we cite in this section is a direct basis for our account of critical kinship studies. And much of the work we cite in this section is critical in many senses of the word. As such, it is certainly the case that in attributing a label to a body of research (as have Kroløkke et al. 2015), a large part of what we are doing is signalling something that already exists: studies of kinship that are critical of the assumption that kinship is a product of nature—a key point of critique in much of the work that has been undertaken under the banner of kinship studies both in the past and in the present, as we shall see below.

Having said this, what distinguishes this section from the next is the fact that the research summarized in the present section is arguably informed by a humanist logic. That is, a logic in which human beings and our values and worldviews, however diverse, are by default treated as more salient or important than those of any other species. More specifically, and given our focus in this book on Western accounts of kinship, our suggestion is that much of the work that has been conducted under the banner of kinship studies reifies a very particular Western individualistic account of humanity, even if at times such work has involved cross-cultural comparative studies. Our intention in this section in briefly outlining two of the key tenets of previous work in the field of kinship studies, then, is not only to celebrate the important insights afforded by those working in the field, but also to suggest why appending, or foregrounding, the word 'critical' to the field introduces a shift in orientation that warrants close consideration, a shift that we outline in more detail in the following section.

The work of David Schneider arguably constitutes one of the key examples of a shift in anthropology from an account of kinship where it had previously been seen as a reflection of nature, to one where kinship is seen as an artefact of culture. Published in 1968, Schneider's *American Kinship*: *A Cultural Account* provides an in-depth ethnographic analysis of kinship terms in the USA. What has now become a standard feature of work in the field of kinship studies is clearly highlighted in this early work by Schneider, namely in his suggestion that:

> The cultural universe of relatives in American kinship is constructed of elements from two major cultural orders, the *order of nature* and the *order of law.* Relatives in *nature* share heredity. Relatives *in law* are bound only by

> law or custom, by the code for conduct, by the pattern for behavior. They are relatives by virtue of their *relationship*, not their biogenetic attributes (p. 27).

This statement follows a lengthy and detailed examination of American kinship categories, in which Schneider distinguishes between categories that are treated as though they are constituted by nature (what he refers to as unmodified categories, so, for example, 'mother', 'father', 'sister') and those that are constituted by law (what he refers to as modified categories, so, for example, 'foster child', 'mother in-law', 'step-father'). What is important about the quote above, however, is that it draws attention to the fact that while unmodified categories are treated as though they are a reflection of nature, in fact they are *naturalized* categories that are a product of a cultural order. This is thus a central premise of kinship studies: that anything in regard to human kinship that is treated as 'natural' is more correctly that which has been 'naturalized'. In other words, unmodified categories such as 'mother' or 'father' (which, in the context of Schneider's data, referred to women and men who had conceived and birthed children together as a product of reproductive heterosex) are not simply a reflection of 'natural' relations between men and women. Rather, they are the product of a wide range of cultural institutions that (1) normalize heterosexuality, (2) privilege reproductive heterosex, and thus (3) provide environments that are conducive to this mode of conceiving children.

Schneider went on to develop these points about the naturalization of particular kinship relations in his next major work, *A Critique of the Study of Kinship* (1984), where he states that:

> The distinction between genealogy and norm or role *seems* to permit us to say that genealogy is structurally or logically prior to norm or role. But that priority follows directly from the definition of kinship as genealogy and not from any empirical or independent consideration. It is purely a matter of definition. The structural and logical priority of genealogy is built into the premises embodied in the way in which kinship is defined. There is nothing 'structural' about it (pp. 129–130, italics in original).

Here Schneider makes the point that while the supposed naturalness of genealogy (as a mode of inheritance, seen as a product of genetic relationships between kin) is treated as producing a norm in which genetic relatedness is valued, in fact both the privileging of genetic relatedness and the emphasis upon tracking genealogy through genes are the product of a very particular (in this case American) way of understanding kinship.

Building on and extending the work of Schneider, Marilyn Strathern (1992a, 1992b), Sarah Franklin (1997), and Janet Carsten (2004)—three leading voices in the field of kinship studies—explore how particular forms of kinship are naturalized. Strathern does so by considering English kinship patterns, Franklin by exploring how assisted reproductive technologies are naturalized in the English context, and Carsten through cross-cultural work undertaken across a range of sites, including China, Sudan, Northern India, and Madagascar, through which she problematizes the normative status of Western human kinship practices. Strathern, in particular, takes the work of Schneider, and suggests that not only is kinship 'the social construction of natural facts', but also that in the context of British kinship 'nature has increasingly come to mean biology' (1992a, p. 19). This suggestion by Strathern is vital in its emphasis upon the particular aspects of British kinship that have become naturalized. Specifically, Strathern suggests that biology—referred to above as genetic relatedness—is what has been naturalized as kinship, a point that Franklin then takes up in her work. This is a key point that we will return to in the next chapter, where we discuss the points of critique that constitute the basis of critical kinship studies.

Also responding to Schneider's work, Carsten (2004) explores in detail how folk understandings of kinship—what Schneider depicts above as the assumption that the 'fact' of genealogy determines norms of kinship—require ongoing interrogation in order to understand how particular kinship practices become naturalized. As she suggests:

> Kinship may be viewed as given by birth and unchangeable, or it may be seen as shaped by the ordinary, everyday activities of family life, as well as the 'scientific' endeavours of geneticists and clinicians involved in fertility treatment or prenatal medicine… But increasingly, this separation, which is undoubtedly central to Western folk understandings of kinship, has itself come under scrutiny (p. 6).

Here Carsten emphasizes the point that any distinction between how kinship relations are formed, understood, and practised is arbitrary, given the commerce between the ways in which particular modes of family formation are privileged and thus naturalized. Further, Carsten suggest that such naturalization results in medical practices that support or bolster modes of family formation that are privileged (i.e. genetic relatedness). This, in turn, shapes what counts as kinship, and how we experience our lives as kin in a relationship to social norms about what counts as kinship 'proper'.

A second key thread in the field of kinship studies, and one that follows on from the critique of the naturalization of human cultures, is that of the role of sex—and specifically the binary conceptualization of men and women and the resultant naturalization of heterosex—in the production of Western kinship categories. Schneider suggests as much in his 1968 text, where he proposes that 'sexual intercourse is an act which is undertaken and does not just happen' (p. 32). While Schneider's elaboration of this claim that heterosex is actively produced rather than incidental is tantalizing brief and to a certain degree opaque, it has subsequently been taken up in significant detail in the fields of both kinship studies and gender studies, perhaps most notably in the work of Gayle Rubin (1975), who comments that:

> Lévi Strauss concludes from a survey of the division of labor by sex that it is not a biological specialization, but must have some other purpose. This purpose, he argues, is to insure the union of men and women by making the smallest viable economic unit contain at least one man and one woman (p. 178).

Rubin's essay-length elaboration on this claim clearly demonstrates the ways in which the cultural normalization of heterosexuality serves the purposes of capitalism, namely to ensure the production of surplus capital via the production of a particular social unit—namely the heterosexual couple—through which the gendered division of labour operates to both encourage reproduction, and thus encourage the production of labour. As such, and as Rubin suggests, Western kinship patterns, in which reproductive heterosex and the genealogical transmission of relatedness and inheritance are naturalized, serve to ensure the production of surplus capital. Donna Haraway (1991) demonstrates how the logic of capitalism has long underpinned the study of kinship, where the supposed complementarity of the sexes serves to naturalise kinship as the founding institution of culture:

> Perhaps, many have thought and some have hoped, the key to the extraordinary sociability of the primate order rests on a sexual foundation of society, in a family rooted in the glands and the genes. Natural kinship was then seen to be transformed by the specifically human, language-mediated categories that gave rational order to nature in the birth of culture. Through classifying by naming, by creating kinds, culture would then be the logical domination of a necessary but dangerous instinctual nature. Perhaps human beings found the key to control of sex, the source of and threat to all other kinds of order, in the categories of kinship (p. 22).

This quote from Haraway both repeats our earlier suggestion that the study of kinship has primarily been the study of *human* kinship, and pre-empts the importance of the work of Haraway in what is to come in terms of our elaboration of what we understand as constituting critical kinship studies. For Haraway, sex ‘in nature’ has historically been perceived as a threat that needs to be controlled. Kinship, then, serves to regulate and ‘contain’ sexuality so as to produce only one type of sexuality—reproductive heterosex—as both viable and regulated, ironically by suggesting that it is natural, while at the same time requiring its naturalization through cultural practices in which it is enshrined as a norm. Judith Butler (2000) has referred to the ironic naturalization of heterosex through the depiction of kinship as the founding trope of culture as a ‘conceit’, in her suggestion that:

> Although we may be tempted to say that heterosexuality secures the reproduction of culture and that patrilineality secures the reproduction of culture in the form of a whole that is reproducible in its identity through time, it is equally true that the conceit of a culture as a self-sustaining and self-replicating totality supports the naturalization of heterosexuality and that the entirety of the structuralist approach to sexual difference emblematizes this movement to secure heterosexuality through the thematics of culture (p. 35).

Here Butler (2000) importantly brings the kinship studies critique of the nature/culture binary together with the role of sex, in order to suggest that kinship structures themselves are an allegory for culture as the 'taming' of nature, as she goes on to suggest:

> The story of kinship, as we have it from Lévi-Strauss, is an allegory for the origin of culture and a symptom of the process of naturalization itself, one that takes place, brilliantly, insidiously, in the name of culture itself. Thus, one might add that debates about the distinction between nature and culture, which are clearly heightened when the distinctions between animal, human, machine, hybrid, and cyborg remain unsettled, become figured at the site of kinship, for even a theory of kinship that is radically culturalist frames itself against a discredited 'nature' and so remains in a constitutive and definitional relation to that which it claims to transcend (p. 37)

Although not directly referencing Schneider in her account of theories of kinship that are 'radically culturalist', we would suggest that Butler's theorizing is directly applicable to a critique of Schneider's early work, one that will lead us into the following section where we further unpack what is 'critical' about 'critical kinship studies'. In elaborating how culture is naturalized through practices of kinship, Schneider (1968) suggests that:

> Human reason does two things. First, though it builds on a natural base, it creates something additional, something more than what nature alone produces. Second, human reason selects only part of nature on which to build. This is because nature itself is composed of two distinct parts. One is good, the other bad; one is human, the other animal. Human reason selects the good part of nature to build on; it can set goals and select paths, judge right from wrong, and tell good from bad. The family, in American kinship, is defined as a natural unit based on the facts of nature. In American culture, this means that only certain of the facts of nature are selected, that they are altered, and that they are built upon or added to. This selection, alteration, and addition all come about through the application of human reason to the state of nature (p. 36).

While we would want to be clear that in this quote Schneider is summarizing his ethnographic findings in terms of how American people at the time, through their folk narratives of kinship, understood the role of kinship in regards to the imposition of culture upon nature, there is a degree to which Schneider reifies the binary of nature and culture, human and animal, even at the moment where he seeks to problematize these binaries. In other words, by treating as axiomatic the equation of the human with both 'the good' and 'culture', non-human animals are relegated by default to 'the bad' and ' nature', and thus potentially outside of kinship.

Of course the point of Schneider's work, and all those we have cited in this section, is to argue precisely that both culture and kinship are the product of particular human ways of partitioning the world into binaries that serve to reify human ways of being. Our concern, nonetheless, is with whether or not something slips to the wayside in this type of account, that is that Western human kinship practices are but one way of thinking about being in the world. As we suggest in the following section, arguably what constitutes a core component of critical kinship studies is to render visible the human in kinship studies, not simply by adding in non-human animals to our account of kinship, nor by claiming to know what kinship means for non-human animals. Rather, we suggest, critical kinship studies seeks to examine how technologies of human kinship are part and parcel of the construction of humanness (which is positioned in opposition to those who are not considered human), and thus to be 'critical' when we study kinship is to interrogate the anthropocentrism that is at the core of humanist accounts of kinship.

Defining Critical Kinship Studies

We have already indicated above that, in our view, critical kinship studies takes as its central focus the need to move beyond a humanist account of kinship, one in which human understandings of kinship and human kinship practices are treated as the only forms of kinship and only ways of being possible. Importantly, we do not mean to suggest that kinship studies should just be reduced to a naïve form of animal studies, wherein all animals (including humans) are treated as equals in the face of kinship, and where our attention turns primarily to human/non-human animals interactions. For us, such an approach would simply naturalize particular things as 'kinship'. Instead, and following Haraway (1989, 1991, 2008) and others whose work we outline below, we believe the focus of critical kinship studies is twofold: (1) to examine which humans are central to understandings of human kinship, through which practices such understandings developed, and how boundaries are drawn in terms of what constitutes human kinship; and (2) to examine how understandings of human kinship are always already defined in a relationship to other species. For as Haraway (1991) suggests:

> [D]espite the claims of anthropology to be able to understand human beings solely with the concept of culture, and of sociology to need nothing but the idea of the human social group, animal societies have been extensively employed in rationalization and naturalization of the oppressive orders of domination in the human body politic. They have provided the point of union of the physiological and political for modern liberal theorists while they continue to accept the ideology of the split between nature and culture (p. 11).

Importantly, our definition of critical kinship studies (and our enactment of it in subsequent analytic chapters) does not entirely mirror Haraway in terms of exploring histories of human abuse of animals in the quest to define what properly constitutes 'the human'. Nonetheless, we take as vital the point that understanding human kinship requires decentring humans, a point made by others such as Marie Fox (2004). Or perhaps more precisely, it requires decentring a humanist account of the human species, in which humans are taken as self evidently the centre of the world—an assumption that potentially prevents us from understanding the practices we engage in through which we construct the category 'human' itself.

By definition, humanism is about the centrality of the human subject looking outwards, with the presumption that no one is looking back. As such, humanism functions to objectify or indeed 'thingify' other species, treating them either as objects who do not look, or as things to be instrumentalized in the service of human needs, as 'property' within regulatory frameworks (Fox 2010). Yet, as Haraway suggests, whichever way other species are understood, they are central to how humans understand ourselves. This is evident in the quote from Schneider that we included earlier, where the rational human chooses the 'good' in nature from which to construct culture, a claim that is only possible through comparison with other animals who are left with the 'bad' of nature.

Of course the converse of these objectifying practices is also true with regard to humanism. Within a humanist logic, human parts can be accorded personhood, as we will explore in more detail in the following chapter and in Chapter 5. Donated organs, for example, are often thought by recipients to contain the 'spirit' of a deceased person, and human cells are treated as containing the truth of a person via their DNA. In this sense, kinship may be claimed by organ recipients in regard to the donor's family, just as those who donate embryos may claim that a child born of their donation is their kin, or the kin of their own children (Nordqvist and Smart 2014).

In addition to this logic of personifying body parts, we would suggest, are the operations of capitalism referred to earlier. Specifically, the good human citizen is compelled to pursue life at all costs: through medicine, surgeries, transplants, and all manner of interventions that serve to treat humans as a vital, indeed central, feature of this planet. In his comparative account of transhumanism and posthumanism, Richard Twine (2010) suggests that the former, which brings with it all of the valorized interweavings of human bodies and technologies, is yet another way or privileging human ways of being over all others:

> Transhumanists take things literally. Their supersession of humanism is material in a specific way. When they talk of posthumans they are imagining a human materially modified, a body 'enhanced'. This is hyper-humanism in the sense of bodily and emotional control; and in the stress upon individual autonomous choice over current and forecasted reproductive technologies… The emphasis on the individual here is counter to anti-humanist critiques of liberal humanist thought and the extension of the value of control is counter to critical posthumanism (p. 181).

Twine's account of the differences between transhumanism, the category 'posthuman', and the theoretical orientation referred to as posthumanism is thus central to our understanding of critical kinship studies. While in the chapters to come we most certainly seek to examine how technologies play a central role in shaping understandings of Western human kinship, we are not interested in transhumanist accounts of the posthuman, in which the centrality accorded to the human species is further privileged by its technological enhancement. Instead, our interest is to examine, as we do in the following chapter, how kinship itself is a technology, one that shapes how we understand what counts as human, and through which human relationships with other species are formed. Thus, as Cary Wolfe (2010) suggests in his elaboration of posthumanism, the point of posthumanism is not to deny the importance of studying humans as a species. Rather, a posthumanist approach:

> [E]nables us to describe the human and its characteristic modes of communication, interaction, meaning, social significations, and affective investments with *greater* specificity once we have removed meaning from the ontologically closed domain of consciousness, reason, reflection, and so on… But it also insists that we attend to the specificity of the human—its ways of being in the world, its ways of knowing, observing, and describing—by (paradoxically for humanism) acknowledging that it is fundamentally a prosthetic creative that has coevolved with various forms of technicity and materiality, forms that are radically 'not-human' and yet have nevertheless made the human what it is (p. xxv).

From our vantage point, then, posthumanism as a theoretical orientation underpinning critical kinship studies allows us to examine the construction of human kinship practices, to examine who such practices exclude (both some humans and all non-human species), and to identify the ways in which such practices are naturalized. Given as human authors we are unable to problematize human kinship practices from a place outside our species, a posthumanist framework enables us to think about how claims about human kinship are made, and through which relationships (including inter-species relationships) they are made. Thus as Haraway (2008) has suggested in some of her more recent work on animal companions:

> I am interested in these matters when the kin-making beings are not all human, and literal children or parents are not the issue. Companion species

> are the issue… But none of it can be approached if the fleshly historical reality of face-to-face, body-to-body subject making across species is denied or forgotten in the humanist doctrine that holds only humans to be true subjects with real histories (p. 67).

Nik Taylor (2012) takes up the work of Haraway in discussing how her own relationships with the non-human kin she lives with shape her understanding of self and being in the world:

> I remain permanently curious about the 'we' that the three of us create—this messy grouping of human and canine; the relatings that occur between us. Yet I remain aware that traditional sociology can do nothing more than account for our relationship from my perspective, if at all. The 'knot' that we three constitute is thus seen as a one of us two 'others' with the ' one' being the only object (subject?) of importance and interest here. To account equally for the 'plus two' is a challenge (p. 43).

In framing critical kinship studies through the lens of posthumanism, then, we take up this challenge to think about what it means to understand practices of Western human kinship through a complex web of relationships in which human animals, non-human animals, technologies, and practices all overlap and intersect. Our point, then, is not *per se* to yet again reify practices of Western human kinship (by denying non-human animal kinship practices or, indeed, kinship practices across species). Rather, our point is to critically examine how humanness is constructed in contrast with all that is positioned as not human. 'Practices of western human kinship', then, as we use the term, focuses on how humans are treated as the centre of the world precisely through our claims to kinship that are themselves claims to human exceptionalism.

Importantly, however, while having used the word 'intersect' above, our approach to thinking through kinship practices is one of assemblage, rather than intersectionality. Across a now substantial body of work, Jasbir Puar (2013) has drawn attention to the humanism inherent to theories of intersectionality. Notably, her intent in making this critique is not to dismiss the significant contribution that theories of intersectionality continue to make to understanding how all of our lives are shaped through a criss-cross of identity categories. Rather, Puar's point is that an understanding of assemblage extends the agenda of theories of intersectionality by encouraging us to think about relationships rather than individuals. Although not the intent of Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989, 1991)—who originally elaborated the theory of intersectionality—many recent applications of intersectionality have treated identity categories as mere matters of addition or subtraction. Such an approach reduces intersectionality to a set of individualized coordinates that can be mapped out and then responded to, which is problematic because of the reductive individualism and the change-resistant nature of such 'plotting'.

We can see this in the storybook *King & King & Family*, and perhaps most pertinently in its title. The ampersands denote a story where King plus King plus Family constitute kinship. Our point is not that two men and a child do not constitute a kinship form (many can and do), but rather that they are constituted as such additively. In other words, rather than seeing kinship as formed through an assemblage of technologies through which particular bodies are rendered intelligible, kinship is simply seen as the summation of a series of individuals. While this is, indeed, the hallmark of Western humanist accounts of kinship, and while in some sectors this may be a necessary way of thinking about kinship (given the operations of neoliberalism, for example), when it comes to theorizing beyond the categories we already have—categories shaped by humanist understandings of the world—we need other ways of thinking about kinship.

We thus follow Puar (2013) in her suggestion that assemblage is centrally about connections. More specifically, she suggests that:

> [A]ssemblages are interesting because a) they de-privilege the human body as a discrete organic thing. As Haraway notes, the body does not end at the skin. We leave traces of our DNA everywhere we go, we live with other bodies within us, microbes and bacteria, we are enmeshed in forces, affects, energies, we are composites of information. And b) assemblages do not privilege bodies as human, nor as residing within a human/animal binary (p. 4).

Thinking about human kinship through a posthumanist focus on assemblage, then, requires us to bring together people, bodies, and experiences that may typically be considered to be incongruent. More specifically, it requires us to consider how binaries (such as culture/nature, woman/man, animal/human, familiar/strange) function to construct as much as they function to exclude. In other words, when the strange is rendered familiar, when difference can be incorporated into a logic of sameness, as was the case in *King & King & Family*, we must ask what disappears? The answer to this question, from the perspective of critical kinship studies, is the humanist logic that frames processes of incorporation and naturalization, processes that we must attend to in order to develop other accounts of kinship.

Chapter Topics

In the rest of this book, we bring together a complex array of kinship stories that are intended to jar. In so doing, we draw upon research that we have conducted previously with other people, as well as new research that we have conducted together for this book (specifically, analyses of film and documentary data). With regard to the former, some of the research discussed in Chapter 4 was undertaken by Damien in collaboration with Clare Bartholomaeus. Similarly, some of the research reported in Chapter 6 was undertaken by Damien in collaboration with Catherine Collins and Clemence Due and Nicole Caruso, and by Liz with Ruth Cain and Christa Craven. Finally with regard to previous collaborative work reported in this book, some of the research detailed in both Chapters 7 and 8 was undertaken by Liz in collaboration with Rosie Harding, and some of the research drawn on in Chapter 8 was undertaken by Damien in collaboration with Kathleen Connellan, Clare Bartholomaeus, and Clemence Due. For the sake of readability, however, in these chapters we use the pronoun 'we' to refer to this collective work, although, of course, acknowledging here the contributions that others have made to our thinking and data collection. The analyses reported here, however, are original to this book and to our collaboration as authors. All of the underpinning empirical research we engage with in this book was approved by our university ethics committees and/or the Social Care Research Ethics Committee (SCREC), and all names used for participants are pseudonyms (though names from media data are retained as per the originals).

With regard to the chapter contents, the following two chapters explore in greater detail some of the concerns we have already raised in this chapter. Specifically, Chapter 2, ‘Objects of Critique’, outlines in detail three points of critique that we believe are central to critical kinship studies, namely kinship as a nodal point of power, kinship and the ‘natural order of things’, and the valorization of genetic relatedness. Chapter 3, ‘Tools of Critique’ - then offers three tools of critique that we see as central to critical kinship studies. These are an understanding of kinship as a technology, a discursive account of subjectivity, and a focus on affective ambivalence.

Having outlined our points of critique and tools for examining them, the subsequent analytic chapters then explore in detail how the latter can help us understand a truly diverse range of practices of Western human kinship. Chapter 4, ‘Reflecting (on) Nature: Cross-Species Kinship’, explores the intersections and overlaps between accounts of humans raising non-human animals as kin, and accounts of heterosexual human couples planning for a first child. Our central claim in this chapter is that human relationships with other animals often serve primarily to tell us more about humans than they tell us anything about non-human animal ways of being. Importantly, our claim here is not to dismiss cross-species kinship outright, nor is it to deny the fact of non-human animal personhood. Rather, it is to emphasize the operations of human exceptionalism.

Chapter 5, ‘Donor Connections’ explores narratives of kinship about both organ donation and donor sperm conception. We frame the chapter through a focus on the instrumentalization of non-human animals with regard to breeding, and from there explore how such instrumentalization is both implied in, and resisted by, narratives of organ and sperm donation. By exploring how both organs and sperm are treated as synecdoches for whole people, we discuss the complex accounts of kinship provided by a sample of recipients of cadaveric organs and a sample of donor conceived people taken from television programmes and documentaries.

Having explored how personhood is evoked or claimed through donated materials in Chapter 5, in Chapter 6, ‘Kinship and Loss’, we then explore how personhood is routinely denied in the context of certain losses (i.e. the loss of a companion animal, and in the case of pregnancy loss), while in others certain forms of personhood are devalued (i.e. when children are diagnosed with autism or are transgender). By bringing together multiple accounts of loss across these contexts, we highlight not only the ways in which human exceptionalism operates to accord personhood only to certain groups, but also that human exceptionalism is always premised on a particular account of personhood, and that the failure to 'achieve' such personhood may be experienced as a loss.

In Chapter 7, 'Motherhood and Recognition', we consider how motherhood is normatively constructed as being alive for one's children for as long as possible, and how being a mother involves both conceiving and birthing children. We then trouble this understanding of motherhood by juxtaposing two under-recognized groups of mothers, namely transgender mothers and cisgender mothers with dementia. Through exploring these two categories of motherhood we interrogate where the taken for granted assumptions about mothering lie, in terms of bodies, roles, identities, and, indeed, filial connection itself.

Chapter 8 focuses on 'Kinship in Institutional Contexts', acknowledging that how kinship is enacted is highly dependent on context. Kinship is shaped by, and through, institutional contexts both at a broad discursive level and also through moments of institutional interaction. In this sense kinship is dynamic *and* contingent on content. In this final substantive chapter we again consider incongruous contexts—a mother and baby unit, and institutional dementia care—in order to examine how context *per se* is vital for a critical exploration of kinship.

In bringing together these complex and seemingly competing assemblages of people, personhood, and kinship, the analytic chapters in this book demonstrate how a posthumanist approach to critical kinship studies may be achieved. Moreover, these chapters allow us to consider how the narrative contained in *King & King & Family* becomes intelligible. Thinking about these types of stories as *human* stories of kinship, shaped by a very specific Western humanist logic of personhood, enables us to think about the connections that they both engender and prohibit: the ways of being they render intelligible and the exclusions they are reliant upon. By the conclusion of this book, we will have provided an understanding of what is 'critical' about 'critical kinship studies', and specifically, following Puar, to have asked not what kinship is *per se*, but rather what it does: what hierarchies, inequalities, and ways of being does it prop up, and through what multiple and nebulous assemblages does this occur.

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2

Objects of Critique

A Story

Rather neatly for us, the 2010 film *Splice* touches on many of the issues that we cover in this chapter. Indeed, it is tempting to view the film as an ironic commentary written with full awareness of the types of concerns we raise in this chapter. As such, the film is a useful way to open this chapter given its ambivalent depiction of science. In our reading of the film, it holds in tension the question of whether we should treat human scientific endeavors seriously, or whether all forms of human science are flawed enterprises. For us, then, it is precisely the fact that human science—and here particularly genetic science—is depicted in the film as the most appropriate lens through which to ask philosophical questions, yet potentially the least able to provide answers about matters of ontology, explains why *Splice* offers us a useful vantage point from which to introduce the themes of this chapter.

To turn to the film, then, *Splice* tells the story of two scientists, Elsa (played by Sarah Polley) and Clive (played by Adrien Brody), a couple who work together in a genetics lab. The film pursues two interlinked storylines. One involves the depiction of genetic science as a capitalist

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venture. In this storyline Elsa and Clive are hired to produce a new organism—which is made up of a combination of plant, snail, lizard, kangaroo, fish, horse, and bird DNA—from which proteins can be harvested for the purposes of creating marketable products. The second storyline, and the one that constitutes the main plot, involves Elsa deciding to pursue a further DNA combination that involves adding human DNA to those that they have already combined. Despite this being against company protocols, and despite Clive's apparent concern about the ethics of their actions, Elsa proceeds with the process.

With regard to the first storyline, the film opens by focusing on the creation of two organisms, one referred to as male and named Fred, and the second referred to as female and named Ginger. When Fred and Ginger are introduced to one another, their extended tongues wrap around each other, at which point Elsa says 'they're imprinting on each other… It's love at first sight'. From these first scenes of the film, then, human views about different gender love are positioned as a core focus. Elsa and Clive then leave to present their work to the chair of the company board, where they are met by their lab manager who hands them a copy of a magazine in which they are featured as a cover story on the basis of their work in the field of genetic science. The manager asks them why they had to give the quote '[i]f God didn't intend for us to explore his domain why did he give us the map'. In this combination of celebrity status accorded to genetic scientists, and the attribution of their work to the intentions of God, the work of Clive and Elsa is rendered both natural and spiritual.

Later in the film we return to the fate of Fred and Ginger. Ginger, we learn, has undergone a change in hormone production, with high levels of testosterone being produced. Ignoring this development, Elsa and Clive take Fred and Ginger to a presentation for a large audience of potential investors, where they are referred to as a 'couple'. The audience are told:

> These are state of the art designer organisms… The origin of a species. Male and female. Like Adam and Eve. Coming together to enact nature's timeless story of love.

Again, in this statement the film brings together religion ('Adam and Eve') and evolutionary science ('origin of a species') to depict their creations not only as implicitly natural and preordained, but also as developmentally normative: as a male and female 'couple' they 'enact nature's timeless story of love'. Unfortunately for Fred and Ginger, however, when the glass sheet between them is lowered, we learn that Ginger is now male, and instead of embracing as they did in the first scenes of the film, they kill one another. The audience is left horrified and blood splattered. When later called to account for this, Clive positions the killing as natural, saying that 'clearly two males caged together and stressed' would result in a desire to fight. Almost mocking Haraway's (1989) critique of the history of primatology, *Splice* depicts male–male relationships as fraught with potential violence, thus implying the importance of females to mediate male–male violence, again naturalizing male–female pairings and their 'timeless story of love'.

At the same time as the film tells the story of Fred and Ginger, it also tells the story of the creature created by the *addition* of human DNA to the combination involved in the creation of Fred and Ginger. However, while Fred and Ginger are depicted as two blobs with no distinguishing features, from the outset the creature that has human DNA is personified. The personification of the creature begins at the moment of their conception. At the moment when Clive inserts the spliced DNA into an emptied ovum, Clive says 'fuck', to which Elsa replies 'exactly'. Here in this moment, then, the creation of an embryo is framed as akin to intercourse. Yet despite this metaphor of coitus and the role of Elsa and Clive in it, a subsequent conversation between Elsa and Clive shows Elsa as disinterested in having a child in the future. Perhaps predictably, however, the narrative of the film takes a sharp turn.

In the scenes that follow the conversation about having children, Elsa and Clive are called to the lab, where the embryo has grown so quickly that it is threatening to break the unit it is housed in. Unable to open the unit, Elsa says 'I'm going to have to do this manually', before inserting her arm into a vagina-like opening. The creature inside latches onto Elsa's arm, causing Elsa to moan and scream as though in labour. Clive then smashes the glass unit, cuts open the amniotic sac, and out falls a creature the size of a rugby ball but with a tail like a sperm, which falls to the ground screaming, just as Elsa falls to the ground and convulses. In this quick presentation of scenes, we switch between Elsa wanting to create the creature, Clive being unsure, Clive inserting the DNA (which is rendered akin to coitus), Elsa saying she doesn't want a child, and then Elsa being forced into a form of labour. In this switching, a cross-species narrative of reproduction is introduced. Just like Fred and Ginger, we might suggest, the 'natural order' of events occurs, with male agency asserting itself to regulate women's 'natural' role in producing children.

We use the term 'children' here pointedly, given what then follows in the film. The creature that subsequently emerges from the rugby ball-shaped object resembles a hairless combination of a rat, kangaroo, and human. As it grows, however, its form becomes more and more human, albeit retaining the behaviours of all of its combinant parts. From the initial scenes with the creature, Elsa refers to it as 'imprinting' on her, then refers to the creature as 'she', before giving her a name: Dren. In subsequent scenes we see the previously reluctant mother, Elsa, swaddle and nurse Dren, dote on her, and protect her against Clive when he states they should terminate the 'experiment'. In turn, Dren is depicted as sharing traits with Elsa, specifically a love for the lollies that we have earlier seen Elsa enjoying; a sharing of traits that foreshadows what is to come.

In the scenes that follow, Dren quickly matures, and Clive and Elsa are no longer able to hide her in the basement of the lab. They then move her to a farm owned by Elsa, where she grew up. Despite the personification of Dren, they house her in the barn. When Clive and Elsa go into the house, we are shown Elsa's old bedroom—just a mattress on the floor and a metal bucket. Comments made by both Clive and Elsa portray Elsa's experience of an abusive childhood, one in which her mother neglected her and experienced poor mental health. The introduction of Elsa's abusive childhood is then shown in the film as translating into her inability to mother Dren, whom she yells at, smacks, and punishes by taking away a cat that she has been caring for. When Elsa comes to apologise for her anger, and returns the cat to Dren, we witness a scene where Dren kills the cat. This leads to Elsa restraining her and cutting off the end of her tail, which contains a 'stinger'. Throughout the surgery Elsa records clinical audio notes, in which she states the important of dehumanizing Dren so as to resolve her cross-species identification. At this point Elsa removes Dren's clothing and jewellery.

Clive, then left alone on the property, is shown watching Dren's naked body on a video camera he had installed in the barn to monitor Dren.

We are shown Clive falling in love with Dren, and it is at this point, once Elsa discovers Clive and Dren engaged in intercourse, that we learn that the human DNA in Dren came from Elsa. Clive explains his attraction to Dren via this information, just as Dren's recapitulation to violence is explained through her genetic relationship to Elsa (daughter of an abusive mother, who was the daughter of an abusive mother). The story then takes an even stronger turn for the worse, when Elsa and Clive decide to kill Dren, who rises from her grave only to have morphed hormonally—like Ginger—so that she now appears male. After attacking Clive, Dren then rapes Elsa, before finally being killed by her. The film closes with the depiction of Elsa as pregnant with Dren's baby, and with Elsa signing a contract with the company, who sees the child-to-be as a potential new revenue stream.

We have only given a relatively brief overview of the key themes of the film, yet it should be evident how it connects with many of the concerns of a posthumanist critical kinship studies. In the film we see repeated reference to the 'natural order of things', to the power of heterosexual love to overcome male violence, the important role of genetics in determining behaviour and personality, and to the supposedly 'animal nature' of non-human species. The film also shows how humans instrumentalize and anthropomorphize other species, always to our own ends. Yet at the same time, the film potentially shows how human ways of being and understanding the personhood of other species are incapable of grasping the incommensurable differences of other species. And perhaps ultimately, the film shows how capitalism will happily instrumentalize humans in order to produce surplus. As we will see in the following sections, all of these are key points of critique in previous literature that we would consider as constituting a basis for critical kinship studies.

Three Objects of Critique

In this section we outline three objects of critique that we see as consistent concerns across previous literature that may be broadly encompassed by the term 'critical kinship studies'. By objects of critique we mean norms, values, or assumptions that are often taken for granted within Western societies at large, and which have at times shaped research on families living in such societies. When such norms, values, and assumptions are left unchallenged in research on kinship, then, they are reinforced and, indeed, reified. Critical studies of kinship, by contrast, have sought to problematize how we understand families by identifying the operations of norms, values, and assumptions as they circulate in everyday life, and in research. Doubtless there are many other objects of critique that feature in critical studies of kinship, but we have identified three that saliently repeat across the literature.

Kinship as a Nodal Point of Power

This first object of critique focuses, in particular, on how Western kinship structures function as nodal points of power within the formation of Western human personhood. More specifically, Western human kinship structures both 'insert' individuals into existing operations of state-sanctioned power hierarchies (i.e. by making only particular forms of personhood intelligible), and make normative power hierarchies appear natural. We can see this, for instance, in the film *Splice*, where not only are males and females treated as complementary partners, but also the roles of men and women are clearly differentiated and hierarchized. Thus, as Sylvia Yanagisako and Carol Delaney (1995) suggest, 'differentials of power come already embedded in culture. That is what we mean by *naturalizing power*, for power appears natural, inevitable, even god-given' (p. 1). Again, we can see this type of naturalization of power in the film *Splice*, where the specific way of understanding knowledge production depicted within the film (i.e. genetic science) is treated as akin to the work of God, thus ignoring the ways in which such knowledge is culturally produced and valorized.

Critiques of how individuals are inserted into existing power structures and how this is normalized often draw upon the work of Michel Foucault. In his series of lectures on psychiatric power, Foucault (2006) argued that the Western nuclear family functions not merely as an extension of disciplinary power, but rather as one of the central nodes through which individuals are 'inserted' into disciplinary apparatus. Foucault suggested that although in the past in Western nations the family was but one of many sites through which power came to operate upon individuals, the increased move away from sovereign power at a social and institutional level and toward a disciplinary model of power (where individuals are held responsible for their own self-monitoring) has meant that the family is left as a key site of sovereign power, within which parents direct and control the lives of children. As such, families serve as a nodal point through which individuals are 'attached' to disciplinary structures on the basis of a range of moral and legal codes surrounding families that mandate for parents to enforce actively social norms and ensure adherence to modes of self-discipline.

Writers such as Matthew Cole and Kate Stewart (2014), Chloe Taylor (2013), and Kay Anderson (1995) have all suggested that the family serves as a key site through which children are inserted into networks of power that reify human exceptionalism (see also Tjørnhøj-Thomsen 2015). Cole and Stewart, for example, focusing on children's storybooks, note that such books normalize viewing animals as meat:

> For instance, the Ladybird *First Picture Dictionary* (Berry, no date), aimed at toddlers, uses humorous illustrations of animals (among other images) as examples for 24 of the 26 letters of the alphabet. None of the images shows animals in captive situations, with the partial exception of a 'zoo' depicted without enclosures and with a snake, big cat, elephant and giraffe amiably hanging out with a 'zoo keeper'. It also includes images of animal products, such as 'egg' represented by a drawing of a fried chicken's egg. Most incongruously, it juxtaposes an illustration of a salami sausage being sliced (to illustrate 'knife') with drawings of a koala and a kangaroo. The fact that what are being sliced are the body parts of other animals is of course hidden from the toddler reader (p. 21).

As Cole and Stewart note throughout their work, these types of representations of animals depict them as 'naturally' disposed to being housed in zoos, as naturally producing foodstuffs (i.e. eggs), or, indeed, their bodies as naturally being food for humans. Anderson (1995) takes the first point up in more detail in her analysis of the role of zoos in normalizing animals in captivity. In particular, Anderson suggests that the development of ‘children’s zoos’ within wider zoological institutions serves to encourage parents to treat viewing animals in captivity as a normative part of child development. In a complex variety of ways, then, practices of Western human kinship do not only insert humans into networks of power through which humans are disciplined in particular ways, but such practices also indoctrinate children into human exceptionalism, thus naturalizating the human exertion of power (including death) over non-human animals.

Having just provided a specific example of how practices of Western kinship function to insert humans into networks of power that reify human exceptionalism, it is also important to consider examples where humans are similarly inserted into networks of power that privilege only certain forms of kinship. One way to do so is suggested through the work of Sylvia Yanagisako and Carol Delaney (1995), who emphasize the importance of focusing on cultural origin stories as a window into how any given culture understands what counts as kinship proper. As they state:

> We propose to treat origin stories neither as false tales nor as possible windows into real true origins, but as *representations* of origins. Stories of origin are told to every generation and thus affect how people imagine themselves to be. New contexts and changed circumstances can imbue the stories with new meanings and generate new interpretative challenges; in the process both the understandings and the stories can be transformed (p. 2).

We would further suggest that origin stories are important because they carry with them ontological implications: they tell of what it means to *be* in any given cultural context, and what ways of being are culturally intelligible. We have already highlighted above one such form of cultural intelligibility, namely the consumption of animals. Other forms of cultural intelligibility are evident in the types of everyday metaphors, colloquialisms, and expressions that circulate in Western societies about families. We now consider some of these with a focus on what can they tell us about Western understandings of personhood as formed through kinship as a node of power.

The first such expression is one explored in depth by David Schneider in his *A Critique of the Study of Kinship* (1984). In this text, Schneider suggests that the expression 'blood is thicker than water' is 'a fundamental axiom of European culture' (p. 199). As such, Schneider writes, '[i]t is no accident that the assumption that Blood Is Thicker Than Water is fundamental to the study of kinship' (p. 174). Schneider suggests that even if the logic of the saying—as he represents it to be, namely that blood relations have more solidity than any other—was based on some sort of evidentiary truth based in nature, it is only through a cultural lens that this comes to matter. In other words, it is only through a cultural lens in which individuals are presumed to be bonded via forms of kinship based on genealogy that 'blood relations' are treated as natural, and hence that blood relations are made to matter. Yet for our purposes here it is important to consider how even this way of understanding the expression 'blood is thicker than water' elides other possible histories of the expression.

In taking 'blood is thicker than water' to mean that blood relations between kin (more commonly now known as genetic relations) are the most important and powerful, the meaning of the word 'blood' is treated as referring to consanguinity. Yet there are other interpretations of the history of the expression available. In one, the expression is a truncated version of a longer form, namely 'the blood of the covenant is thicker than the water of the womb'. This understanding of the expression to a degree turns the commonplace one, in which kinship on the basis of consanguinity, on its head. Here the 'water of the womb' is accorded a lesser status than relations formed through covenants such as those between 'blood brothers' (i.e. those who make sworn pacts with one another), or the blood of the battlefield. In these interpretations of the expression, blood is a signifier of chosen allegiance, rather than loyalty predetermined by the fact of birth. That this alternate meaning falls to the wayside in favour of the more common Western understanding of blood kin being more important or enduring than any other forms of relationality is telling. It is telling of the power of Western origin stories to naturalize particular modes of personhood (i.e. personhood constituted through individuals involved in kinship relations that are founded upon genetic bonds).

A similar logic to the most commonly known understanding of 'blood is thicker than water' appears in the expression 'you can choose your friends but you can't choose your family'. Contained within this common expression are a number of assumptions about the difference between kith and kin. The latter, the expression presumes, are there by default. This type of presumption is reliant upon the expectation that all family members are related genealogically, a presumption that removes family from the realm of choice, and locates it instead in the realm of nature. Moreover, the treatment of kin as something you do not choose reinforces the idea that you cannot walk away from family: family is permanent, constant, and everlasting. Kith, by comparison, are chosen, potentially less permanent, less enduring. Notably, the Oxford English Dictionary defines kith and kin as relational: kith is defined as 'the persons who are known or familiar, taken collectively; one's friends, fellow-countrymen, or neighbours; acquaintance; *in later use sometimes confused with kin*' (emphasis added). Here, then, kith is not to be confused with kin. And here again, a particular form of personhood is reified, one in which each person is presumed to have an origin within a kinship network that is distinct from kith, and through which each person is inserted into networks of power in which kin are valorized over kith.

Importantly, when speaking of the distinction between kith and kin, it is necessary to introduce a third distinction signalled in the work of Marc Shell (1986), who suggests that animal companions are often understood neither as kith nor kin, but as kind or species. As we noted in Chapter 1, and as we will explore in more detail in Chapter 6, this is not to suggest that some humans do not experience genuine and meaningful kinship relations with animal companions. Rather, our purpose in drawing attention to Shell's argument is to suggest that the language of kith and kin, itself exclusionary with regard to particular human–human relationships, is further exclusionary in the example where non-human animals are viewed as a 'kind' (i.e. simply as a species grouping, rather than as having their own forms of personhood and sociality). Shell, however, troubles this notion in highlighting that:

> Family pets are generally mythological beings on the line between human kind and animal kind, or beings thought of as being on the line between…

> Sometimes we really cannot tell whether a being is our kind or not our kind, our kin or not our kin; we cannot tell what we are and to whom (p. 142).

The (artificial) distinction between kith, kind, and kind, then, is a hallmark of human exceptionalism, a topic that we will return to across the chapters of this book.

A third common expression highlights how the logic of kith versus kin plays out in terms of what constitutes intelligible family membership. Consider, for example, the expressions 'like mother like daughter', or 'like father like son'. In the film *Splice* we see this type of logic play out in the assumption that Dren liked a particular type of lollies because Elsa, to whom she was genetically related and who is positioned as akin to her mother, also liked them. This example, we would suggest, emphasizes the assumptions underpinning the logic of expressions such as 'like mother like daughter': the 'like' is part and parcel of the same logic contained in the common understanding of the expression 'blood is thicker than water'. In other words, the 'like' is constituted more in line with blood, than water. This would appear important in the context of the film *Splice*. Although in the film Clive is initially positioned as resembling a father to Dren (given his role in creating her and through his relationship with Elsa), the logic of his sexual relationship with Dren is based upon the depiction of them as kith, not kin. Because Dren is not genetically related to Clive, she is not, in effect, his daughter. While the film evokes a sense of horror at the cross-species intercourse, and although the scene of intercourse is certainly not outside the realms of father–daughter incest, there is a degree to which the latter is resolved through the depiction of Dren as a proxy for Elsa herself, rather than as a daughter of Elsa and Clive. There is a sense, then, in which 'like mother like daughter' is both a claim to kinship based on sameness, while also being an injunction upon incest arising from sameness. The construction of intelligible romantic relationships, then, hinges to a degree in Western societies on whether one is alike another person, with like here referring narrowly to a genetic sameness.

Importantly, another and final expression we now discuss demonstrates how 'likeness' as a basis for kinship (and thus a prohibition on romantic intimacy) serves to notionally exclude certain people from full membership of the category ‘kin’. Consider the expression ‘he must be the postman’s/milkman’s son’. This type of expression is typically used when a child looks noticeably different to their father, the implication being that the child was conceived by the mother having sex with a man other than the father. In this expression, then, familial difference is rendered suspect. Although contemporary use of the expression is typically humorous, like all expressions it has its basis in broader concerns and, indeed, cultural anxieties, specifically here those about children born ‘illegitimately’. This final expression, then, demonstrates that the ‘blood’ of kinship can always be open to question should assumptions about ‘likeness’ be read as rendering paternity in doubt.[1] Western kinship categories as nodes of power are thus regulated by adherence to particular lay understandings or origin stories that treat only particular forms of kinship as intelligible, and thus only particular forms of kinship as producing acceptable modes of kinship.

Of course for those positioned outside such norms of kinship and personhood, problems abound. As we suggested in the previous chapter, the flexibility of Western understandings of kinship allows for the incorporation and domestication of ‘diverse’ families. However, this is not the same as saying that kinship norms fundamentally change through engagement with difference. Instead, those kinship forms located outside the norm become sites of intense scrutiny; offered acceptance only through approximation. And perhaps more importantly for our argument here, through adherence to the rule of kinship as a nodal point of power. This point is rendered especially clear in the work of Aaron Goodfellow (2015), in his ethnographic work with gay fathers. Focusing specifically on the experiences of a gay adoptive father, Goodfellow suggests that one of his participants, Steve, who had adopted a boy who had experienced considerable abuse when living with his birth family, was only possible because Steve could demonstrate that he had come to:

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[1] Note that there is no equivalent idiom with respect to questioned maternity, underscoring the foundational premise that mothers always, invariably, grow their offspring. And, indeed, ‘gestational mother’ cements this with respect to egg or embryo donation (Nordqvist & Smart, 2014).

> [L]earn the qualities that define a proper parent by participating in the operations of a state-sponsored institution. While working in a halfway house for boys, he came to know both what the state considered the proper function of a family to be and what a family could and could not do for a child (p. 104).

As Goodfellow goes on to state:

> When Steve takes up the state's image of paternity, state forms of power come to overlay his sense of self in such a way that experience becomes inseparable from the operations of the state… The convergence of such forms of power within Steve, as a subject, means that both his imagination of himself and his experience of fatherhood have to be understood as embedded within the state's efforts to regulate the social order […] In Steve's experience it is by possessing the qualities inhering in the state's image of a paternal figure and objectively showing a commitment to raising responsible and respected children that one successfully achieves the status of a parent in the eyes of the state (pp. 104–6).

As we have suggested above, given kinship is a node of power, these points made by Goodfellow hold true for all kinship forms, even if they potentially hold especially true for kinship forms constituted outside the norm of reproductive heterosex. What requires elaboration, then, are the specific ways in which individuals and families in Western societies are inculcated into norms of kinship in which kinship is defined through 'blood', 'likeness', and acceptance of state power. This is the topic to which we turn in the next section.

The Order of Things

The second object of critique we raise here is one that we have already briefly outlined in Chapter 1, and which was a feature of the film *Splice*, namely the idea that when thinking about kinship there is a particular order in which events occur—a developmental logic. This idea of a natural order of kinship plays out in at least three interrelated ways, which we will now explore. The first of these relates to the dominant narrative of pronatalism in Western societies, and the impact of this on those who choose not to or cannot have children, individuals who are positioned at the peripheries of kinship. The second relates to the development of children, and the normative assumptions about what child development should look like. The third brings the first two together within a broader framework of what Lee Edelman (2004) refers to as 'reproductive futurism', namely the assumption that all lives should be oriented towards a politics of development in which kinship as normatively constituted is the proper trajectory for all people, and as such constitutes the only valid form of personhood.

With respect to pronatalism, the injunction to conceive and raise children is central to the construction of what is seen as properly constituting manhood and womanhood. As we suggested in Chapter 1 following Gayle Rubin (1975), the construction of women and men as naturally paired couples, and the depiction of specific roles most appropriate to women and men serves to fulfil the aims of capitalism to produce surplus. In so doing, the binary conceptualization of women and men and the specific roles expected of them has particular implications with regard to pronatalism. For women, the expectation of childbearing and mothering creates a framework in which the allocation of personhood to women centrally revolves around bearing children (although this does not fall uniformly across all women: pronatalism impacts more squarely on heterosexual women than lesbian women, for example). At the same time, however, and as Ivett Szalma and Judit Takács (2015) note—based on analysis of Hungarian longitudinal (2001, 2004, 2008) life course panel survey data - in certain countries there are '(hetero) normatively prescribed forms of childlessness' (p. 1048), such that the reproductive capacities of some women are less valued than those of others.

As we suggested in Chapter 1, a posthumanist account of critical kinship studies aims to identify how 'the human' in humanism is constituted. Pronatalism, we would suggest, is one form through which the female human is constituted as intelligible through her role as a childbearer. Importantly, this role is cordoned off from the childbearing role of females in other species, where fecundity is taken as a symbol of animalism. Human female personhood, then, is constructed through a series of paired opposites: reproductive capacity, but in moderation. Consider, for example, television programmes such as *Jon & Kate Plus 8*, a US reality television show that ran from 2007 to 2011 and aired 150 episodes filmed in the family home. Or the international media attention given to the woman dubbed 'octomom', Nadya Denise Doud-Suleman, an American women who gave birth to octuplets in January 2009. Programmes and people such as these demonstrate to us not only the fascination of the general public with 'exceptional' families, but also how such families are depicted as not entirely bound by cultural norms that regulate appropriate human reproduction.

Of course the converse of a disdain for human fecundity is also evident. This is most noticeable in relation to cultural depictions of women who do not have children, whether this be by choice or owing to infertility (e.g. Giles et al. 2009). While to a certain degree the latter group of women are accorded sympathy, it is nonetheless the case that the personhood of either group of women is viewed as compromised owing to the cultural perception of a failure to adhere to a pronatalist logic (e.g. Shaw 2011). The experience of feelings of such failure is evident across the literature on women who are not mothers, with the work of Stephanie Rich et al. (2011) providing a clear example:

> The women in this study emphasised strongly an awareness of dominant discourses through which motherhood is presented as normal and natural, and consequently, childlessness was considered an unnatural and abnormal state […] The role of motherhood for women is often presented as preordained, with women's natural instincts and bodies being perceived as suited to reproduction and bearing children. Through this discourse, as the position of mother is presented as natural, childlessness through its failure to realise a woman's natural instinct and imperative, is presented as unnatural (p. 234).

As Rich and her colleagues note, here again the cultural expectation of pronatalism becomes naturalized, so much so that having children is seen as 'natural', with not having children seen as 'unnatural'. Yet as we suggested in Chapter 1, the 'naturalness' of reproduction is a product of systems in which reproduction is valorized. In other words, a pronatalist society will always promote practices and technologies of kinship that encourage child-birth, increasingly by whatever means. Of course, as we intimated above, suffice to say that not all women are uniformly inculcated into a norm of pronatalism. Given the range of differing qualifications of what properly constitutes the human, it is more correct to note that although some women are *expected* to reproduce, other women are not, and others may well be prohibited from reproducing or penalized for their reproduction, as Carolyn Morell (2000) notes:

> The fundamental paradox of the new pronatalist culture of reproduction is that powerful beliefs about women's proper place coexist with politically powerful and institutionalized beliefs about who should become a mother and under what circumstances. For white, heterosexual, able-bodied, middle-class and wealthy women, ever-expanding reproductive technologies and legal paths to parenthood create options and opportunities undreamed of only a decade ago. For women without such privileges, popular consensus and social policies neither support their desires to mother nor their actual mothering work (p. 315).

Therefore, we can see here how 'entitlement' to reproduce, and pronatalist abrogation for those who do not is strongly affected by an assemblage of subject positions.

So far, we have focused on normative expectations placed upon women to reproduce. For men, the logic of reproduction also holds true, albeit in potentially different ways. Given what we discussed in the previous section about the differentiation between kith and kin and the importance of genealogy and genetics in the determination of what constitutes the latter, it is important to consider how this specifically plays out regarding men's reproductive capacity.

No less so than is the case for women, men are encouraged to invest in pronatalism, although we would suggest that the founding logic of such an investment is differentially related to human male personhood. Indeed, and echoing the film *Splice* and Clive's suggestion that it would be natural for two males housed together to want to kill each other, there is a degree to which while women's reproductive capacity is both naturalized yet regulated through a disdain of fecundity, the nature of men is arguably depicted as more closely aligned with males in other species. The injunction to 'beget the son and heir', for example, places emphasis less on the bearing or raising of children as constituting male personhood proper, and more precisely men's role in conception, as Liberty Barnes (2014) suggests in her work on men and infertility:

> When couples desire parenthood and a male factor impedes conception, men experience role failure. They fail to be reliable husbands and to become fathers. They also fail to prove the functionality of their essentially masculine parts and therefore fail as men. But failure is not an easily accepted explanation for men or an adequate way to make meaning of what might be a very long-term experience. In other words, failure is not an option, and gender work is mandatory (p. 85).

Again, if we consider the film *Splice*, when Clive inserts the combinant DNA into the empty ovum, Elsa refers to this as fucking. In other words, Clive as the agent of reproduction is the one fucking; the one enacting conception. As much as pronatalism is wrapped up in normative constructions of femininity for women, then, masculinity for men is wrapped up in normative constructions of fertilization.

Given the imbrication of pronatalism in constructions of normative human male personhood, then, it is unsurprising that the literature on men and childlessness has similarly found that for men who wish to have children, but who cannot, this can be accompanied by considerable feelings of loss (Hadley 2012). Importantly, we would differentiate to a degree here between findings in relation to women and childlessness, and research findings in relation to men and childlessness. Although to an extent the feelings of loss experienced by men and women who cannot have children may be similar, what differs are the cultural expectations. If bearing and raising a child is normatively central to human female personhood (or at least amongst a particular privileged group of women), then all aspects (i.e. conceiving, bearing, and raising) are expected. If we are correct in our suggestion that for men a greater emphasis is placed upon fertilization as a signifier of human male personhood, then the implications are somewhat different. This is not to say that many men do not wish to raise and care for children, and that the loss of the opportunity to do so can lead to what Robin Hadley and Terry Hanley (2011) refer to as 'vulnerability and depression' (p. 66). Rather, our point is that perhaps for many men the experienced drive to have children within the context of a pronatalist society is wrapped up in the requirement to prove masculinity through fertility, a point we will return to below.

Obviously the claims we have made above are rather blunt, and there are many variations and nuances in terms of how individual people experience the injunctions of pronatalism. What we have sought to suggest, however, is that the imperative to have children is a product of capitalism and the push to produce surplus, and this is framed by the naturalization of differences between women and men, and the construction of essential roles for women and men. Such processes of naturalization both rely upon an implicit comparison with what is assumed to occur 'in nature', while being entirely cultural productions of what constitutes human female and male personhood proper.

Of course, when a child is born those involved in its conception and birth are then subject to another layer of expectations about what constitutes appropriate personhood for parents, driven by expectations about what children should be. This moral injunction reflects assumptions about Western human personhood more broadly, as elaborated in Erica Burman's (1994) insightful reading of the literature on child development. Burman suggests that there are at least three key assumptions that inform expectations about raising human children. These are: (1) the assumption that genetically related infants and adults 'naturally' bond to one another; (2) that parents (and adults more generally) will always (automatically) know what is best for children; and (3) that children's needs are best met through the care provided by an opposite sex (preferably married) couple.

These are, of course, culturally located accounts of what constitutes human child development, and reify what Barbara Baird (2008) has referred to as 'child fundamentalism', namely a 'discursive resource that is put to work in the service of a particular worldview', one in which 'the figure of 'the child' is [mobilized] in such ways that constitute this figure as a fixed and absolute category' (p. 293). Importantly, and as both Burman (1994) and Haraway (1989) argue, accounts of human child development are wrapped up in human understandings of animal kinship, and, more specifically, human impositions upon animal kinship that are then used to justify human kinship patterns. It is worth here citing Haraway (1989) at length with regard to her critique of Harry Harlow's (1971) experiments on macaque monkeys:

> If ever there was a device designed to let animals exceed their feral achievements, this was it. 'The nuclear family apparatus… is a redesigned, refined, replanned and magnified playpen apparatus where four pairs of male and female macaques live with their offspring in a condition of blissful monogamy. In the nuclear family apparatus each and every male has physical access to his own female and communicative access to all others' (Harlow et al. 1971, p. 541). The monogamous father became an iconic Harlow natural-technical object of knowledge in a period of great concern for 'the family' that characterized suburban American in the 1960s. The nuclear family apparatus was part of the incitement to discourse about sex and gender in the privileged biopolitical arena where power is embodied in modern societies (p. 240).

As Haraway indicates, the foundations of human accounts of child development are premised upon human experimentation with non-human animals, experiments that by their very design naturalized the human understandings of kinship upon which they were based. In other words, by engaging with the life worlds of macaque monkeys through the standpoint of humanism, Harlow was only able to see the monkeys as 'naturally' reflecting what he then suggested should form the basis of human child development models, precisely because his research was always already shaped by assumptions about what human development should be. The abuse of non-human animals under the leadership of Harlow, then, was a guise aimed at providing 'evidence' for something that was already taken for granted, namely that female–male pairs living in isolated monogamous kin arrangements were the most likely to provide the best outcomes for children. That Harlow found this to be true is thus not surprising, given that this assumption was *a priori* of the research itself. Treating as taken for granted the 'naturalness' of human child development as part of the natural order of things thus has much to tell us about Western human personhood in terms of why standardized developmental accounts hold sway.

The abuse of non-human animals in human clinical work is not, of course, the only way in which non-human animals are incorporated into normative understandings of development. Non-human animals—and here especially animal companions such as dogs and cats—are often incorporated into normative understandings of child development. For example, in her work on young lesbian, gay, and bisexual people and family planning, Danni Pearson (2015) suggests that among the young people she interviewed there was a prevalent narrative in which couples decided that they would first have an animal companion, as a 'trial run' for having a human child (see also Tjørnhøj-Thomsen 2015, for how animal companions may stand in for a human child in the context of infertility). Animal companions are thus the testing ground for competency and confidence in raising a human child. For other humans, and as we will explore in more detail in Chapter 4, animal companions may be treated as actual children, raised instead of human children. In saying this, our point is not to discount the loving relationships that may occur across species, as we highlighted with respect to the work of Nik Taylor (2012) in Chapter 1. Rather, our point here is about how other species are at times incorporated into a human developmentalist logic whereby what is expected of animal companions may be likened to what is otherwise expected of human children. Finally, in relation to human children, animal companions, both historically and in the present, are often treated as tools for teaching human children about, for example, empathy or morality (Fox 2006). Again, then, how we understand a human developmentalist logic is often intertwined in how other species are co-opted so as to justify such a logic.

Turning to our final point about the order of things, Edelman's (2004) account of reproductive futurism affords us insight into the ways in which a particular logic of Western human personhood shapes both pronatalism and developmentalism. Importantly, in his critique of reproductive futurism Edelman critiques a humanist agenda, namely one in which the perpetuation of 'the species' is a key agenda of pronatalism. Such an agenda, of course, accepts as taken for granted the superiority of the human species, and our importance to the planet, ignoring the destruction of the planet and other species wrought by the human species.

Incorporated into the logic of reproductive futurism is not only human exceptionalism, but also the importance of sustaining human life. As such, not only is the drive to populate a salient feature of reproductive futurism, but also a drive to extend life, and thus to increase productivity, again returning us to the centrality of capitalism to practices of Western human kinship. Twine (2010) suggests as much in his posthumanist critique of transhumanism, where he posits:

> The transhumanist unease with death, where the ageing process is redefined as pathology, is characteristic of a movement unreconciled with the ecological situatedness of the human, and determined to broaden further the modernist notion of human freedom as an escape from 'nature' (pp. 182–83).

As Twine suggests, reproductive futurism is as much wedded to the naturalization of reproductivity as it is wedded to the idea of exceeding 'nature' in the form of extending life. Perhaps to an extent this provides some further explanation as to the account of men, reproduction, and personhood that we elaborated above; namely, that the drive to reproduction represents something of a drive to immortality through genealogy. In our own research on men who are sperm donors, for example, this exact language of immortality is often reported as a driving factor in the decision to donate sperm (e.g. Riggs and Scholz 2011). Although as we suggested above, there are many shades of grey in what motivates anyone to take up a role within a broader pronatalist agenda, it nonetheless seems important to acknowledge the specifically gendered ways in which reproductive futurism is experienced. Certainly, research with women who choose not to have children suggests that a decision not to have children can, for some women, result not only in the denial of a place within a reproductive future, but also the denial of a normative life course trajectory, where maturity is considered a corollary of ageing:

> Interestingly, it appears that despite the fact that Tamara has become chronologically older over time, due to her status as an older childless woman, Tamara is perceived as having aged, but not necessarily having matured. This finding is consistent with research by Maher and Saugeres, where some childless women felt they were perceived as immature for not wanting children (Rich et al. 2011, p. 235).

This quote from Rich and colleagues is notable for the ways in which it draws our attention yet again to the ambivalent nature of Western human accounts of kinship. And more specifically, the ways in which the purportedly natural order of things is framed by a logic of Western liberal humanism. On the one hand, the participant referred to as Tamara makes agentic choices about her life, thus fulfilling one of the expectations of liberal humans: to be autonomous agentic citizens. Yet because Tamara's choices do not conform to a pronatalist logic, and because they do not conform to a form of reproductive futurism through which we are expected to propel ourselves into immortality, Tamara is an ageing body with no purpose (i.e. no children). As we shall see later in this chapter, this type of ambivalence is precisely the type of thing we would wish to submit to analytic scrutiny within a posthumanist critical kinship studies.

The Valorization of Genetic Relatedness

In this third and final point of critique, we focus on one of the areas that has been given arguably the most attention in critical work on kinship over the last three decades; namely, the ways in which genetic relatedness between human kin is valorized. We have already touched on this point above when we discussed Western cultural expressions regarding kinship that demonstrate the role of origin stories in the constitution of Western human personhood. In this section we explore the topic in more detail, again highlighting the ambivalence at the core of Western cultural accounts of genetics and kinship.

The privileged value accorded to genetically related kin is well and extensively documented, from the early work of Schneider (1968) onwards, so we will not rehearse the evidence for it here (although see, for example, Finkler 2000; Nelkin and Lindee 1996). What is of perhaps more interest to us is research that examines how genetic relatedness is made to matter, especially in contexts where genetic relatedness may arguably be considered to be questionable or, indeed, non-existent (e.g. in the case of adults who have children through donor conception). Conversely, we are also particularly interested in contexts where it would seem that genetic relatedness, when reduced to the ‘bare facts’, may potentially undermine the equation of genetics with kinship. Charis Thomson (2001) argues as much from her ethnographic work in fertility services, where she suggests that:

> One might expect to find the connections enhanced between relatedness as determined by biological practice and socially meaningful answers to questions about who is related to whom. The science would help to hone or perfect an understanding of such terms as ‘mother’, ‘father’, and ‘child’. Tracking biomedical interventions in infertility medicine from the perspective of kinship theory reveals something altogether different, however. Rather than finding the natural ground to social categories exposed at its most concrete level, one discovers a number of disruptions of the categories of relatedness (especially parent and child, but also sibling, aunt, uncle, and grandparent). In particular, one sees that the connections between the biological facts taken to be relevant to kinship and socially meaningful kinship categories are highly indeterminate. Keeping biological and social accounts aligned, and utilizing biology as a resource for understanding the latter, takes work (p. 176).

In the particular chapter that this quote is taken from, Thomson outlines six cases where heterosexual couples utilized assisted reproductive technologies to achieve pregnancies. The cases varied widely, but what the chapter leaves us with is a sense in which genetic relatedness, even in its barest form in terms of ‘whose egg and whose sperm’, never easily translates into an assumption about kinship. One of the examples provided by Thomson is from the experiences of a woman who used her daughter’s ovum and her new husband’s sperm to create an embryo that she then carried. While the husband was a step-father to her daughter, the woman’s account involved complex moral gerrymandering in order to allocate to herself the role of mother, and to discount claims to incest. In this example, then, genetics does not equal kinship in the way it is typically understood (i.e. the daughter will not be the mother of the child conceived of her ovum, but rather an aunt). Drawing on the work of Carsten (2004), Petra Nordqvist and Carol Smart (2014) suggest that in such examples,

> What we might see emerging … is the pressure felt among non-genetic parents to make themselves into *proper* parents because they were unable to tap into a cultural understanding of their parenthood as simply given (p. 138).

In other words, although genetics is presumed to equal kinship, and indeed this is the case for many people, for a significant minority of people kinship is formed through the genetic materials of others. This requires considerable work in order to arrive at an account where genetic material—typically understood as the foundation of kinship in Western cultures and accounts of personhood—is reworked as simply raw material unconnected from the roles of the people from whom it is sourced. In examples such as this, then, the expressions 'blood is thicker than water' and 'you can choose your friends but not your family' are shown to be not uniformly true.

As we suggested in the previous section, however, the value of genetic relatedness and the capacity of people to negotiate kinship relationships outside of genetic relations may very well be gendered. In her work on Australian women accessing assisted reproductive services, Christine Crowe (1985) suggests that while generally women more than men may be willing to utilize reproductive services that enable them to carry a child conceived from another woman's ovum, this requires an investment in the messages that such women receive from clinics, in which their biological (i.e. gestational) as opposed to genetic role is emphasized. Crowe suggests that for such women, while they may otherwise be able to reconcile their desire for motherhood with their non-genetic relationship to their child, the male-centric nature of clinical services returns the matter to the realm of relatedness as determined by science, albeit through the realm of biology rather than genetics. That this both reifies the presumed 'natural' role of women as childbearers as discussed earlier, and legitimizes kinship through biology, Crowe suggests, serves to minimize the extent to which women, absent of clinic discourses about relatedness, may be willing to bear children without privileging specific normative practices of Western human kinship.

This point is particularly salient for those who foster or adopt, and for whom a claim to kinship is made absent of either biology or genetics.

To return to the work of Schneider outlined in Chapter 1, we can usefully consider the differences between modified and unmodified kinship categories. What does it mean, for example, for a woman who conceives and bears a child to be simply called a mother, while another woman who has a child through adoption is called an 'adoptive mother'. Similarly, what does it mean for a child conceived of a donor embryo to be called a 'sibling' or even 'child' of the family who donated the embryo, yet in the case of foster care it is often the case that foster siblings are referred to as such (i.e. 'foster siblings', rather than simply 'siblings'). These are issues that we will attend to in more detail in Chapter 5.

Concluding Thoughts

In this chapter we have outlined three specific points of critique that we see across much of the critical literature on practices of Western human kinship. That all three overlap and are co-determined in many ways highlights the importance of the understanding of assemblage (Puar 2013) outlined in Chapter 1, in which it is the connections between discourses and the modes of intelligibility that they produce that must be our focus. To put this another way, looking solely at accounts of human life course, or developmental accounts of childhood, or the priority accorded to genetic relatedness, can only each provide us with part of the picture that makes up practices of Western human kinship. So for readability, then, we have separated the three points of critique out from one another, yet they can only be understood as mutually constitutive. This is perhaps most evident in the film *Splice*, where shared genetics are depicted as determining developmental outcomes, just as the normative life course trajectory of having children (even if across species) shapes the salience accorded to shared genetics. And as with the many examples we have provided in this chapter with regard to the location of non-human animals in the context of practices of Western human kinship, much of what sits at the heart of such practices are forms of human exceptionalism, constituted through complex assemblages of technology, personhood, and affect. And it is to these assemblages that we turn in the following chapter.

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3

Tools of Critique

A Story

We begin this chapter with a story taken from the television show *Botched*. Each episode of *Botched* features three people who have previously had plastic surgery that they report went wrong. The show revolves around the work of two plastic surgeons—Dr Terry Dubrow and Dr Paul Nassif, both renowned for work undertaken in their Californian clinic—who attempt to 'fix' what has previously gone wrong. In the episode that we focus on here, which first aired in the US on 5 June 2015, we are introduced to a young woman named Tanya, who provides the following narrative:

> Hi, my name is Tanya, I'm 28 years old, and my stomach looks like a reverse four pack. For the last 24 years I've had to live with a scar on my stomach that is a constant reminder of the twin that I could have had.

As Tanya shares more of her narrative, she reveals that at the age of four she had surgery to remove a tumour 'the size of a softball' on her left ovary. More importantly for our focus here, Tanya reports that during

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the surgery the doctors found ‘hair and teeth’ in the tumour, and that they were

> 99.9 per cent sure that it was a twin. After having my twin removed, there’s always just been that void. Seeing twins grow up around me it was really difficult, thinking ‘that could’ve been me’… I would have had that companion, that closeness, that ‘you’re reading each other’s minds’ sense of closeness. That’s the loneliness that I feel on a day-to-day basis.

As the episode introduces the viewer to further details about Tanya’s life, we are shown that Tanya has two sisters, who appear caring and supportive of Tanya, and while respecting her distress about the scars on her stomach, tell her it is ‘all in her head’ that she feels like she cannot go out in public. Tanya responds by saying that because her sisters are ‘skinny and cute’, she feels different to them, again emphasizing the importance of the twin that she believes she lost (who would have reflected something back to her that she does not see reflected in her sisters). When Tanya goes to see doctors Dubrow and Nassif, however, they inform her:

> Dr Dubrow: That wasn’t a twin. That was in your ovary. So not a twin of yours. A teratoma is a benign, soft tissue tumour that’s composed of cells from many different cell type origins, like hair, teeth…
>
> Dr Nassif: Some of that is your chromosomal makeup. One hundred percent of yours. So that is why [the doctors who operated on Tanya’s tumour] said it is *like* a twin. So it’s *like* a twin of you personally. It’s a mini you. Just pieces of you in that little tumour.
>
> Dr Dubrow: So take that void and delete it. Throw it in the trash. You don’t have a void. You have these two [gesturing to Tanya’s two sisters who attended the appointment with her].

The episode then cuts to Tanya saying ‘I am completely in shock. I don’t think that I’m going to be able to completely let it go. I think it may take time… I’ve been living for so many years thinking I have a twin’.

Tanya’s story is especially salient in the context of the present chapter, as it highlights the central role that kinship plays in Western human conceptualizations of personhood, and specifically here something of the interplay between genetics, kinship, and what it means to be a person formed at the intersections of discourses about relatedness, sameness, and loss. For Tanya, her four-year-old understanding of the surgery outcomes was that she had within her a twin, one that was taken away from her, and for which she experienced an ongoing sense of loss and grief. Despite having other family members with whom she was close, Tanya longed for 'that "reading each other's minds" sense of closeness'. For Tanya, then, her subjectivity was wrapped up in a sense that she was only half of an entire puzzle, and without her 'other half' she struggled to develop a strong sense of self as an autonomous individual. This idea of needing an 'other half' to complete us is a prevailing discourse in Western societies, one through which many of us come to understand what it means to be intelligible, and through which our decisions about who we count as kin, who we view as romantic partners, and the importance we place upon romantic partners, are determined (Riggs 2015). As we will see in the following sections, discourses about the formation of the Western subject are central in terms of how we critique understandings of kinship.

Further, with regard to the tools we introduce that provide us with ways of critiquing the normative understandings of practices of Western human kinship outlined in the Chapter 2, Tanya's story also highlights the importance of focusing on the affective aspects of kinship. In the extract above, Dr Dubrow instructs Tanya to 'throw it in the trash'. Here Dr Dubrow relegates the tumour simply to the role of biological waste, ignoring that for Tanya it was formative of her personhood, hence her statement 'I don't think that I'm going to be able to completely let it go'. The 'it' of Dr Dubrow's 'throw it in the bin' and the 'it' of Tanya's 'I don't think I'm going to be able to completely let it go' are thus of two different registers. For Dr Dubrow the 'it' is a void, a product of the false sense of loss of a twin. For Tanya the 'it', we might suggest, is her sense of self (as a twin). Acknowledging that kinship—even if in this instance 'fictive'—has an affective component, one that determines what and who will matter, is an important tool for unpacking why it is that particular accounts of kinship within Western societies hold sway, and why they are potentially resistant to change.

Finally, Tanya's story also highlights the power of Western discourses of kinship as technologies that naturalize and normalize particular ways of thinking about relatedness. We can see this most clearly in Dr Nassif's suggestion that what was removed from Tanya's ovary was *like* a twin. More correctly, however, and following the description of teratomas (from the Greek for 'monstrous tumour') provided by both doctors, what was removed from Tanya's ovary was actually more like a clone. While monozygotic twins are, at the point of conception, genetically identical, typically across the lifespan some epigenetic differences will eventuate as a result of environmentally caused mutations. For example, recent identical twin studies have found that the concordance rates for cancer in identical twins may be as low as 40 per cent (Fraga et al. 2005). The idea that a collection of cell types in a tumour constitutes a 'twin', then, reinforces one particular technology of kinship whereby relationality is determined by genetics, hence a collection of cell types is referred to using the metaphor of 'a twin', precisely because practices of Western human kinship are constructed via norms of genetic relatedness, as we have discussed in previous chapters. As we shall see in the following sections, these key themes in Tanya's story constitute the three tools of critique that we outline in respect to posthumanist critical kinship studies.

Three Tools of Critique

In our reading of the literature that takes a critical approach to the study of kinship, there are three key tools of critique that predominate. These tools function as lenses through which to critically view practices of Western human kinship, lenses that function across a body of work to highlight how Western kinship practices are naturalized. The first tool of critique that we elaborate is arguably the most salient and prevalent, namely an understanding of human kinship as a technology. As we will elaborate below, this does not involve focusing on technologies of kinship *per se*, although often kinship technologies are the topic. Rather, it involves focusing on how particular human kinship practices produce particular modes of personhood. The second tool of critique then turns to examine the question of personhood within theorizing on kinship, and specifically elaborates an account of subjectivity prevalent across the critical literature on kinship, in which individual people are seen as 'folds' of wider discourses. Finally, we outline the importance of focusing on affect, and particularly affective ambivalence, in understanding kinship practices. Such an approach, we suggest, moves beyond simply focusing on the emotion work of kinship (although this remains important), to incorporate a focus on assemblages of affect through which kinship norms are both produced and challenged.

Human Kinship as Technology

In elaborating this first tool of critique, we draw upon the work of Sarah Franklin (e.g. 1997, 2013a, b) and Donna Haraway (e.g. 1989, 1991, 2008), both of whom have extensively argued for an account of Western kinship practices as technologies that produce particular ontologies and thus forms of personhood. We explore the arguments presented by both Franklin and Haraway, before then turning to a specific example of kinship as technology, namely in the work of Liberty Barnes (2014) on the topic of male factor infertility.

In her now significant body of research on *in vitro* fertilization (IVF), Sarah Franklin has elaborated an account in which Western kinship practices activate particular substances which are seen as central to personhood. In particular, Franklin suggests that the complex performative work involved in creating parents through reproductive technologies produces the genetic materials contained in sperm and ovum as mattering. In other words, the existence of substances that are referred to in Western societies as sperm and ova is naturalized through a logic in which reproduction is reduced to the bringing together of these two substances. Overlooked in such a reductive account, Franklin suggests, is that this is one very specific, culturally located, account of human reproduction, one of many that exist in the world. Thus, as Franklin (2013a) suggests:

> What the looking glass of IVF helps to reveal is how technologies of kinship and gender, among others, activate reproductive substance, not the other way around. Indeed, IVF makes explicit how and why technologies of kinship not only organize reproduction but are reproductive substance—and thus how reproductivity is itself produced, worked up, or cultivated (p. 152).

Haraway (1991) provides us with an account of how technologies of sex naturalize the cultural aspects of reproduction, referring again to capitalism as a mode of creating surplus that is reliant upon discrete reproductive units (i.e. the heterosexual couple) that are themselves naturalized:

> In ‘nature’ profit is measured in the currency of genes, and reproduction or replication is the natural imperative. But reproduction is not sex. In fact, sex is a dangerous modern innovation, one so challenging to older logics of individual profit-making as to require considerable attention. Like any other capitalist system, natural replication systems are compelled to make radical innovations all the time, or be outclassed by the dynamic competition. Sex is such an advance… Sex is a constraint on the formation of societies because sexually reproducing individuals are not identical genetically. They therefore compete with different investment strategies (pp. 60–61).

Bringing together Franklin and Haraway’s work (as the former already does in her *Biological Relatives*), we can suggest that technologies of personhood—such as we saw in the film *Splice* in Chapter 2, where males and females are seen as complementary pairs that reproduce harmoniously—serves to naturalize heterosex. Through such technologies the fact of difference ‘in nature’ is modified into a logic of sameness in which sex thus becomes a tool for producing sameness. As we suggested in Chapter 2, common expressions about families emphasize a logic of sameness as central to Western definitions of kinship. So too, while sex normatively relies upon the binary pairing of male and female, paradoxically it does so through the production of a form of personhood that is reliant upon a logic of sameness (i.e. that both males and females work towards a similar goal of reproduction).

This type of account is explored in detail in the work of Karla Armbruster (2010) in her consideration of the human regulation of canine sexuality and reproduction. As Armbruster suggests, the injunction to ‘spay and neuter your pets’ brings with it a range of assumptions about non-human animals, evoking, as Armbruster suggests, an idea of ‘raw sexual instinct’ (p. 756). Armbruster goes on to suggest, and counter to claims that spaying and neutering is 'kind' to animal companions, that what is being regulated through the exertion of control over the sexuality and reproduction of animal companions is control over human sexuality, specifically by drawing a line between sexuality that is unregulated (i.e. 'natural') and sexuality that is culturally regulated, with the former thus seen as warranting intervention. Given this precise same logic has variously been applied to a wide range of humans (e.g. people living with disabilities, people who are racialized as non-white), Armbruster's analysis of canine sexuality and reproduction is incisive in terms of reflecting upon how particular practices of Western human kinship serve to render intelligible only particular forms of humanhood (i.e. those that are culturally sanctioned).

Understanding Western human kinship as a technology, then, encourages us to focus on how certain kinship practices serve to normalize only particular ways of thinking about reproduction, and, further, to treat particular forms of (genetically related) kinship as natural, rather than as culturally reified ways of thinking about relationality and kinship. Thus, as Franklin (2013a) suggests:

> In the same way the textile industry cannot be explained by a desire for clothing, IVF is not simply a response to a desire to have children. *In vitro* fertilization is indexical of its modern heritage, a combined apparatus of family and gender norms, scientific research programs, legal instruments, bureaucratic procedures, technical skills, and ethical codes (and so on). Now an expanding global service sector, the IVF industry has in turn become a generative matrix for new technologies, procedures, products, and markets. This matrix is also the source of new biological relations and relativities that exceed the frame of existing concepts and understandings, much as they also both rely upon and extend familiar models of biology, technology, and kinship (p. 18).

This quote from Franklin echoes our suggestions earlier in this chapter and in Chapter 1, namely that while the reproductive realm in Western societies is subject to ever-expanding opportunities for the creation of life, there is a sameness across these opportunities, in the sense that they all reify, albeit in different ways, a particular kinship logic, namely the bringing together of two gametes as the definitive mode of family formation, and thus as the normative mode of personhood (i.e. that parents are genetically related to their children, and children are genetically related to their parents). This mode of kinship, then, is a technology of Western human personhood, and as we have repeatedly suggested, a technology of capitalism.

The work of Liberty Barnes (2014) on male factor infertility provides a clear illustration of how Western reproductive technologies and forms of personhood are produced through particular technologies of kinship. As Barnes suggests, the naturalization of men's and women's roles in reproduction is challenged in the context of male factor infertility. Yet, as her research findings suggest, the particular ways in which reproductive technologies and surgeries aimed at addressing male factor fertility are accounted for serve to naturalize both. As Barnes suggests:

> Surgical procedures for men are invasive and painful and require long recovery periods. Yet patients perceive these cutting-edge medical interventions as 'natural' solutions to male infertility, because they have the potential to enable sperm to eventually fertilize an egg within the context of intimate marital relations in the privacy of a couple's own home (p. 128).

Reproductive heterosex, despite being made possible only through surgical intervention, then, is again naturalized in the case of Barnes' participants. As a result, reproductive heterosex as a kinship norm functions as a technology that serves to reify the heterosexual couple, and normalize a particular mode of personhood (in which heterosexual couples conceive children to whom they are genetically related). Here Western kinship practices produce the very object of their desire, namely the heterosexual family unit, by activating particular reproductive substances, as Franklin suggests, in ways that reify them both as natural (i.e. as found in nature, despite the use of surgery) and as naturalized (i.e. as the culturally valorized understanding of what constitutes kinship).

As we shall see in the chapters to come, understanding practices of Western human kinship as technologies that produce particular forms of personhood is thus a central tool of critique for understanding how particular family forms are reified, and indeed naturalized.

Subjectivity

As we have suggested already in this chapter, kinship technologies produce, and indeed reify, particular modes of personhood within the context of Western societies. Accounts of personhood, then, are an important tool of critique in the context of a posthumanist critical kinship studies, in the sense that they allow us to focus on how, across a range of contexts, particular understandings of what it means to be a human are discursively produced. We have already suggested in the previous chapter that Western human personhood is wrapped up in normative understandings of gender and pronatalism, with the example of people who are unable or choose not to have children providing a clear demonstration of the impact this has upon perceptions of personhood. In this section we further outline how we understand an account of human subjectivity as it can be applied to critical kinship studies.

In conceptualizing subjectivity, we follow the lead of writers such as the collective known as Beryl Curt (1994), and the contributors to the classic text *Changing the Subject* (Henriques et al. 1984). In these writings, individuals are understood as a 'fold' of discourse. Importantly, this is not to deny the rhetoric of Western individualism and its emphasis upon the rational autonomous subject. Rather, in drawing upon an understanding of individuals as 'folds' of discourse, we suggest that Western individualism, as but one of many discourses available, is the fabric from which the individual-as-fold is woven.

The following two images illustrate our point about individuals as folds of discourse. The first depicts the individual as a fold or 'crease' in the narrative of their family. This is perhaps the most common understanding of individuals as produced by the context in which they live. Here, the child is shaped as they develop through the ideas and beliefs rendered intelligible within their family. Kinship in this sense is comprised of a set of individuals who are similarly shaped as folds of a family logic by shared ideas and beliefs.

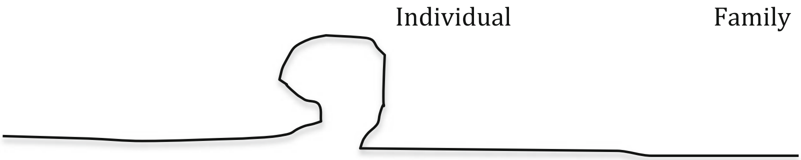

Fig. 3.1 Individual in the family

The second image below, however, extends or, indeed, reworks this understanding of the role of the family. In this image, the same understanding of individuals as fold is evoked, but here we see individuals as folds of discourse. Of course, the ideas and beliefs that circulate within families are discursive, but importantly with regard to the second image, discourse is not produced internally by a logic entirely specific to the family. Rather, familial discourse is produced by broader discourses about what it means to claim kinship, and what it means to be a person in Western societies.

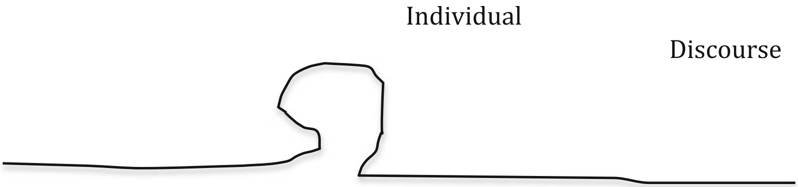

Fig. 3.2 Individual in discourse

Importantly, these two images demonstrate the intersections of family practices and broader discursive practices. The example of families formed through adoption or foster care is one useful case in point. In the context of the first image, families formed through foster care or adoption will develop their own kinship practices that involve shared ideas and beliefs, much like all families. Yet kinship practices in families formed through adoption or foster care are always already shaped in a relationship to wider kinship technologies in which, as we outlined above, reproductive heterosex and genetic relatedness are produced as natural and privileged (e.g. Riggs 2012). In the second image, then, individuals who are members of foster or adoptive families are folds of wider discourses about what constitutes kinship proper.

An example from cross-species kinship also provides a useful case in point regarding the intersections of family practices and broader discursive practices. Nik Taylor's (2007) interviews with staff who work at animal shelters in the UK suggests that for many staff, an essential aspect of their work is according personhood to non-human animals housed in shelters. One of the ways in which this was achieved was through practices of naming. In the discourse of the shelter, then, according (or in some accounts acknowledging the) personhood of non-human animals was considered likely to engender positive outcomes in terms of placement with a human family. Yet the same interviewees acknowledged that the very reason for the existence of shelters are human practices of domestication, through which non-human animals' lives are instrumentalized for the benefits of humans. Again, then, this example demonstrates the importance of focusing not simply on the immediate discursive contexts in which personhood is formed or accorded, but also on the broader discursive contexts through which particular modes of personhood become intelligible. In the example provided by Taylor, shelter workers construct for themselves an account of their own personhood in which they 'do right' by non-human animals. Yet this account is always already bound up in the very forms of human exceptionalism that instrumentalize non-human animals, and which requires naming non-human animals (as a form of attributing personhood) in order to justify their care.

The work of Aryn Martin (2007) on human chimerism provides us with yet another example through which to think about individuals as folds of discourse. In one particular piece of writing on the topic, Martin explores two cases where two mothers were found to be genetically unrelated to their children, despite having conceived them through reproductive heterosex and then birthed them. This finding—a product of the women having two sets of genetic material in their bodies—resulted in high levels of government observation and regulation, for one of the women almost resulting in the removal of her children from her custody. Martin suggests that concerns over these two women is a product of the type of personhood that is increasingly reified within Western societies, namely one in which genetics are seen as determining personhood, and by turn determining kinship. As we saw in the film *Splice*, Dren was depicted as liking the same lollies as Elsa because they shared DNA. Conversely, for the two women discussed by Martin, their status as mothers was questioned because they *did not* share DNA. Thus, as Martin (2007) suggests:

> Because genome, body, and person do not conveniently align in human chimeras, the discourse in which they are characterized offers a crude measure of the extent to which genetic essentialism has become a proxy for personhood (p. 214).

As Martin deftly argues in her paper, the reduction of both personhood and kinship to genetics serves a regulatory and thus exclusionary purpose: it defines who will count as kin, and thus, by extension, who will count as a person. Here the 'a' is important, as Martin (2007) notes:

> Discourse about these recent cases of chimerism reveals that genomes have come to bear some material connection to the essence of personhood, as psyches and souls did at particular historical moments. Moreover, because each cell allegedly contains a copy of the entire genetic essence of an individual, two cell lines *are rendered as though they are two people* (p. 216, original emphasis).

Given that one aspect of the discursive folds shaping individuals in Western societies is the notion of the rational autonomous individual, it is perhaps unsurprising that human chimerism troubles this discursive framing. As we saw in the film *Splice*, the problems experienced by Elsa and Clive with regard to Dren's behaviours related to her chimerism: she needs to be dehumanized by Elsa to control her 'animalism', yet at the same time she was personified in the first place because Elsa perceived her as exhibiting a form of humanity. Yet following Jacqui Gabb (2011), we might question why it is that cross-species relationships are only perceived as viable or worthwhile by humans if we can see some form of humanity in other species. Instead, as Gabb suggests:

> The significance of the human–animal relationship is in its significant otherness: in our mutual investment in another creature that we can never fully know. As such we must always remain open to the other's difference

> and in so doing we become aware of our strangeness in this other's world. In this way animals open us up to relational possibilities that reside beyond the personal, the social and the family: they call into question what constitutes a relationship. Emotional and tactile connections create ethical appreciation of our shared species otherness (para 4.11).

Understanding Western human personhood as a fold of discourse, then, allows us to view the specifically human aspects of how we understand what it means to be an intelligible person, while a posthumanist approach to critical kinship studies allows us to interrogate the limits of humanism for thinking through cross-species relationships, and, indeed, allows us to examine what it means to claim a particular form of human personhood. Doing so, as we suggest in the following and final section, requires us to consider the affective ambivalence that shapes practices of Western human kinship.

Affect and Ambivalence

In her work on kinship, Judith Butler (2000) emphasizes the importance of an account of subjectivity that recognizes its psychical effects. As she suggests:

> It is, however, not enough to trace the effects of social norms on the thinking of kinship, a move that would return the discourse on kinship to a sociologism devoid of psychic significance. Norms do not unilaterally act upon the psyche; rather, they become condensed as the figure of the law to which the psyche returns (p. 30).

As such, in this final tool of critique we consider the affective fields in which individuals circulate. The turn to the study of affect has been given considerable attention within sociological analyses of personhood over the last two decades, and we believe it has much to offer in terms of the critical study of kinship. Importantly, and as we elaborate in this section, our interest is not simply to encourage the development of typologies of affective kinship. Rather, our interest is to encourage the critical study of affective ambivalence in the context of practices of Western human kinship. To put this a different way, given the internally inconsistent logic of Western human kinship as outlined in both this chapter and Chapter 2 (i.e. that certain human kinship practices are naturalized through technologies that are anything but 'natural'), it is important to examine the contradictory, that is ambivalent, forms of affect that circulate with regard to kinship technologies.

Michael Peletz (2001) suggests that the study of ambivalence is well suited to the study of human kinship, and long overdue. As he suggests, and in contrast to early anthropological work on human kinship in which ambivalence was minimized,

> Many adherents of the new kinship studies, in contrast, devote considerable analytic attention to the theme of ambivalence. This is partly because the new kinship studies are heavily gendered, and display pronounced concern with power, practice, agency, and sociality, all of which are thoroughly suffused with—or inevitably raise issues having to do with—mixed emotions (p. 414).

Peletz nonetheless suggests, however, that to a degree ambivalence is under-attended to in the study of human kinship. This reinforces our supposition that in framing affect as a third tool of critique within the context of a posthumanist critical kinship studies, it is important that we focus on affective ambivalence. Sarah Franklin (2013a) makes a similar suggestion in her work on IVF, where she, too, emphasizes the ambivalence inherent to reproductive technologies:

> Few people go through IVF… without experiencing, either temporarily or permanently, and to a greater or lesser extent, a degree of ambivalence about this procedure—a view that is widely shared by IVF clinicians and nurses, who know better than anyone the potentially high costs of IVF. This ambivalence indexes the difference between the norms that IVF belongs to, and the extent to which it also challenges or contradicts these very same conventions (p. 7).

Franklin's point is vital, and mirrors our suggestion earlier in this chapter, namely that kinship technologies which naturalize particular practices (in this case IVF) are always already technologies of naturalization. Hence they are always at risk of highlighting, rather than hiding, the fact that what is at work is the construction of the natural through the cultural, as Schneider (1968) pointed out in his early work.

As we have done in the previous two sections, we now turn to a specific example in order to illustrate our point about the importance of focusing on affective ambivalence. We take our example from the work of David Eng (2010) in his *The Feeling of Kinship*. In one of the final chapters of the book, Eng provides a close reading of Rea Tajiri's video *History and Memory*. The video documents Tajiri's experiences as the daughter of Japanese American parents who were interned during the Second World War in a prison camp in the USA. In his reading of the video, Eng considers the interplay of imagery and words (and sometimes imagery and no words) in the production of a particular form of affect that echoes the loss felt by Tajiri, a loss that she cannot vocalize, a loss inherited from her mother. Importantly for our elaboration of the role of ambivalent affect as a tool for use within a posthumanist critical kinship studies, Eng (2010) suggests that:

> Much of poststructuralist thought, as Rei Terada points out, assumes an antipathetic relationship between affect and language. *History and Memory* suggests a different account of this cleaving. It offers a critical vision in which affect and language might not be disjunctive, but instead work collectively to transform our relation both to history and to structures of family and kinship (p. 170).

It is through this quote that the reference to vocalizing above comes into its own. While, as Eng suggests, Tajiri may have come to create the video because she was unable to vocalize what it was she felt she had loss (which, we learn, was an incorporation of her mother's own loss in the internment camp), she was nonetheless able to symbolize it. In other words, through the video Tajiri is able to narrate the story of her loss through images in ways that bring into language the affective ambivalence inherent to her story, one where her pain was her mother's pain, but where neither could vocalize their pain. Thus as Eng suggests, Tajiri:

> [A]rgues for a new conception of the subject as both a discursive construct and an intricate psychic being with existential needs and concerns, with great psychic depth and capacity for feeling (p. 191).

The idea of symbolizing contradictory and competing affect without necessarily relying upon spoken language is vitally important to a posthumanist critical kinship studies. If kinship is only spoken language—as some who write about kinship seem to imply (e.g. Bartkowski 2008)—then kinship is only the province of those who have access to forms of language that are considered intelligible. Understanding kinship through affect, then, allows us to understand something of the embodied, felt, practices of kinship that perhaps cannot be easily vocalized or which are not given life through language. This is not to suggest naively an extra-discursive truth to kinship that can necessarily only be felt and can never be spoken of. Rather, it is to suggest that Western human expressions of kinship may, at times, be incapable of symbolizing in language kinship practices that refuse representation, or which are otherwise unintelligible. This is particularly salient with regard to cross-species kinship practices, as Gabb (2011) suggests:

> Social sciences research on human–animal relations has primarily focused on the affective value of pets in enhancing human experience, figuring centrally in people's extended and extending networks of kin. But I want to say more than animals affectively count—as dependents who need routine care alongside kin and/or as restorative substitutes who compensate for the alienation caused by community breakdown and crumbling social fabric. I want to move beyond these 'like kin' and/or intimacy deficit models. My intention is to situate human–animal ties within the fabric of connected lives, bringing to the foreground an appreciation of different ways of being; materialising 'queer families of companion species' (para 4.2).

These sentiments align with the work of Clinton Sanders (1993), in his exploration of human/canine kinship and affect. In this work, Sanders explores how humans (including himself) attribute affect and personhood to animal companions. As he suggests, while this always runs the risk of anthropomorphism, and while it is always already wrapped up in histories of domestication and the instrumentalization of non-human animals as we explored above, a focus on affect may be the least anthropomorphizing way of thinking about cross-species kinship. As Sanders rightly suggests, as humans we are always attributing mindedness to other humans: we often presume that we know how others feel or what they are thinking. It is possible, then, that in thinking about affect in the context of cross-species relationships, on balance it is just as likely that we may capture something of the genuine love that some humans feel for other animals, as much as we may be complicit with anthropomorphism. Given that our focus in this book is on practices of Western human kinship, we would suggest that even if understanding human accounts of non-human animal affect largely only reflect back to us what humans make of other animals, this does not discount the utility of affect. Indeed, thinking about *ambivalent* affective relationships across species (i.e. ambivalence as a product of the tension between love and instrumentalization) is arguably an important feature of a posthumanist critical kinship studies that seeks to understand how as humans we make recourse to claims to human kinship through our accounts of other animals.

Concluding Thoughts

In this chapter we have outlined three tools for critique that we will then apply in the following chapters. Much like the previous chapter, however, there are many connections between the three tools, and again we have only treated them as separate in order to improve readability. For instance, just as kinship as a technology produces particular intelligible forms of human personhood, so, too, do the discursive folds through which Western human personhood is made intelligible produce particular forms of affective ambivalence that signal something of the conflict between ‘micro’ and ‘macro’ discursive practices. Furthermore, and while highlighting the logic of human exceptionalism that shapes much of what we are critiquing and how we are critiquing it in this book, so, too, the cross-species examples in this chapter signal how central human accounts of other animals are accounts of what properly counts as human (including, as we have suggested, the exclusion of certain humans from full membership of the category ‘human’). In the analytic chapters that follow, then, we unpack these ideas in more detail, always mindful that the ‘human’ in ‘practices of Western human kinship’ is constituted through the practices themselves.

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4

Reflecting (on) Nature: Cross Species Kinship

A Story

As we have reiterated across the first three chapters of this book, posthumanist critical kinship studies takes as one of its foci the everyday ways in which Western human kinship practices are naturalized through both implicit and explicit comparison with non-human animals. Implicit comparisons are the basis of humanism itself: the privileging of human accounts over all others. This is something of a constant, shaping the actions of most humans living in Western societies, in the sense of being relatively unaware of the anthropocentrism that shapes our worldviews. The explicit, by contrast, although being relatively constant, is never one single thing. It can be in the denial of personhood to non-human animals. Alternatively, it can be in the anthropomorphizing of non-human animals. Perhaps most challenging for a posthumanist account of kinship is the fine line between the latter and the genuine loving kinship that many humans experience with other species. As Haraway (2008) notes, given the domestication of other species, it is difficult to separate out the history of domestication (and the abuse and violence towards other species that it has entailed, and continues to entail and engender, such

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as tail docking; Fox 2010) from the ways in which domestication makes possible experiences of loving kinship with other species in the first place.

In this chapter, however, although we touch on the literature on domesticated non-human animals below, our focus is more on how animals who are not typically considered domesticated—in this case other primates—become tools in a humanist logic that seeks to prove the 'truth' of Western human culture through recourse to its purported basis in nature. In this sense, the 'bringing in' of other primates to human cultures becomes an argument for the supposed natural superiority of the human species. What we see in other species, then, becomes a reflection not of their own ways of being in the world *per se*, but rather a claim to human exceptionalism. In order to demonstrate this suggestion, in the sections that follow we present both human accounts of other primates as kin (accounts that emphasize the purportedly culturalizing effects of exposure to humans), and human accounts of planning to conceive human children (which are framed by the naturalization of a desire to have children). In both topics we focus on what each reflects back to us about what it means to be human, highlighting the solipsism of humanist accounts of kinship.

Before turning to the two sources of data we seek to compare and contrast, we first present a story from another children's storybook—this time *And Tango Makes Three* (Richardson and Parnell 2005)—to illustrate some of the claims we have made above, and to provide some further framing for this chapter. Since its publication in 2005, *And Tango Makes Three* has been the centre of considerable controversy. Between 2006 and 2008, and again in 2010, the book topped a list of the most complained about books in the USA, and 'was the most banned book for several years' (Magnuson 2012, p. 10). Across these years, complaints came from at least six American states, primarily from parents who felt that the subject matter of the book was inappropriate for young readers (Machlin 2013). More recently, in 2014 the National Library Board of Singapore announced its intention to destroy copies of *And Tango Makes Three* (Tobar 2014). This plan was, however, subsequently overturned on protest, but the book is now shelved in the adult section of Singaporean libraries.

So why the controversy over a children's picture book? Those who oppose the book object to the fact that it tells the story of two male chinstrap penguins housed in New York's Central Park Zoo, and, more specifically that the story depicts the penguins as a couple who hatch an egg and raise the baby penguin. Opponents of the book, perhaps predictably, view the book as promoting homosexuality, as endorsing gay parenting, and as addressing sexuality-related topics that they consider too sensitive for young readers. Conversely, those who celebrate the book emphasize the fact that the book is based on two male penguins who are actually housed in the Central Park Zoo. These two penguins, according to their keeper Rob Gramzay, did partner off and were subsequently given an egg from another pair of penguins, which they did then hatch, feed, and raise. The two male penguins were named Roy and Silo (these same names are used in the book), and the baby penguin born to them was named Tango, hence the title of the book.

While the controversy over the book is useful to a certain extent in the context of critical kinship studies (i.e. to examine how social norms about sexuality and family shape responses to the book), a quote from the co-author of the book, Justin Richardson, highlights more precisely the reasons why we are focusing on the book in this chapter. In response to the controversy over the book, Richardson stated that:

> We wrote the book to help parents teach children about same-sex parent families. It's no more an argument in favor of human gay relationships than it is a call for children to swallow their fish whole or sleep on rocks (quoted in Miller 2005).

Leaving aside the contradictory claim that the book aims to 'teach children about same-sex parent families', but that it is not 'an argument in favor of human gay relationships', what we are left with in this quote is a concern that goes to the very heart of our account of what constitutes critical kinship studies. That is, the ways in which other species are at best addressed in terms of kinship through the operations of anthropomorphism, and at worst through forms of anthropocentrism that construct human kinship as the only valid form of kinship.

Examples of anthropocentrism appear throughout the book. For example, the story begins by framing the Central Park Zoo as somewhere that animals live. In a sense this is true in that there are animals who are alive, and who are housed in the zoo. But we have used the term ‘housed’ to draw attention to the fact that Roy, Silo, and Tango, along with all of the other animals housed in the zoo, are in captivity, and as such their lives are largely regulated by the interests of a viewing public. This is not to say that animals housed in the zoo are not cared for, nor that there may not be other reasons for the existence of the zoo, such as monitoring animals in danger of extinction. Rather, our point is that animals housed in zoos are part of a much wider phenomenon of human control over other species.

Anthropomorphic accounts of animals abound, from the third page of the story we are told that:

> Children and their parents aren’t the only families at the zoo. The animals make families of their own. There are red panda bear families, with mothers and fathers and furry red panda bear cubs. There are monkey dads and monkey moms raising noisy monkey babies. There are toad families, and toucan families, and cotton-top tamarin families too (Richardson and Parnell 2005, p. 3).

In this account, human children and their parents are left unmarked as such, with only non-human animals marked by the designation ‘animal’. Yet quickly this implicit distinction between human and non-human families disappears, when we are told that in the penguin colony every year the penguins pair off into ‘boy’ and ‘girl’ ‘couples’. Our concern here is not about the genitalia of the penguins, nor is it about the practice of pairing. Rather, it is with how the language of ‘boys’, ‘girls’, and ‘coupling’ brings with it human understandings of these terms, much the same as we saw in Chapter 2 with regard to our concern about similar language in the film *Splice*. Importantly with respect to this particular depiction of pairing, when we are introduced to Roy and Silo they are positioned as the point of difference to the norm of ‘boy’ and ‘girl’ ‘couples’, which again fails to explore whether specifically ‘gendered’ (i.e. male and female) kinship pattern are the norm in penguin colonies, or whether penguin colonies exhibit a more diverse range of kinship patterns (in which case Roy and Silo would not be the point of difference).

As the story progresses, these same issues around anthropomorphizing and normalizing continue, such as in reference to 'mama' and 'papa' penguins, and in the suggestion that Roy and Silo had to 'learn' about nesting from other penguins. The language used, as suggested above, treats human categories as equally legitimate for penguins, just as the language of difference positions Roy and Silo as having to 'learn' about nesting, whereas for the 'mama' and 'papa' penguins nesting is a given. This individualizing of 'learning' to Roy and Silo repeats the human idea that gay men are not 'natural' parents (rather they have to 'learn' how to be parents), repeats the normative human assumption that 'mama' and 'papa' 'couples' automatically know how to raise children, and ignores the complex mating and 'learning' rituals that penguins may engage in.

When the egg finally hatches, the book reports that Mr Gramzay—the penguin keeper—said 'we'll call her Tango… because it takes two to make a Tango' (p. 23), before going on to state that 'Tango was the very first penguin in the zoo to have two daddies' (p. 24). Elsewhere we have argued (Riggs 2012) that this anthropomorphic account of the birth of a child to 'two daddies' is reliant upon the disappearance of two other penguins: the penguin who fertilized the egg and the penguin who laid the egg. In a coda to the story we are told that the book is based on 'events' that are 'true', specifically that the egg from which Tango hatched came from a 'penguin couple named Betty and Porkey' who were unable to 'care for more than one [egg] at a time'. When Betty laid two eggs, one was given to Roy and Silo. Although on the one hand it would potentially be a form of anthropomorphism for us to insist that Betty and Porkey were Tango's birth parents, on the other hand it is nonetheless important to highlight the fact that, given the anthropomorphism that structures the story itself, the claim that it takes (only) 'two to make a Tango' is arguably incorrect.

While our focus here on *And Tango Makes Three* will only have given a glimpse as to our broader argument within this chapter, it is important to signal here that our suggestion is not that, had the book resisted an anthropomorphic account of Roy, Silo, and Tango, it would have provided a ‘truer’ account of their lives. Rather, our intention in focusing on *And Tango Makes Three* is to suggest that how we account for the lives of other species potentially tells us more about our own species than it does theirs. Although it has been suggested that among zoologists anthropomorphism is ‘a capital sin’ (León 2004), it creeps into many natural history programmes, especially in the narration and musical accompaniment to ‘mating scenes’. As we shall see in the remainder of this chapter, how humans construct accounts of both other species and our own in terms of conceiving and raising young highlights what Joanne Faulkner (2011) depicts as:

> [A] connection between humanity’s complicated regard for animals and the cultural meaning of childhood in the West: a connection that situates both animal and child at the limits of the human, and (thereby) as sites of its self-representation (p. 73).

Our focus, then, is on which particular self-representations (of ‘human nature’) are apparent in accounts of both other species and human children.

Nature as Culture: Raising Monkids

As we suggested above, our focus in this chapter is on both human interactions with other primates (i.e. Capuchin monkeys and chimpanzees) and human accounts of having human children. Having said this, we begin this section by briefly exploring some of the research that has focused on humans who live with animal companions, and specifically dogs. Our reasoning behind this is, that as much as primatology has informed how we understand ‘human nature’, there is a degree to which this is implicit rather than explicit to contemporary understanding of human personhood. Furthermore, accounts of human kinship with other primates are to a degree atypical in relation to human acts of domestication. Accounts of dogs as human companions, however, are a much more readily intelligible route through which to think about what it means for humans to claim kinship across species.

In regard to the question we raised above about the difficulty of separating out histories of domestication from experiences of cross-species kinship, Nikki Charles (2014) suggests that while it is potentially the case that any experiences of kinship across species that involve domestication can never be free of the effects of anthropocentrism, this does not mean that animal companions are always already seen as human substitutes, or are accorded personhood only on human terms. Charles suggests that for at least some of her participants,

> relationships with animals were valued not only because animals were ‘almost human’ but also because they were not. Animals were sometimes found to be better at being family than were human animals; they were ‘more family than family’ and the emotional bond was experienced as stronger and more enduring than that with some human family members (p. 725).

As Marie Fox (2010) suggests ‘significantly, such bonds seem reciprocal in nature’ (p. 41). The work of Emma Power (2008) also affirms this account of loving relationships across species, but nonetheless suggests that there is a degree to which humans mould the actions of animal companions so as to better conform to readily intelligible understandings of family life. As she suggests:

> While care-based encounters point to participants’ efforts to extend family-belonging to dogs-as-dogs, where encounters were framed by an understanding of dogs as animals operating at a species, breed and individual level, they also represented a simultaneous ‘drawing-in’ of doggie activity and bodily expressions. These practices were designed to shape dogs so that they fit within dominant values associated with family and home, including views of home as a safe, clean, ordered space. In the exclusion of excess dog hair, smells and energy these practices further assisted home’s appearance as a ‘human’ space (p. 542).

Although there may be many experiences of cross-species kinship where the practices of regulation and normalization as described by Power are not apparent, it is nonetheless important for us to consider what is at work when non-human animal ways of being are both valued (as per the quote above from Charles), when such valuing is potentially often framed and shaped by human values about appropriate ways of living and being through kinship.

In a commentary on the future of the field of critical animal studies, Helena Pedersen and Vasile Stanescu (2014) suggest that a key direction for the field—and one we would suggest is equally true for critical kinship studies—is to problematize the behaviours of humans, rather than continuing to focus solely on those who are not human as the locus of our attention. We take up their suggestion now in our examination of two documentaries that focus on humans raising non-human animals. As we suggested above, reading human experiences of kinship with animal companions is always difficult to do without attending to the history of domestication. This is a tension in the work of both Charles (2014) and Power (2008) summarized above. In turning our focus to humans raising Capuchin monkeys and chimpanzees, we can see how in cases where domestication is less common (i.e. than the domestication of cats or dogs), the same issues play out. This is specifically true in terms of not only the emotional bond that is more than (or as Charles (2014) suggests, better than) human, but also the shaping of non-human animal behaviour so as to more readily conform to accepted norms of kinship. What it reflects to us, then, are *human* behaviours, which following Pedersen and Stanescu (2014), we can then problematize for the assumptions inherent in them.

The first documentary that we consider originally aired on ABC in the USA in 2010. Titled *My Child is a Monkey*, the documentary depicts what is framed as a growing phenomenon, namely people raising Capuchin monkeys as children. The documentary opens with the narrator asking the question '[d]o you ever wish your child would never grow up?', to which he provides the answer '[f]or some people this is a reality. A forever baby. A monkey baby'. It is at this point that the narrator introduces the term 'monkids' to refer to Capuchin monkeys raised by humans. The documentary features four human families who are raising Capuchins. We focus on three women in particular (Justine, Audrey, and Charlene) whose narratives are reported within the documentary.

While not the first woman appearing in the documentary, Justine's narrative is an important place to start in terms of how the lives of

Capuchins are framed within the documentary. When we are introduced to Justine, she is on the way to a breeder from whom she is planning to buy a Capuchin. She tells the camera 'I certainly wouldn't have done [i.e., had] an adult monkey… So hopefully I have a clean sheet to build that relationship with… I'm excited because they're so child like. And so human like'. In this account, an infant monkey is a *tabula rasa*, a blank slate (or 'clean sheet' in Justine's terms) on which Justine can project human attributes. Yet this idea of the 'clean sheet' is quickly complicated when she meets the breeder.

After first meeting George, the Capuchin whom she is there to purchase, Justine asks the breeder, Gayle, if she can see George's parents. When they are standing outside the enclosure, Gayle says:

> And I would leave the baby there [i.e. at a distance from the enclosure, out of sight]. I would not bring them here. Because that would be to add insult to injury. And it would make her [the mother]—she knows it's him. I don't want to hurt her feelings by letting her know that we're doing what we're doing.

Following this comment, Justine asks '[d]o you not feel a bit guilty taking the baby away from the mum?'. Gayle's reply demonstrates the complex rhetorical work that goes into legitimating taking infant Capuchins away from their mothers:

> Not at all. They know that in their first three days I'm gonna take that baby. And by that time they're kinda over it anyway. Two mums over there that've been with me for 19 years, when they see me with a net [gestures at mother throwing baby to ground]. Bam! And you're history.

These two quotes from Gayle are, in our view, entirely competing. On the one hand, Gayle leaves George behind, rather than showing him to his mother and 'adding insult to injury' and 'hurt[ing] her feelings'. In this account, duplicity is required in order so as not to cause hurt. Here, then, George's mother is positioned as a feeling being, one who could be hurt by 'what we're doing'. The engagement between Gayle, Justine, and George's mother is thus an engagement between sentient beings that involves the complex negotiation of emotions. Yet this recognition of the mother's sentience and potential emotionality is then discounted in Gayle's reply to Justine. In her reply, there is a shift in affect, away from an account of George's mother as capable of being hurt, to one in which she is incapable of being hurt. Obviously Justine had asked a difficult question that held Gayle to account for her actions (as much as it potentially placed the responsibility for accountability on Gayle's shoulders, rather than her own). Gayle's response is thus potentially a defence against an implied accusation. Yet while Gayle's account of the mothers readily rejecting their babies appears designed to mitigate accountability, we would suggest that instead it demonstrates her complicity in the very rejection she recounts. In other words, it is only because she regularly comes with a net that the mothers purportedly throw their babies to the ground. We have no idea about what might have happened in the past; what might have happened to the mothers if they clung onto their babies and resisted their removal.

The idea that the removal of Capuchin babies from their mothers is akin to theft is reflected in a narrative provided by Kari Bagnall, who runs the Jungle Friends Primate Sanctuary, where many Capuchin and other primates are housed if they are rejected by their adoptive human families. Yet despite this counter-narrative, one in which human exceptionalism is centred, the documentary nonetheless, we would suggest, rests upon according a degree of legitimacy to the humans who raise Capuchins. Again, ambivalence is a hallmark of their narratives, where we are shown numerous examples of Capuchins attacking their humans, yet the humans nonetheless reiterate love for them. Audrey says '[i]t's just a love that you can't explain… It's tremendous. The bonding. You can see. I'm their mother'. Much like the storybook *And Tango Makes Three*, and despite the narrative of adoption trauma provided in the example of Justine above, the birth parents of the infant Capuchins disappear, to be replaced by human parents. As Charlene says '[i]t was like having a newborn baby'. It is like having a newborn baby, yes, if having a new born baby involves stealing them from their birth parents. Given the fact that child theft does occur, it is perhaps surprising as to how blithely these women speak of their Capuchin 'children', eliding the fact of how they came into their family.

A similar ignorance is depicted in the book *Next of Kin* (Fouts 1997), which tells the story of Roger Fouts' experience of learning with Washoe, a chimpanzee. As a graduate student, Fouts came to work with Richard Gardner, a behavioural psychologist who was attempting to test the hypothesis that chimpanzees could learn language, and in so doing tell us something about the aetiology of human language acquisition. Although much of the story recounted by Fouts is moving and heartfelt, we focus here on his account of Washoe's origins. Fouts tells us that he had 'naively assumed that Washoe must have been abandoned by her mother, then rescued by some decent person who sent her to America for the best possible care' (p. 39). While this assumption of human decency is latter corrected,[1] it is notable to us how strongly humans are willing to believe that non-human animals simply abandon their young, especially female primates who are well known for remaining closely connected to their offspring throughout their life (Goodall 1990).

A slightly more honest account of the theft of primate infants is provided in the second documentary that we consider. *Project Nim* (2011) based on the *Nim Chimpsky* biography by Elizabeth Hess (2009), documents the life of Nim, a chimpanzee who was born at the primate centre where Washoe was later to live, and Fouts to work. The documentary *Project Nim* tells the story of Nim's life through the humans who worked with him, again on a project of learning language in the context of being raised 'like a human child'. The first human with whom Nim lived was Stephanie Lafarge, who was instructed to raise him as her own child. Herbert Terrace, another behavioural psychologist, was the team leader, and in the documentary he reports that he asked Stephanie to raise Nim because she 'was exceedingly empathetic and warm. A chimp could not have a better mother'. Stephanie, however, tells us about Nim's birth mother, and his removal from her:

> Nim was born at the primate centre in Oklahoma, and I went out there to get him. I'd never been near that many chimpanzees. It was frightening and intimidating, and I knew Dr Lemon and his wife [who ran the Institute for

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[1] Washoe was stolen from her mother after she was killed by poachers whose job it was to collect chimpanzees and transport them from 'Africa' to the USA for animal testing, including in the US space programme.

> Primate Studies] were watching me to see what kind of a mother would I be. Caroline, Nim's mother, was sitting right there, holding Nim, and she knew what was going to happen better than I did. She had had six of her previous babies removed, apparently in the same way. When the time came to take Nim from his mother, she instantly took on this drama, this feeling of something about to happen. And Dr Lemon shot her with a tranquilising gun, and then said 'quick, we have to get in before she falls over and falls on him'. She was trying to protect him and cradle him.

In this account Stephanie provides some background to the type of *fait accompli* attitude that Gayle above alleges Capuchin mothers display when a child is removed from them. In Stephanie's account, the theft of a child chimpanzee is not easily accomplished. Rather, it requires sedation, and always involves a sense of drama and a desire to protect on the part of the mother, in this case Caroline. Despite this sensitivity to Caroline's loss, the narrative quickly moves onto the joy that Stephanie and her family experience in raising Nim. As Stephanie notes, 'I breast fed him for a couple of months. It seemed completely natural. Everything was about treating him like a human being'. Again, we have to ask the question of what is natural or human-like about raising a stolen child. And again we are left with the driving force of human exceptionalism, through which raising a stolen child is, indeed, completely natural. To return briefly to Washoe, we would note that Washoe was named after the US county where she first lived, a county itself named after the First Nations tribe upon whose land it is located. Given the ongoing history of the theft of First Nations human children across the world and the theft of Washoe (and Nim, and George, and countless others) from her mother, it is tragically apt that Washoe was given this name.

As the documentary progresses, we learn that Stephanie and Herbert had previously had a sexual relationship, and, indeed, Stephanie suggests that this history was the 'glue' that made the project possible. This is despite the fact that Stephanie lived with her husband, and despite the fact that Herbert rarely visited the house where Stephanie and her family, including Nim, lived. And it is at this point in the documentary that Herbert provides an account in which he is both positioned as the equivalent of Nim's father, alongside positioning Nim as a scientific tool:

> Young, newborn chimps, are always raised by their mothers, not by their fathers. And I didn't see any way of trying to change or any point of trying to change that. For better or worse I never regarded him as a child. I regarded him as an intelligent, personable, centre of a scientific project.

Again here there is ambivalence: Herbert justifies his relative non-presence in Stephanie's family home by the logic that chimpanzees are not raised by their fathers, the implication being that he is Nim's father. Yet he then immediately states that he did not regard Nim as a child. We might suggest that what sits in the middle of this ambivalent account is the implication that although Herbert did not regard Nim as *a* child, there was an extent to which he regarded him as *his* child, one who was the product first of his previously sexual relationship with Stephanie, and then later with other female research assistants with whom he had intimate relationships. Like the film *Splice*, which we discussed in Chapter 2, a humanist logic of reproduction serves to evoke technologies of kinship through which it is intent that decides who a mother or father is, with the intent of men playing a determining role in according the role of mother to Stephanie, and the paired role of father to Herbert.

At this point in the documentary, however, the narrative shifts. Although Stephanie was initially allocated the role of mother, and by her account she performed this role well, indeed 'naturally', both Herbert and another research assistant—Laura-Ann Petitto—claim in the documentary that Stephanie was an inadequate mother. Herbert suggests that 'she was not very concerned with discipline', and Laura-Ann states that '[t]his animal climbed the walls all day. He ripped apart Stephanie's house all day. Kinds of things she was exposing Nim to was atypical'. Here Nim is reduced to 'this animal', and Stephanie's mothering positioned as 'atypical'. The decision is then made by Herbert to remove Nim from Stephanie's care. In the last scenes in which Stephanie appears, she states:

> My separation from him was just as abrupt, in a way, at that moment, as his was from Caroline. I was ostensibly conscious, but I was was as unaware and unincharge as she was.

We certainly would not wish to discount the distress that the removal of Nim appeared to have caused Stephanie and her family. Nonetheless, it is important for us to question the comparison that Stephanie makes. Caroline, we are told by Stephanie, had six children stolen from her before Nim. Further, Caroline, Stephanie suggests, was very aware of what was going to happen. No two losses are the same, and Stephanie's suggestion that her loss was similar to Caroline's, while important for its acknowledgement that Caroline was, indeed, a sentient being who could experience loss, nevertheless discounts her loss to a degree by focusing primarily on human loss.

In titling this section 'Nature as Culture', we were aware that this could be read as repeating the binary of non-human animals as being 'in nature', and culture as the province of humans. What we hope we have demonstrated in this section, instead, is that nature *is* cultural. In other words, in examining the experiences of humans raising other species we have sought to illustrate how human understandings of what is seen as 'natural' is always already cultural: the 'nature' of Capuchins (e.g. to purportedly cast aside their babies when a breeder approaches) is only intelligible to us through a human lens. Sue Walsh (2002) argues as much in her consideration of the work of Marian Scholtmeijer (1993) on animal victims in fiction. Scholtmeijer, Walsh reports, critiques the work of early primatologists who found that if they attempted to resist imposing anthropomorphic accounts onto the lives of the chimpanzees they were studying, all they were left with in terms of data were a list of acts that had no discernable meaning. This lead Scholtmeijer to suggest that the early primatologists she critiqued failed to understand that meaning in terms of the behaviours of other species could only be rendered intelligible through an anthropomorphic lens. Observing the otherness of non-human animals, Scholtmeijer suggests, destabilizes human assumptions about the inherent nature of meaning. Walsh, however, critiques this claim made by Scholtmeijer, suggesting that:

> Scholtmeijer in this instance claims the animal as having a radical destabilizing effect upon human certainty, [which] becomes for her a property of the animal itself. In other words, the 'reality' of the animal is known as 'the unknowable', rather than its unknowability being understood as an effect of its positioning within language and culture (p. 158).

In this section we have sought to point out similarly how the 'nature' of Capuchin or chimpanzees—as though it could be witnessed and, indeed, harnessed in the context of human families—is always an effect of human cultural impositions, in which it is presumed that by studying other species we can know something of ourselves. In a sense in this section we have affirmed this supposition, but not in the ways that Richard Gardner or Herbert Terrace may have intended. Studying chimpanzees or living with Capuchins tells us about what it means to be human precisely because it highlights what humans are willing to do in order to know ourselves. Some of us are willing to steal children, to deceive mothers, to manipulate, and to control. In looking at humans raising non-human animals as children, then, and following Pedersen and Stanescu (2014), what we are doing is looking at human exceptionalism in practice, rather than looking *per se* at what chimpanzee language acquisition (as was the focus of Richard Gardner and Herbert Terrace) can tell us about the 'aetiology' of human language acquisition.

Culture as Nature: Conceiving Human Children

In the previous section we focused on the ways in which human claims to kinship with other primates demonstrate the lengths that some humans will go to in order to know (or in some cases not to know) themselves. Such knowing, however, is always a reflection of the 'nature' of human exceptionalism, rather than necessarily reflecting anything about human histories as read through our 'closest ancestors' (i.e. other primates). As such, our argument in the previous section was that any claims about the 'nature' of other species is always a product of human culture. In this section we tackle the question of the nature/culture binary from another angle, by focusing on how heterosexual couples planning for a first child explain their desire to have a child. As we shall see, what is arguably a cultural phenomenon—shaped, as we argued in Chapter 2, by discourses of pronatalism and normative assumptions about masculinity and femininity—is instead located by the couples in nature. In other words, Western human kinship technologies that privilege and make possible reproductive heterosex are positioned not as technologies, but rather as natural.

In her book-length exploration of the topic, Karin Lesnik-Oberstein (2007) investigates how the naturalization of reproductivity appears across a range of texts, including some of those that we explored in Chapter 1, and which we suggested constituted part of the trajectory of critical kinship studies. While we would not necessarily agree with all of the arguments that Lesnik-Oberstein (2007) makes (and specifically her critique of Carsten 2004), her central point about the naturalization of the desire to have children closely connects with our arguments within this book:

> The questions of why people want children, and why specifically children they define and see as 'own', seem to me to be absolutely fundamental to the whole premise of reproductive technologies. The entire enterprise… justifies and vindicates itself on the grounds of the claim that the wanting and having of 'own' children is somehow integral, or of the highest importance, to human life… Reproductive technologies in many cases would have no validity, or a different validity at the very least, without these assumptions: that the having of children is of paramount importance, and that these children need to be 'biologically', and preferably 'genetically', 'own' children (p. xxi).

Across a number of chapters, Lesnik-Oberstein critiques the Western cultural assumption that the desire to have 'own' children is 'hardwired', instead suggesting that claims to hardwiredness are always already a product of particular accounts of human personhood, in which to be intelligible is to conceive, bear, and raise children:

> Hardwiredness is something which triumphs over the resistance of culture, so that culture is not the product, or inclusive, of hardwired aspects, but a separate phenomenon, deriving from elsewhere. Likewise, fashion can be out of step with the hardwired. Therefore, the hardwired triumphs over a culture and fashion that are both separate from and in opposition to it (p. 4).

As we have argued both in this chapter and in previous chapters, accounts that naturalize a desire to have children serve to position kinship technologies as mere reflections of nature, often through claims such as the need to 'perpetuate the species', or more individually to 'continue one's own bloodline'. That these types of claims may appear commonsensical, however, is reflective not of the naturalness of human reproductivity, but rather the ways in which particular forms of reproductivity are privileged and promoted.

Of course, as we suggested in Chapter 2, the desire to have children is gender differentiated, on the basis of normative assumptions about the proper roles and forms of personhood allocated to women and men. In the case of Lesnik-Oberstein and many others who similarly critique pronatalism and the naturalization of reproductivity, primary emphasis is placed upon the regulation of women. This is understandable given, as we argued in Chapter 2, women are placed under an imperative not only to conceive children, but to bear, birth, and raise them. As early as 1916, first-wave feminist writers such as Leta Hollingworth acknowledged how claims to 'maternal instinct' were used to regulated women's bodies and personhood, and to insist upon the centrality of reproductivity to women's lives:

> There is, to be sure, a strong and fervid insistence on the 'maternal instinct', which is popularly supposed to characterize all women equally, and to furnish them with an all-consuming desire for parenthood, regardless of the personal pain, sacrifice, and disadvantage involved. In the absence of all verifiable data, however, it is only common-sense to guard against accepting as a fact of human nature a doctrine which we might well expect to find in use as a means of social control (p. 20).

In this important early piece of writing on the topic, Hollingworth clearly challenges the naturalization of reproductivity, instead positioning it as a form of social control of women. Yet what is perhaps most important about Hollingworth's work is the historicity it lends to the accounts of Lesnik-Oberstein and others in terms of the persistence of the naturalization of reproductivity as a form of social control. This is not to say, of course, that the contours and nuance of particular elements of pronatalism do not fluctuate over time. The breastfeeding component of motherhood mandates provides a simple case in point. In her book-length critique of the contemporary perspective that breastfeeding is medically superior to bottle-feeding human infants, Joan Wolfe (2011) charts the rhetorical and liberal humanistic hyperbolic terrain of 'total motherhood' in the USA through the lens of breastfeeding. Although a detailed discussion of her compelling argument would nudge us off our current course, suffice to say employing a wet nurse,[2] for the middle-classes, remained possible up until the nineteenth century, and use of formula milk was normative between the 1950s and 1970s. It is only comparatively recently that a woman (or trans man) breastfeeding their own child has become a moral imperative for lactating (or potentially lactating) parents, which is culturally imbued—and affectively charged—with notions of care, virtue, or shame, and, likely, ambivalence.

To return to Hollingworth (1916), she ends her piece with a call to arms, one that hails women to refuse the demand of reproductivity:

> The time is coming, and is indeed almost at hand, when all the most intelligent women of the community, who are the most desirable child-bearers, will become conscious of the methods of social control. The type of normality will be questioned; the laws will be repealed and changed; enlightenment will prevail; belief will be seen to rest upon dogmas; illusion will fade away and give place to clearness of view; the bugaboos will lose their power to frighten (p. 29).

While it is certainly the case that growing numbers of women refuse the motherhood mandate,[3] and although even larger numbers of women delay having children until a period in life when it can be better accommodated,[4] as we outlined in Chapter 2, these types of decisions have negative implications for the forms of personhood afforded to women who make them. Indeed, the very language of 'decisions' itself, as we shall see in our analysis below, positions *not* having children as a decision, while within the context of a heteronormative social order having

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[2] Interestingly, wet-nursed children were, in some cultures, known as 'milk siblings' and families were linked through 'milk kinship' (Altorki 1980).

[3] For instance, there has been a 34% fall in the number of live births over the 50-year period from 1963 to 2013 across the 28 European Union Member States (ONS 2015).

[4] For example, the average age of mothers giving birth across European Union Member States was 29.2 years in 2003, rising to 30.3 years in 2013 (ONS 2015).

children is still very much treated as a given—as something not requiring a decision.

In regard to men's experiences of the naturalization of reproductivity, the research evidence is somewhat more ambivalent. As we suggested in Chapter 2, there is a degree to which men experience a call to propagate but not necessarily also child raising. Obviously this is not a strict rule, and men's experiences of an injunction to reproductivity are diverse. In terms of reproductive futurism, findings from research by William Marsiglio et al. (2001) suggests that for many young men procreative consciousness is situational, activated either by an awareness of the potential for unwanted conception (in the context of reproductive heterosex), or as otherwise made salient by primarily female partners. Marislio and colleagues do acknowledge that the injunction to reproductivity forms a wider backdrop for men's experiences in Western societies, but that typically this only becomes salient in particular contexts, which is what we may suggest differentiates men's experiences from women's (i.e. the centrality of assumptions about motherhood to women's personhood in Western societies arguably makes reproductivity a more globally salient issue for many women).

Tracy Morison and Catriona Macleod (2015) suggest that despite this potential differentiation between men's and women's responses to the reproductive imperative, procreation is nonetheless treated as a hallmark of Western human personhood, regardless of gender. As they state:

> Procreation is one such heterosexual practice that bears tremendous social significance, if not for most, for full citizenship status. Having children represents full adherence to the requirements of what it means to be an adult woman or man. The process of sexual desire for the opposite sex, partnership through marriage, and then producing children follows the expected and desirable pattern of the (heterosexual) life course and signifies the culmination of heterosexual coupledom (p. 30).

As this brief summary of some of the previous literature on the naturalization of Western human (heterosexual) reproduction would suggest, cultural norms about what it means to be valued as a human include, at their heart, the valorization of reproductivity (see also Turner 2001). Yet as we have also suggested, the valorization of reproductivity naturalizes the injunction to conceive, bear, and raise children, so much so that it can often be difficult for heterosexual couples to elaborate on why they plan to have children. We certainly found as much when conducting interviews with white middle-class heterosexual women and men. When asked to share some of their thoughts about why they wanted a child, both men and women were largely unable to elaborate upon their desire for a child. We purposely chose this word 'desire' to try and evoke the affect associated with wanting a child. Yet despite this, what we often heard were highly naturalized cultural scripts about what it means to have a child. As we see in the quotes from Samantha and Amy below, for some people, explaining why they wanted to have a child evoked a paired contrast between their own desire, and what was often framed as a 'lack' of desire on the part of people who *don't* want or can't have children:

Samantha: I don't even know how to describe why I want a child. I want to, I love kids, I've always loved kids, I think eventually I would like to work with kids in some way. But having your own child I think is a really special privilege in some ways, not everyone gets to do it and I think that that's really sad for some people especially for those that really, really want it. I can't tell you why, I think it's…for me it's a biological drive, it's something I feel that's supposed to be part of my life, it's something that I feel that I'm supposed to do. I hope that answers your question.

Amy: I find it interesting that some people don't have the instinct [to have children] because I always thought that everybody had it, that every female had it. And when I was growing up all the women that surrounded me had it, everyone, all my friends especially in high school once we had this really solid little group of friends and all the girls in that group would talk about when we get married and have children. I think all the friends I had were fairly, that thought was just, that kind of mainstream thought, you know, you are going to have children and it will probably happen in our 20s and there wasn't so much, it seemed normal to me because of the people I was surrounded by and my parents encouraged it.

In the first extract, Samantha evokes the language critiqued by Lesnik-Oberstein (2007), namely the distinction between 'children' and an 'own' child. For Samantha, working with children is not the same as 'having your own children', which Samantha depicts as a 'biological drive'. Such a drive, however, is depicted by Samantha as producing sadness for people who are unable to have an 'own' child. Amy takes the comparison between those who want to have children and those who don't a step further, in questioning how it is that any person cannot have the 'instinct' to have children. While Amy is able to elaborate on some of the potential sources of her feeling that the desire to have children is an 'instinct' (i.e. peers, parents), these cultural sources nonetheless affirm the supposed naturalness of her desire, rather than constituting the processes through which her desire is rendered intelligible.

Importantly, this language of the desire for a child being a 'biological drive' or 'innate' was not just drawn upon by the women we interviewed. Men also drew upon this language to explain the reasons why they wanted to have a child. When we asked Tom why he and his partner had decided to have a child, he said:

> Tom: I'm not sure if it's really…yeah, it was a decision to have a child obviously, but I guess it's a bit innate for me anyway. I've never really had to think, you know, 'do I want a child?' It's always been a natural sort of progression. I guess when I was sort of younger, sort of between 18 to 21 and 22ish, the desire was stronger and when I sort of hit my mid-20s, I sort of discovered the world a little bit, I guess, and became a little bit more work-centric. I'm not sure if that's because perhaps I was single in those early days and it seemed so far away, a family, whereas now it seems feasible.

Returning to the point we made above, for some of the people we spoke to like Tom, having a child was not necessarily articulated as a decision. Rather, it was treated as 'innate' or as a 'natural sort of progression'. As we suggested above, this implicitly frames *not* having a child as a decision, whereas having a child is something that is expected. Furthermore, and mirroring the findings of Morison and Macleod (2015), a desire to have a child is perhaps most strongly activated for some people when they are in a relationship. For Tom, his 'innate' desire is activated by the fact that having a child is now 'feasible' (given he is in a relationship). The idea that a child becomes more 'feasible' in the context of a relationship serves to naturalize (heterosexual) relationships as the most appropriate context in which to think about the desire for a child. In a fashion this echoes the storybook *And Tango Makes Three*, in which male and female 'couples' were depicted as automatically knowing how to nest and hatch their young, whereas a male–male couple were depicted as having to 'learn' how to nest.

As we also noted above, normative discourses of masculinity privilege the idea of procreation as a form of contributing to the species, or ensuring one's own genetic legacy, both of which are often treated as commonsense ways of thinking about human personhood, and both of which, we would suggest, are structured by assumptions about human exceptionalism. Many of the men we interviewed evoked this type of logic, more so than did the women we interviewed. When asked about what appealed to them about having children, men gave responses such as:

Adam: It's kind of selfish I suppose but it's contributing to the species or whatever. I think it's just everyone's drive to keep the ball rolling kind of thing. To me it seems unnatural not to want to have kids because if you want to get all philosophical about it what other purpose is there except to reproduce and then die? You see it in organisms like mayflies that don't even eat. They just hatch, breed, die, hatch, breed, die. It's all they do.

Ian: To me I think that, you know, it kind of completes a relationship in my opinion in a lot of ways. I mean, you know, I suppose one of the primary biological reasons for anything being alive is to procreate and so, you know, I think…I don't know, for me there'd be something missing if there wasn't to be that. I couldn't imagine being an old person and not having kids. I think that'd feel pretty lonely actually. It'd feel like there's something missing.

For both of these men having children is a primary, if not the sole reason for existence: to 'keep the ball rolling'. This type of mundane human exceptionalism displays a logic that is naturalized by Adam through recourse to the analogy to mayflies, who, he told us, just hatch and breed in an endless iterative loop. This type of pragmatic functionalism is interesting for the way it drains the desire for children of affect (and, indeed, of any care of offspring), so much so that the sole point of humans is for there to be humans. Although much wider than the claim that Adam is making, implicit in it is the assumption that Earth needs humans (otherwise why would our reproduction be valuable). In reducing the desire for children to a 'biological reason', these types of responses not only naturalize reproduction, but also reduce human personhood to a singular modus operandi.

In response to hearing the types of stories outlined above, we sought other ways of encouraging our interviewees to unpack some of their assumptions about what it means to want to have one's 'own' children. One of the ways we did this was by asking people if they had considered fostering or adopting, or if they would consider using assisted reproductive technologies if they couldn't conceive a child through reproductive heterosex. On the whole, responses to these types of questions again reinforced the supposed naturalness of the desire to have an 'own' child, as can be seen in the following responses:

Frank: [If my partner gives birth, as opposed to adopting or fostering] It's my blood and an heir. It's nature, it's natural to think like that. Well, at least that's the way I think. It's just going to be my son, something from me.

Wendy: [We would try IVF before adoption or fostering] Because the child would be ours, you know our biological child. I think like that's the natural…like that's naturally what most people would want for themselves. There's just something strong about genes I think, and DNA that you can't…there's certain things that you can't get in other ways.

For both Frank and Wendy the idea of having an 'own' child is 'nature' or 'natural'. Importantly, and echoing our point above, there is the implication that people who are happy to have a child who is not their 'own' are outside of nature. We can see this both in Frank's comment 'it's natural to think like that', and Wendy's comment 'that's naturally what most people would want'. Not only do Frank and Wendy position the desire to have an 'own' child as 'natural', but in so doing they also privilege this account of the desire for children at the expense of other possible accounts, as we can see in Wendy's bottom-line argument that 'there's certain things that you can't get in other ways'. Although Wendy didn't elaborate on what these 'certain things' are, we would suggest that what Wendy believes she will get is a place within the realm of the natural, which is accorded significant value in her account (and in Western human cultural accounts of kinship more broadly).

The final two extracts return us to the previous section, and the idea that studying or developing kinship with non-human animals might allow us to know something about ourselves as humans. For some of our participants, the desire to have children was about a desire to see themselves reflected in another person, and thus to know something more about themselves:

John: It might even sound a bit silly and a bit old-school, but I don't know, just carrying on your genes. Yeah, so, I don't know, it's like carrying on the bloodline or something. I think it would be nice to be able to go, 'Oh, yeah, look, you know, you can see that in our child and that's from you and we can see that in the child and that's from me'. You know, I think there's all that kind of stuff as well.

Ann: I think [they] have your genes and they have your DNA and they look like you and, you know, I really believe that a lot of who we are comes genetically from our parents. I do feel that a lot of our nature comes from who our parents are, not just through connecting. It just seems like more sort of…it would be better to be able to have…for me to be able to have my own child with [my partner], something that we created together that's half him and half me.

As we discussed in the previous chapter in connection to human chimera, and as we will return to in the following chapter, the emphasis placed upon 'bloodlines' and DNA in regard to kinship functions to position DNA as a key determinant of Western human personhood. Seeing an 'own' child as reflecting something about both of their parents relies upon an investment in the idea that a child should reflect their parents and that such reflecting is the product of shared genes. Not only is this a narrow understanding of the role of nature and nurture, but it is also a misunderstanding of genetic inheritance. A child is not comprised of two wholes combined into one. Rather, according to Western understandings of genetics, a child inherits half of their genes from one parent, and half from the other. In other words, two halves make a whole. It is thus only *parts* of each parent that are transmitted genetically. The idea of two people as wholes combining to make another person, we would suggest, reflects something of human exceptionalism, whereby propelling ourselves across time is seen as laudable and valued. As we shall see in the next chapter, however, this normative ideal of one plus one equals two is rendered problematic, and, indeed, becomes ‘a problem’, in instances where intent and genetics intersect in the context of kinship (such as in donor conception), and where incorporating parts of another person (such as in organ donation) shape and change how we understand personhood.

Concluding Thoughts

In this chapter we have brought together two seemingly disparate datasets: humans raising Capuchin monkeys or chimpanzees, and human heterosexual couples planning to conceive their first human child. Our argument has been that in both contexts, the ways in which adult humans speak about raising children of any species has much to tell us about human exceptionalism. As we have suggested, the study of chimpanzees living in kinship arrangements with humans has more to tell us about the lengths humans will go to in order to see something of ourselves reflected in the supposed ‘nature’ of other species than it does have anything much to tell us about what kinship means to other species. Likewise, we have suggested that the accounts that some heterosexual couples give of why they desire to have a child tells us more about the role that children play in reflecting something to human adults about themselves than it does reflect anything much about the value of children themselves as sentient beings.

As we suggested earlier in this chapter, both of these examples arguably demonstrate the solipsism that sits at the heart of Western humanism, focused as it is on the merits of (certain privileged adult Western) humans simply for the fact that we are human. While we might typically think of kinship as the coming together of groups of people united by a shared history and a shared narrative, the analyses we have presented in this chapter suggest that to a certain extent practices of Western human kinship are centrally defined by liberal humanism, by notions of the autonomous individual, and as embedded in claims to the naturalness of reproductivity. These findings are certainly nothing new, mirroring as they do the early anthropological work of Marilyn Strathern (1992), among others. In the context of posthumanist critical kinship studies, what we would suggest is required is an understanding of Western human kinship that does not simply rely upon identifying and describing relational practices, and the meanings attributed to them. Rather, it is important that we also explore the modes of personhood that are privileged within Western accounts of kinship, a topic that we attend to even more closely in the next chapter.

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5

Donor Connections

A Story

We open this chapter by focusing on the 2011 film *Starbuck*. For many readers the film's storyline may be familiar due to the 2013 American remake, which was renamed *Delivery Man*. We chose to focus on the original French Canadian version because to a certain degree the American remake whitewashes some of the key issues that appear in the original film. A key example of this involves the title. The original title references a Canadian bull—Hanoverhill Starbuck—who during his life was viewed as having exceptional genetics, and who sired over 200,000 offspring, and whose sperm was sold in 45 countries in over 685,000 doses. It has been estimated that the net income resulting from the sale of his sperm exceeds $25 million. In our view, this backstory to the original title is important, as it highlights the commodification of sperm and, particularly in the case of Hanoverhill, commodification associated with breeding animals for milking or slaughter. From the outset, then, the Canadian version of the film centres the ways in which individual bodies are commodified with the aim of producing capital. The Canadian version further highlights this through the opening scene, where the lead character—David

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Wozniak (played by Patrick Huard)—is shown masturbating at a sperm donation clinic, a context that is presented as cold and impersonal, and where he chooses the donor identification of 'Starbuck', thus connecting him to the aforementioned bull.

Our intent here is not to provide a full comparative reading of the two versions of the film, but it is worth noting that the American version does not open with this same scene. It instead opens with David (played by Vince Vaughn) going to work. The title change to *Delivery Man* is also worth noting. Not only because it further draws attention away from the name Starbuck and its association with animal breeding and commodification, but also because the idea of a delivery man brings with it a complex set of associations. Certainly, in both films, David works in his family's meat wholesale business, and specifically his role is to deliver meat. So in this sense, he is a delivery man. But in the context of children and donor conception—the central theme of the film—the word 'delivery' has other meanings: not only to deliver a child (i.e. to be involved in a birth), but also the story of the stork who delivers babies. Neither of these associations are accurate depictions of the role of sperm donors, and again, to an extent, occlude the overall themes of the original film.

Turning to the central premise of the film, *Starbuck* tells the story of a man who, when he was younger, donated sperm to a clinic for which he received $24,255 in 'compensation', resulting from 693 donations over a two-year period, from which, we are told, he 'fathered' 533 children, 142 of whom want to know his identity. Despite him signing confidentiality agreements, the children who are petitioning for identifying information claim in their class action suit that his 'right to privacy should take a back seat to [their] basic human rights'. Notably, this claim does not appear in the American version of the film. This type of claim is common in the literature on the views of donor-conceived children, who often state that it is a human right to have access to information about their genetic history, although often this is couched further in terms of a right to know one's genetic 'parents' (e.g. see Harrigan et al. 2015). This conceptualization of genetics constituting a parent is obviously one that we seek to trouble throughout this book. Nonetheless, we are aware, in the context of this chapter, that there is a range of sensitivities related to how donor-conceived people view themselves and their conception; a topic we will explore in more detail later in this chapter.

When David learns about the class action suit, he is given the profiles of the 142 children. He initially throws them away but then retrieves them and looks through them. The first profile he looks at is a major league soccer player, so he takes a friend named Avocat—who serves as his (rather inept) lawyer—to a game. After the man conceived of David's sperm scores the winning goal, we are later shown David walking home, where he says '[m]y genes were on a professional soccer pitch. It's crazy. It's like an extension of me scored the winning goal'. The achievements of the man conceived of his donation are further rendered salient by the fact that David himself plays soccer in a local team. This emphasis upon perceived similarities between the traits and personalities of donors and children conceived of their donations is replete across the literature (e.g. see Turner and Coyle 2000), and is often used to bolster claims to the equation of genetics, kinship, and self; another point that we will explore further below.

David then proceeds to contrive ways to meet other people conceived of his donations, without them knowing who he is. In each of these vignettes he finds a way to help each of the people. In one such vignette he delivers a pizza to a young woman who overdoses while he is in her apartment. When he takes her to a hospital, the young woman misrepresents him as her father, so as to be released from the hospital rather than being admitted to a recovery programme, all without knowing that he is her donor. This pattern continues, after which he tells Avocat that he can be a 'guardian angel' for the people conceived of his donations, because 'these kids need someone in their lives to watch over them. I'm the donor, and they're my responsibility'.

This idea of being 'responsible' is an increasing theme as the film progresses, culminating to a degree in a scene where David accidentally walks into a meeting convened by the 142 children. When he realizes this, he stands up and says 'I love you. I love you all very much. You're all focusing on Starbuck, but you can't forget that whatever happens, you're all brothers and sisters'. In the American remake the words 'I love you' are not included. Beyond this difference, it is important to note here that the narrative of the film closely mirrors the real-life experiences of a large cohort of people conceived from the same donor in the USA. Eric Blyth (2012a, b) documents the experiences of some of this cohort, whom he refers to as Clan X (in order to protect their anonymity). Many of the members of Clan X he interviewed similarly make claims to kinship on the basis of a shared donor, referring to one another as brothers and sisters, despite not being raised together as siblings, mirroring again some of the research and data we consider in detail below.

David's intention to be an anonymous 'guardian angel' is challenged, however, mid-way through the film when he returns home and is confronted by one of the people conceived of his donations, who has managed to identify who he is. The man, who is a vegetarian, is disappointed to learn that David works at a butcher shop, saying to David 'so you murder animals', to which David says he is 'just' a delivery man, to which the young man says 'so you cart around the carcasses of murdered animals'. By comparison, the American remake does not include these lines, instead including a much less strident comment on the human consumption of animals. The young man—named Antoine—is also disappointed to learn that David is not a musician, but rather a self-defined 'jock', just like the people who beat him up at school. Antoine then says:

> Most people come into this world out of an act of love. Most people are conceived of love. But me, I came into this world out of an act of masturbation. I was conceived in a little cup.

Again, this type of claim reflects the literature documenting the experiences of donor-conceived people, some of whom suggest that they feel 'abandoned' by their donor, that he was mercenary and uncaring, the outcome being that they feel disconnected from the world around them (e.g. see Turner and Coyle 2000). In response to these statements, David then decides to spend time with Antoine, whom he finds challenging. Subsequently, when Antoine suggests that David come away to a camp with him, David says that he can't as he already has plans with his girlfriend, who is now pregnant with his child. David reminds Antoine that 'I've got a real family too', to which Antoine responds negatively. Realizing how unfair this statement is, David agrees to attend the camp, which is convened by the 142 children, where we are shown them in an idyllic setting and David happily joining in the events of the day. The camp, however, gains media attention, thus threatening David's anonymity. Following this, the case receives a significant amount of negative local and international media attention, and David hears comments from friends, family, and strangers in response to the media coverage, all of whom depict the anonymous donor as pathological and an embarrassment, echoing representations of sperm donors more widely (e.g. see Thomson 2008).

Before the case goes to court, and following his time at the camp, David feels compelled to drop the case and disclose his identity. Avocat, however, tells David that if they win the case they will make lots of money, to which David says '[y]ou want me to sell my children to pay off my debts', to which Avocat replies 'but they're not your children', with David resolutely replying 'I want to come clean. They're my children'. Yet despite his resolution, David is swayed by the negative media attention, and the trial proceeds and he wins. The film concludes, however, with David deciding to email the 142 people and disclose that he, David Wozniak, is Starbuck. The film ends with the birth of David's child with his partner, with all of the 142 people conceived from David's donation coming to the hospital where David tells them 'I am your biological father. And you now all have a new baby brother'. While the 142 people all appear to happily accept this information (despite having previously been denied it), when David tells his girlfriend she is upset, and tells David he cannot be the father of their child. David emphatically tells her in response that it is up to him to assert that he is the child's father, and that she cannot change that. This declarative statement appears, in the closing moments, to change his girlfriend's opinion, and David's girlfriend embraces him.

As should be readily apparent, the themes of *Starbuck* connect with many of our concerns in this book, specifically the operations of capitalism in the commodification of human and non-human animal bodies, the privileged status accorded to the role of genetics in determining genealogy (in this case in connection to both human and non-human animals - with regard to Starbuck's namesake), and the determinism accorded to genetics in terms of kinship and self. In what follows, we first turn to consider how these same issues play out in the context of organ donation, before then returning to the topic of sperm donor conception.

Organ Donation and Kinship

Before beginning this section, in which we examine accounts of kinship in the context of organ donation, it is important to clarify what precisely we are talking about when we refer to organ donation. In this section we are not addressing the topic of organ trafficking, nor are we addressing so-called 'live' donations, which often take place between people known to one another (i.e. a woman donating a kidney to her brother, or a man donating part of his liver to his father). Rather, in this section we focus specifically on accounts of organ donation that involve transplants from cadaveric donors. Such donations are typically anonymous and between strangers, though as we shall see below, for many recipients (and, indeed, families of deceased donors) there is a desire to reach out and connect.

Before turning to the topic of human–human organ transplantation, it is important to first locate such transplantation in a relationship to xenotransplantation, or cross-species transplantation. This is not only important given our focus across this book on kinship across species, but because historically xenotransplantation has been the testing ground for human–human transplantation, and also because in many ways xenotransplantation is configured as the 'future' in terms of addressing the chronic shortage of available human donor organs.

Lesley Sharp (2011) provides a detailed account of the role of xenotransplantation in the development of human–human organ transplant techniques. Sharp suggests that in the 1960s and 1970s, transplants between other primates were the testing ground, the assumption being that proximity between other primates and humans would result in successful outcomes. As we saw in Chapter 4, this is similar to the idea that teaching chimpanzees how to speak would tell us something about human language acquisition, given the relative proximity between humans and other primates. As Sharp recounts, however, the assumption of relative contiguity was fatally flawed in the context of xenotransplantation, resulting in a number of high-profile cases where such transplants failed and the human recipient died. Importantly, and as Sharp recounts in relation to one particular instance where a human infant received a heart transplant from a baby baboon, the transplantation was not only fatal for the human baby, but also for the baby baboon:

> The animal that supplied Baby Fae with her new heart was described as a juvenile (and, thus, like her, a 'baby') baboon. As such, it was not just any creature, but one that in the United States was described in evolutionary terms as a 'subhuman', 'relative', or 'cousin' of our species. Contrary to statements made within the medical community, the baboon was not so much a donor (there was no informed consent), but instead an animal 'sacrificed' (to employ the clinical term) for the sake of trying to save a sickly human neonate (p. 50).

Given the failure of xenotransplantation in this period of the twentieth century, alongside objections raised by animal rights activists, cross-primate transplantation was halted. This, however, has not meant the end of attempts at xenotransplantation. Most recently pigs have been the focus of scientific attention with regard to xenotransplantation. As Sharp again notes:

> Whereas monkeys and apes were once valued for their size (or 'fit') and evolutionary proximity to humans, the pigs of contemporary xeno research are transgenic creatures, genetically engineered either to purge their progeny of particular proteins that would generate a human immunological response or to ensure that future generations incorporate human material so that their organs might be read as 'self' or 'same' when implanted in people (p. 48).

Pigs that are bred for xenotransplantation, similar to bulls such as Hanoverhill Starbuck and chickens bred for meat or eggs in factory farming (Davis 2014), are thus reduced to products in the name of both human exceptionalism and capitalism. They are no longer animals valued for their sentience or being in the world, but rather are simply valued as products to be consumed or to maintain human life. Which brings us to the topic of organ transplantation itself. While, as we noted above, in this chapter we are not exploring in detail the politics of organ transplantation, it is nonetheless important for us to note that the drive for xenotransplantation is fuelled by the over valuing of human life: that it is deemed important to maintain or prolong human life at all expense. Our point here is not to devalue human life. Rather our point is to suggest, in line with our elaboration of the relative value accorded to non-human animal life in xenotransplantation, that what appears to drive such practices in Western societies is an appetite to increase productivity through the prolonging of human life.

For our purposes in this chapter, and despite the exceptionalism that we would suggest sits at the heart of organ donation, organ donation produces ambivalence about what precisely counts as human after organ donation. Given our focus in this book on practices of Western human kinship, it is notable to us that in the case of organ donation, the notion of the Western-bounded individual is challenged. Indeed, much of the literature on accounts of receiving a donor account are reminiscent of Janet Carsten (2004) and Marilyn Strathern's (1992) accounts of kinship in Melanesia. In this context, they suggest, subjectivity is not accorded on the basis of individual attributes *per se*, but rather on the basis of relationships between people. Marie-Andrée Jacob (2012) has suggested that such an account of self-through-relationship is evident in narratives of organ donation, where those in Western societies who receive anonymous donor organs experience a shift in their sense of self: as being more than simply a bounded individual.

Such an ontological shift is extensively examined in the work of Sharp (1995), who suggests that:

> When organs come from anonymous cadavers, recipients often attempt to integrate some sense of who they think or wish their donors were. In other words, since they are provided with only very limited background information on their donors, they create fictitious characters—whose attributes they fear or wish to emulate—who will then be integrated into how they now perceive themselves as owners or inhabitants of newly constructed bodies (p. 379).

This idea of incorporating part of another person into oneself has implications not only for recipients, but also for the families of cadaveric donors, as Sharp (2006) also elaborates:

> The ideological underpinnings of organ transfer render closure [for families of organ donors] highly problematic. If transplanted organs embody the essence of deceased donors, then organ transfer literally scatters bits and

> parts of selves about the country. In this sense, organ transfer simultaneously engenders, first, a special category of wandering dead […] and, second, a peculiar type of body transgression or hybridity, involving the melding of parts from one donor to the bodies of several strangers (p. 164).

As we shall see when we turn to examine a selection of accounts of organ donation, the strangeness that can accompany organ donation is often managed through the evocation of kinship terms, through which the bodily parts of others are incorporated into the self through the claiming of kinship. Such claims to kinship are often complex, and highlight the transience and constructedness of kinship categories. They often draw upon Western cultural norms that privilege genetics as a formative aspect of kinship, as Margareta Sanner (2003) notes:

> Recipients who had organs from the same donor suggested that a kind of consanguinity had been established. 'Now we are half-siblings'. Thus, even here an idea of genetics was involved in the recipients' thinking (p. 395).

Importantly, however, as both Jacob (2012) and Donna McCormack (2016) have argued, such claims to kinship are not 'fictive', in comparison to notionally 'real' forms of kinship. Rather, claims to kinship in the context of organ donation demonstrate that as a technology, claims to kinship continuously bring into being their referents. In other words, claims to kinship in the context of organ donation are no more unnatural or manufactured than are any other claim to kinship. Rather, they are part and parcel of a Western genealogical framework within which relatedness is determined by particular valorized forms of connectedness (e.g. genetics and/or biology).

Turning to examine some examples of claims to kinship in the context of organ donation, we draw on three sources. The first is a book—*Living to Tell* (NeighborsGo 2012)—which includes a number of short stories by recipients of organ donation. The second, a 2012 PBS documentary entitled *Transplant*: *Gift for Life*, and third, the 2002 film *Blood Work*, directed by and starring Clint Eastwood. In the book *Living to Tell*, two particular narratives demonstrate the complexity of claims to kinship in the context of organ donation:

> Libby: This time, Libby was moved to the top of the national transplant list. Within 48 hours, she was in surgery again, receiving a second liver from her 'soul mate', Joey. Joseph Tyler Desersa of California also celebrated his fourth birthday that year. He died Oct. 18, 1997, of complications from a birth defect—and gave his life back to Libby. 'It's not fair. I'm here and he's not', Libby said. 'They gave me a gift I can never repay'. But she's trying. Libby is a student volunteer at Children's Medical Center Dallas. She is on the Teen Board of the Ronald McDonald House. She is co-president of Students Against Destructive Decisions at her school, Episcopal School of Dallas, and the Future Educators Club. 'Joey is living on through me', said Libby, who is consistently working to repay him. (NeighborsGo 2012, p. 20).

Accounts such as these highlight the affective ambivalence that shapes the experiences of many recipients of donor organs. On the one hand, Joey is depicted as Libby's 'soul mate', as the person through whom Joey 'lives on'. Yet, on the other hand, for Libby organ donation is a gift that can never be repaid, one that is 'not fair'. Across the literature on organ donation, this same tension plays out, with many examples of organ transplant recipients both celebrating the 'gift of life', while also engaging in complex emotion management stemming from the fact that such a gift arises from the death of another. It is thus perhaps unsurprising that kinship becomes a lens through which to frame organ donation. Drawing on broader Western (and, indeed, Christian) accounts of kinship as evoking selflessness and altruism, claims to kinship with donors function, to a degree, as a technology that mitigate the tension between gifts and debt. Religious overtones are similarly evident in claims to kinship in the second extract that we include here:

> Brenda: As she walked up the aisle on her wedding day this June, Brenda Johnson of Wylie carried a photo of the young man who made that day possible for her and her husband-to-be. The young man was John Green, and almost five years ago, his family donated the 22-year-old's liver to Brenda, then 48. 'That change in my life, I felt, allowed me be able to have that special day', Brenda said. Brenda had been on a waiting list for several years and was ailing when John's family made their life-giving decision. John was in a coma after a motorcycle accident when his mother, Marilyn

> Shipp Richard, heard about Brenda's situation. She said she came to believe, and still does, that God was leading her to let her son go and to help Brenda live. 'He was meant for her', said Marilyn, a Mesquite resident, 'because she's been wonderful and she's been healthy, and she didn't have any rejections at all. It was meant to be' […] 'I feel like he's my son that I never had', Brenda said, 'because she passed him on to me to carry on, and asked me to take care of him' (NeighborsGo 2012, p. 22–23).

Again, the act of organ donation is depicted as meant to be, and as ordained by God. And perhaps even more clearly than in the previous extract, a claim to kinship is made by Brenda, the recipient, in the suggestion that John is 'like a son', having been passed on to her by Marilyn, the donor's mother. Sharp's (2006) work on organ donation suggests that a lot rides on these types of claims, particularly with regard to the 'appropriate' relationships between donors and recipients. Sharp outlines a similar example to the one above, where one of her participants (an older male) received a transplant from a younger woman. For the recipient, this evoked complex identity work in order to frame the donor as akin to a daughter helping a father, rather than framing the donor as a peer (which could potentially risk connotations of an 'inappropriate' relationship). In examples such as these, organs are not treated simply as body parts, but rather as synecdoches for the whole person.

By contrast, in the PBS documentary that we now examine *Transplant: Gift for Life*, one older male recipient appeared to evoke the idea of being akin to a lover to the younger female donor from whom he received lungs. The following is a poem read by Bob Kayes, who received lungs from Chelsea Nelson:

> Inhalation, exhalation.
> You're breathing in me now.
> Gracious and peaceful breath,
> Your lungs living again empower me to sigh gratefully.
> Who are you, my pulmonary palmyra, my breath flower?
> Will I ever, ever know? Perhaps, perhaps not.
> Either way, please understand your lungs are safe with me,
> Both alongside my heart.
> Your body, like a love story,

> Shared two healthy lungs with a perfect stranger: me.
> I wear more pink now in your feminine honour.
> You, younger. You, healthier. You, a womanly spirit provide me with many more breaths of life than I had left with my ill-fated fibrosis.
> So now, and forever, we'll go walking, talking, singing, laughing crying,
> And breathing, breathing, breathing, breathing, breathing, breathing, together.

In this poem, Bob brings himself into an intimate relationship with Chelsea, through the positioning of her lungs in his chest, next to his heart. Following Sharp (1995), we might suggest that to a degree these types of claims anthropomorphize individual organs. Such anthropomorphism is different to that which we have examined in previous chapters with regard to non-human animals. In the case of donor organs, it is the organ itself being attributed with human characteristics. Yet, at the same time, these two forms of anthropomorphisms are not entirely separate. In the context of animal companions, for example, or in the context of children's storybooks that feature non-human animals, to give another example, anthropomorphism functions to legitimize kinship relations across and within species by centring Western human understandings of kinship. Similarly with organ donation, the anthropomorphizing of organs functions to reduce affective ambivalence associated with incorporating the body parts of another person, by making the parts stand for the whole, and thus bringing the two people into a kin relationship.

Our final example is taken from the 2002 film *Blood Work*. In the film Clint Eastwood plays a retired detective, Terry McCaleb, who receives a heart transplant. In the film the sister of the woman from whom the heart was taken approaches Terry, and asks him to help her as she believes her sister (Gloria) was murdered. It is not necessary for us to provide extensive details about what is quite a complex and clever detective movie. For our purposes here, a small number of examples demonstrate again how organs may be anthropomorphized, and how this produces complex kin relationships between organ recipients and the families of organ donors. When Terry first meets the sister Graciella (played by Wanda De Jesus), he tells her that '[t]hese cases normally turn on some small detail. Something someone forgot or didn't think was important. That'll be the key and I'll have to find it', to which Graciella replies '[w]ell you have Gloria's heart, she'll guide you'. As above, a heart is a synecdoche for a person, rather than simply a muscle that pumps blood. As Margrit Shildrick (2012) has argued, heart transplants are often viewed as the most evocative, given the meanings attributed to the heart as the source of feeling and emotion.[1]

At the end of the film, having solved the murder and having begun a romantic relationship with Graciella, Terry is asked by a colleague how he is planning on progressing the relationship with Graciella into the future. Terry replies by saying '[w]ell I've got Gloria Torres's heart. I'll let that guide me'. This is notable given, in effect, by this logic it would be one sister's heart guiding romantic feelings for her own sister. This logic is evoked earlier in the movie by the murderer, who asks Terry:

> Do you think when they were little girls, like going to Sunday School, do you think Gloria Torres ever thought her heart would be pumping blood through some guy that was banging her sister?

Obviously we are speaking here about a Hollywood movie, where organ transplantation can be treated as a logical plot narrative in the context of both a murder and a romantic affair. Yet despite the sensationalism that is arguably inherent to the logic presented to Terry above, it nonetheless highlights the complexities associated with claiming kinship to an organ donor, particularly in the context of ongoing kinship relations with the donor's family. This was equally true in the case of Bob Kayes above, who shared his poem with Chelsea's family before meeting them and developing a close relationship with them. That his poem evokes an intimacy between himself and Chelsea, while at the same time Bob has developed a close kin relationship with Chelsea's parents, again suggests, following McCormack (2016), that what is evident in narratives of organ donation such as the ones we have explored above is not a 'fictive' kinship that may be opposed to the truth of kinship. Rather, accounts such

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[1] Prior to the Renaissance the view that the heart was the source of the soul, thinking, memory, emotions, and personality was prevalent, especially in the Egyptian period and in Europe in the Middle Ages. That much influential literature was written when the heart's function was significantly more expansive than simply to pump blood may explain why this association has persisted.

as these demonstrate the ways in which kinship as a technology functions to manage intimacies between individuals, so as to delineate 'appropriate' from 'inappropriate' relationships (indeed, this was the central argument of Lévi-Strauss' 1969 work on kinship, where the injunction to exogamy was to avoid incest). As we shall see in the following section, concerns about 'appropriate' as opposed to 'inappropriate' relationships similarly appear in accounts of donor conception.

Donor Conception and Kinship

Turning to the topic of donor conception, we have already highlighted with regard to the film *Starbuck* how non-human animals such as Hanoverhill Starbuck are instrumentalized for their sperm. In making this suggestion, our point is not to enter into debates about the 'nature' of bulls, for example, and their production of sperm. Like most animals (including humans) that produce sperm, the 'fact' of bull sperm is not something we seek to question, even if how sperm are understood (i.e. as signifying genealogy) is culturally produced (Moore 2008). What we have questioned in this chapter, however, is how a bull such as Hanoverhill Starbuck can be reduced to a sperm-making *machine*, prized only for the capital that his sperm generates. There is also a sense, both in the film *Starbuck* and in the literature on sperm donation, that to a certain extent human males are also instrumentalized (e.g. see Thomson 2008). Yet we would nonetheless suggest that the broader framework of human exceptionalism differentiates these two forms of instrumentalization. While both are used in the service of human life, only one potentially results in the loss of life (i.e. the instrumentalization of animals and their death).

As another example, and if we consider the case of canine pedigrees, the differences become even more readily apparent. In the case of such breeding, this is undertaken *for* humans, some of whom value dogs for traits that can be demonstrated at competitions where prizes may be won. Such competitions, then, do not inherently enrich the lives of dogs, so much as they enrich the lives of some humans. Genes are made to matter in this context because they allow for pride and material gain among some humans. This is evident through comparison to the sterilization of non-pedigree dogs, who are not valued for their genes (Armbruster 2010). Turning to the case of human sperm donation, as we do in the remainder of this chapter, human genetics (in the form of donor sperm) are made to matter for a range of humans: donors, recipients, and donor-conceived people, precisely because sperm is involved in the creation of more humans. Yet as we shall now explore, how sperm matters is complex and highly differentiated between these groups.

As we outlined above with regard to organ donation and kinship, it is important to first delineate the parameters of the groups we will focus on in what follows. Sperm donation is a broad category, and includes relatively disparate groups of recipients, and hence relatively disparate outcomes. Our focus is on donor conception that has historically operated from the assumption of donor anonymity, undertaken in the context of reproductive clinics. For people conceived in such a context, both research and public narratives (which we examine below) emphasize the negative implications of anonymity. This is different to people conceived, for example, in private arrangements where the donor is known, or where their donor conception is not concealed. In their summary of existing literature on the experiences of donor-conceived people, Eric Blyth et al. (2012) suggest that children born to lesbian couples, for example, are typically unlikely to be concerned about their donor conception, with children born to single women somewhat likely to be concerned to know about their donor. Children born to heterosexual couples, and where their conception status, or the identity of their donor, is unknown, by contrast, are those most likely to express significant concern about their donor conception. It is this last group that we thus focus on here, for reasons that will become apparent.

Prevalent in the literature on donor conception is the idea that not being able to know one's donor produces a sense of 'genetic discontinuity', meaning a 'disruption in the continuity of… identity as a biological product of both… parents' (Turner and Coyle 2000, p. 2045). Without in any way wanting to diminish the experience of such a sense of discontinuity, it is important for us to place it in a wider Western social context whereby it is normative for one to be genetically to related to two parents. That the discovery one is not related to both of one's parents should be experienced as a 'disruption' is thus a product of a particular cultural context, and a particular set of assumptions about what constitutes kinship proper, as we have discussed in previous chapters.

Linked also to our exploration of organ donation above, is the idea that knowing one's donor is a core component of knowing oneself. For many donor-conceived people who cannot know about their donor, there is the assumption 'that full ontological security cannot be truly accessed unless the bearer of the genes is known in person' (Nordqvist and Smart 2014, p. 24). Similar to the anthropomorphizing of organs, then, sperm is similarly anthropomorphized as representing the donor, and by implication representing the donor-conceived self (Riggs and Scholz 2011). As was also the case with respect to organ donation, some donor-conceived people who are unable to meet their donor develop narratives about what they think their donor would be like. This assumes that there will be shared personality traits or interests between themselves and the donor, as Turner and Coyle (2000) note, whose participants appeared to suggest:

> [T]hat perhaps in the absence of a 'real' relationship with their donor fathers these donor offspring were relying on a fantasy image as a coping strategy for blocking the threat to their identity by providing a form of temporary escape through wishful thinking or speculation (p. 2046).

In order to address this 'absence', and as we suggested with the film *Starbuck*, some donor-conceived people go to considerable lengths to make connections with other people conceived from the same donor. The case of Clan X, as discussed previously, is a key example of this, although certainly this group of people are not alone in attempting to connect with both donors and others conceived from the same donor's sperm. For those who are able to achieve such connections, there is the perception that this is beneficial, as Blyth (2012a, b) suggests in light of his participants:

> Participants observed two principal benefits of having identified their donor and donor half-siblings. First, the extent to which doing so had contributed to the achievement of their primary goal of finding 'missing' pieces of their genetic biographies. Identifying their donor and meeting half-siblings were acknowledged as integral components of the process by which participants redefined their identities (p. 150).

For recipients of donor sperm, this process of redefinition can be difficult, in cases where their children hold them accountable for the decisions they made about donor conception. Again, this is a dominant narrative across previous research, in which many donor-conceived people report blaming their parents for not disclosing their conception status sooner. And for some donor conceived people there is a further concern that being donor conceived, by default, is damaging regardless of whether or not their conception status is disclosed. Meredith Marko Harrigan et al. (2015) suggest that for some of their participants,

> feelings of victimization [were attributed to the] immediate family system by describing ways in which their parents' decision making hurt them. Constructing his or her parent as an active choice maker, a common construction, one [participant] wrote: 'How could my own parents decide to deliberately separate me from my kin, to grow up half-blinded to my own identity' (p. 82).

In this type of account, which is prevalent across public narratives of donor conception amongst those who cannot access information about their donor, genetics are *de facto* treated as constituting kinship. Yet as we shall now see, this is not a unilateral position among donor-conceived people.

An example of this appears in an episode of the Australian current affairs programme *Insight*, which focused on donor conception. The programme is hosted by Jennie Brockie, who facilitates a conversation in each episode with a small audience on a given topic. In this particular episode, aired on 22 October 2013, the audience was comprised of donor-conceived people, donors, parents of donor-conceived people, and staff at reproductive clinics. In the following interaction, two donor-conceived people in the audience disagree about the importance of knowing one's donor, or the assumption that genetics have anything to tell us about who we are:

> Amy: It fascinates me that we have this idea of our genetic heritage and how important that is to us. I don't really see what the meaningful information about you or your life you would get out of knowing more about [your donor]. And I wonder what you see as the important thing to know.

> Ross: Well, it takes genetics and environment and I think it's pointless, it's belittling both parts of that to put either one down. We're a combination of both. You wanna find someone you look like, and when you don't look like people from your family […] I just want to meet someone that I look like, get to know them, work out where some of my proclivities and skills and vices come from. It's just a part of life.
>
> Amy: See I think we put too much emphasis on genetics in terms of understanding our personality.
>
> Ross: Oh I do too. I think we are way too genetically deterministic in our society. I mean it's more an existential question to find out where I came from.

In the first comment from Ross, the desire to find people you look like is naturalized, as is the assumption that meeting a donor would explain something about one's 'proclivities and skills and vices'. The bottom-line argument 'it's just a part of life' relies upon how normalized these types of assumptions are, both among donor-conceived people, and within Australian society more generally. In a sense, then, donor conception becomes a *failed* technology, one that prevents people from looking like people or knowing who they are. As with the research examples cited above, then, Ross evokes a sense of genealogical bewilderment to legitimate his desire to meet his donor. While in his second comment he concedes that society is 'way too genetically deterministic', he nonetheless restates the idea that his desire is 'existential'. In treating knowledge about his donor as 'where he came from', then, Ross reinforces the idea that genetics equals genealogy.

In making these points our intention is not, of course, to discount or belittle the experiences of people conceived from anonymous donor sperm. The norm of secrecy that informed donor conception in the 1970s and 1980s most definitely has produced a set of experiences that clearly have long-lasting implications. This must be acknowledged and respected. At the same time, one of our key themes within this book is a critique of practices of Western human kinship, in which genetics are accorded a privileged position. Invariably, we cannot expect Ross or any other donor-conceived person to be outside of such practices. Nevertheless, we feel it is important to examine, and critique, the discursive contexts through which certain donor-conceived subjectivities are produced.

The final three extracts included in this chapter are taken from the Australian documentary *Sperm Donors Anonymous*, aired on ABC in August 2015. The documentary followed the same Ross, along with five other donor-conceived people, looking for their donors. In the first two extracts, two of the participants repeat in their own way the narrative provided by Ross above:

> Michael: I feel that really the only thing that I can do, is find out my donor code. It's about creating a picture. It's not just about finding the dude that did a little generous deed. It's about this picture that I'm a part of that goes far beyond just that.
>
> Kimberley: People by, you know, nature, are curious to know where they originated from. So that's the facts. Nobody's trying to force a relationship on anybody, it's just how we're programmed. People wanna know where they come from.

In the comment from Michael, although he suggests that his aim is not simply to meet his donor, the idea of being part of a 'picture' is centrally reliant upon the donor. In the documentary Michael was often caught up in what was a highly ambivalent narrative: on the one hand, he spoke lovingly of his parents, yet on the other there was the idea summarized in this quote, namely that meeting his donor could connect him with something 'far beyond'. The comment from Kimberley, similar to the one from Ross above, naturalizes the desire to know one's donor, which she refers to as a 'fact'. The problem with this type of argument, one in which it is 'nature' or 'programmed' to want to know where we 'originated from', is that people like Amy above, who have no desire to know who their donor is, are implicitly rendered as unnatural or incorrectly programmed. Again, while we respect the individual views of donor-conceived people such as Michael, Ross, and Kimberley, there is a sense in these television programmes that genetic determinism overrides any other ways of understanding one's donor conception.

This point about the centrality accorded to genetic determinism is most salient in the final extract below. This extract is taken from the last minutes of *Sperm Donors Anonymous*, where we learn that Jeff is in contact with his donor, has seen a photo of him, and is reflecting on what all this means:

> Jeff: It's a piece of the puzzle that doesn't make a picture, it doesn't change anything, but I think that knowing it does settle a piece of mind, because until then you're always thinking 'what could it be'. Maybe we will become close, maybe we will communicate, maybe we will have nothing to do with one another from here into the future. Any reality is okay with me. I'm very happy that I know some information, that I've actually seen a picture of his face, I know his name, I have an idea of what he's like and where he comes from. And I have an idea of where I come from.

While in these comments Jeff concludes with the claim that knowing his donor equates to knowing where he came from, there is a sense in which this knowing differs from the knowing that Ross or Kimberley refer to above. Given the ambivalence in Jeff's comments—he might become close with his donor, he might have nothing to do with him—the 'where I come from' seems to us a much more simple version of 'knowing who he is'. To know who his donor is does not necessarily tell Jeff who he is. Instead, it only adds one piece to the puzzle, rather than completing the puzzle entirely. Given Jeff had managed to access information about his donor, and Ross and Kimberley had not, it is perhaps understandable that they were still wedded to the idea that genetics equals genealogy equals an answer to the question 'who am I?'. Indeed, this appears to be a common theme across the literature, and the documentaries we viewed in writing this chapter: that much of the anger that some donor conceived people express about their conception is the product of a sense of powerlessness. Given the strength of narratives of genetics and kinship in Western societies, it is perhaps unsurprising that being denied access to information about one's donor would leave one feeling disempowered.

Concluding Thoughts

In this chapter we have brought together the experiences of donor-conceived people with the experiences of people who have received donated organs, our intention being to demonstrate some of the diverse and complex ways in which claims to kinship are made through recourse to naturalized understandings of genetics and biology. We have also sought to frame these experiences within our broader posthumanist critical kinship studies approach, which seeks to trouble human exceptionalism by examining the continuities and disjunctures between how humans and non-human animals are instrumentalized in the name of producing capital. At the same time, our intention has not been to discount the experiences of donor-conceived people, nor to speak *per se* against organ transplants. Instead, we have highlighted both challenges to normative understanding of kinship (i.e. claiming as a son a person whose heart you have received), as well as how normative understandings of kinship are reinforced even in the absence of actual experiences of kinship (i.e. claiming someone as a sibling solely on the basis of genetics). The tensions between these types of claims, we have suggested, produce affective ambivalences. These affective ambivalences are not necessarily produced due to the fact that the forms of kinship we have examined are located at the margins, but rather precisely because practices of Western human kinship are *all* negotiated through connecting, and, indeed, competing, discursive assemblages that require repetition in order to seem natural. Yet it is precisely through such processes of naturalization, we would suggest, that their contingent status is revealed.

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6

Kinship and Loss

A Story

Given the diversity of topics that we cover in this chapter, we found it difficult to identify one single story that could encapsulate them all. Although not providing a neat solution to this quandary, the Belgian film *Ma Vie en Rose* goes at least some way towards introducing our key themes. Released in 1997, the film tells the story of a young person—Ludovic—and her journey to gender affirmation. The film begins with Ludovic appearing at a house-warming party in a beautiful pink dress. This comes as a surprise to her parents, as by their understanding Ludovic was a boy. In response to Ludovic's appearance at the party in a dress, her parents pass this off as Ludovic being the 'joker of the family', before quickly taking her inside to change clothes. In the moment before she is taken away, however, Ludovic makes eye contact with Jérôme, the son of Ludovic's father's boss, and they smile at one another. When Ludovic is taken inside she drops one of the earrings she is wearing, and we see Jérôme pick it up.

At school the next day the children have 'show and tell', and Ludovic brings her Pam and Ben dolls—popular characters from a television show that she loves. Jérôme brings Ludovic's earring in a box. During play

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time, following the show-and-tell session, Ludovic and Jérôme talk to one another, and when Jérôme attempts to return the earring, Ludovic tells him to keep it. The next day Ludovic visits Jérôme's house. She convinces Jérôme to go into his dead sister's bedroom. Her bedroom appears as a time capsule, preserved the way it was when she died. Ludovic, however, is told that Jérôme's sister is 'away'. Ludovic then dons one of her dresses and stages a wedding with Jérôme. When Jérôme's mother sees them about to kiss, she faints. Jérôme's mother's response, it would appear, is brought on by two intersecting events that challenge her worldview: the first entails someone wearing her daughter's clothes, thus trespassing on the way in which her room has been preserved as a memorial to her. The second is that the person wearing her clothes is a child perceived as male, and who is engaging in intimacy with her son. It is the latter that becomes something of a lynchpin to the film's narrative as it progresses.

That evening, Ludovic's father hears of the events at dinner, and is both very angry and very worried about what his boss will think. He suggests that they should cut off Ludovic's hair, which is styled as a bob. Ludovic's mother replies by saying 'yes, and we could crucify him too'. At this point in the film, Ludovic's mother is supportive of Ludovic's gender presentation, while nonetheless insisting to Ludovic that she is a boy, and also reprimanding Ludovic for trespassing in the dead child's bedroom. Ludovic's sister also defends her, commenting to her father that '[h]e didn't kill the pope'. The father then becomes even angrier at Ludovic, saying '[w]hat you did was very bad'. One of Ludovic's brothers asks '[l] ike putting a cat in the dishwasher?', to which the other brother replies '[w]orse, you moron!' This final set of comments is notable to us, given we would consider putting any animal in a dishwasher to be 'worse', yet the film's narrative positions Ludovic's actions (i.e. wearing a dead girl's dress) as worse than animal cruelty. This, to us, signifies the ferocity that often accompanies responses to gender non-conformity among children.

In response to the father's anger and concerns about Ludovic, the parents then decide to take her to a psychoanalyst. The analyst asks them 'what child did you want? A boy or a girl?'. The father replies that they had no preference, but the mother admits that she thought a second girl would be nice. Ludovic, listening into this conversation, takes this as an affirmation of her gender, while to a certain extent the parents take it as an indictment on them, blaming Ludovic's gender presentation on their own wishes and desires.

Up until this point of the film, and despite her father's anger, the depiction of Ludovic's gender presentation is relatively light hearted. This, however, changes in a subsequent scene, where Ludovic's parents and their neighbours are gathered for a barbecue, where Ludovic is a topic of conversation. One of the neighbours comments that she saw a television show about 'transsexual people', and then says with great sadness, that she doesn't know what she would do if her daughter wanted to be a boy. At the same time, inside the house Ludovic's father is talking to his boss, Jérôme's father. The boss admonishes Ludovic's father for allowing the mother to have 'too much authority over the children', to which the father replies that children aren't all the same, suggesting that the boss would know this if he had more than one child, forgetting that one of his children had died. The boss replies 'God took one of my children. He's not taking two'. This reference to 'taking' is notable, given it implies not the literal taking of a child (i.e. Jérôme's death), but rather positions the possibility of Jérôme having romantic feelings for Ludovic as a death.

With this strong and negative shift in the film's narrative, further negative events transpire, culminating in Ludovic being expelled from school, and the family being ostracized from their community. At this point, the mother blames Ludovic entirely, asking her 'are you trying to destroy our family?' Ludovic leaves the family and stays with her Granny for a period of time, who throughout the film is depicted as supportive of Ludovic's gender presentation. However, Ludovic's father, who has been dismissed from his job by Jérôme's father, gets a new job in a different town, requiring the family to leave their home. Ludovic thus returns to her family and they move to the new town. There, Ludovic meets a transgender boy, and attends his birthday party, where the boy forces Ludovic to change clothes. When Ludovic's mother sees her in a dress, she chases Ludovic, yells at her, and smacks her, screaming 'why do you want to destroy our family'. Ludovic runs away, and when searching for her Ludovic's mother has a vision of Ludovic leaving her, and going to live instead with the fictional character Pam. The film closes with Ludovic's mother waking from the vision, and saying to Ludovic, 'whatever happens, you'll always be my child. I've tended to forget it lately, but not anymore'.

As we noted above, in this chapter we address a diverse range of topics, specifically focusing on those that pertain to children and loss. The film *Ma Vie en Rose*, although not addressing all of the topics we cover below, nevertheless introduces us to the idea that particular children (in this case a transgender child) are sometimes viewed by their parents as a loss, akin to the death of a child. Our central aim in this chapter is to explore how such narratives of loss have increasingly become naturalized. And yet, concurrently, other narratives of loss (such as in relation to the death of a companion animal or a pregnancy loss) continue to be marginalized. What differentiates the apportioning of loss, we suggest, is the degree to which personhood is accorded to particular groups, and the terms on which personhood proper is determined. These are the issues that we now turn to explore in more detail.

Loss, Grievability, and Human Exceptionalism

In this section we explore in a little more detail some of the points we have made above, before turning to the topic of the loss of a companion animal. This topic is a useful place to start, we believe, because of all the forms of loss we examine, it is arguably the one that is accorded the least recognition. For us, this speaks to the matter of human exceptionalism, and the fact that it is largely only human lives that matter when it comes to death. Indeed, as we discussed in previous chapters, entire industries are premised upon the death of non-human animals, with this fact being normalized in Western societies in a multitude of ways. From children's books that depict animals as meat, to the use of non-human animals in experiments aimed at developing technologies that are intended to extend human lives. That the death of a companion animal should be precluded from the realm of socially sanctioned grief, then, sits on a continuum where non-human animals generally, in Western societies, are most often not accorded person status.

It may, of course, seem anomalous, having argued in previous chapters against the anthropomorphizing effects of storybooks such as *And Tango Makes Three* and the film *Splice*, that we should now argue in favour of non-human animal personhood. This, however, is not as anomalous as it may seem. It is one thing to accord *human* personhood or attributes to animals in order to render them intelligible within the context of anthropocentrism. It is another thing entirely, however, to state that non-human animals have their own forms of sociality and personhood defined on their own terms. While in the context of animal companions, and as we have explored in previous chapters, such sociality and personhood are shaped by the human-centric contexts in which non-human animals often live, this does not mean that animal companions do not experience themselves as sentient beings in the world, nor does it mean that some humans do not experience animal companions as kin.

In his work on grief arising from the loss of an animal companion, David Redmalm (2015) draws upon Judith Butler's (2000) work on grief to suggest that only 'some lives in some contexts are grieved while others are regarded as ungrievable, substitutable and "lose-able"' (p. 22). Redmalm goes on to suggest that the loss of an animal companion 'is best understood as liminal grief—as grief simultaneously inside and outside the margin' (p. 32). The loss of a companion animal is accorded a liminal status, Redmalm suggests, precisely because of human exceptionalism, which produces animal companions as non-persons. Yet at the same time, Redmalm suggests that the loss of an animal companion is outside the margins precisely because the experience of such loss refuses to privilege human–human relations. To an extent, Redmalm calls upon us to celebrate this position beyond the margins as challenging human exceptionalism, but we are still left with the fact that the loss of a companion animal is often not recognized.

A key example of both the experience of kinship across species, and the lack of recognition accorded to the loss of an animal companion, appears in the documentary *Shatzi is Dying*. Produced by Jean Carlomusto, the documentary shares the story of Shatzi, a Doberman, who lived with Jean and her partner Jane. Across the span of the documentary Shatzi is shown as living with a chronic illness, and eventually dies at the conclusion of the documentary. At the heart of the documentary is an affective ambivalence that both celebrates the joys of cross-species kinship, yet highlights the fact that such joy always sits in a relationship to the differing life spans of humans and animal companions.

The documentary opens with a voice-over from Carlomusto, who states that:

> Some people keep dogs as pets. I prefer to say we have animals in the family. As a child I begged and begged for a dog. My mother said they were too messy, and they are messy, but who the hell cares? I can't live without animals in my family […] Before I met Shatzi and Rifka [our other dog], I thought all Doberman pinchers were vicious. But what I soon came to love about these dogs is their passion. Dobies are passionate. And passion is an emotion that seems to have gone out of style, but it's my air and water.

Carlomusto's account of the 'mess' of animal companions echoes the work of Emma Power (2008), who reports that some of her participants engaged in complex sets of negotiations centred on how to understand and live with canine ways of being in the world. For Carlomusto, such negotiations are, to a degree, moot, given that for her non-human animals are an essential part of family. This is especially true with regard to her relationship with the two Dobermans whom with she lived: Shatzi and a younger dog named Rifka. For Carlomusto, there is something about the personhood of these animals—which she describes through the language of passion—that mitigates any concerns about 'mess'.

The corollary of recognizing the personhood of Shatzi, however, is that her death is a significant loss for both Jean and Jane. What is lost is not simply a body, but rather a person who had been part of their family. Yet as Carlomusto states, '[w]ith all of the misery and injustice in the world, how do you tell anyone that you are grieving for your pet?'. One of the ways in which Carlomusto describes her response to the loss of Shatzi is precisely by recognizing Shatzi's personhood and agency in regard to her death, in addition to the emotional response experienced by Rifka in regards to Shatzi's death:

> In a way, Shatzi had the perfect death. She lived twice her expected age, never missed a meal. And died peacefully in her sleep. We should all be so lucky. Her death should have come as a relief, but both of our reactions were 'oh no, we weren't there for her'. Well maybe she didn't want us there. Shatzi didn't die alone, Rifka was with her. When we brought them home

> from the babysitters Rifka kept on holding up her paw as if something were wrong with it. And we checked it and rechecked it and it was just fine. Until finally, you know, we just came to the conclusion that she just lost her best friend, and that hurt.

In this quote Carlomusto engages with Shatzi as a being who knows. While, as is true for all of us who live with animal companions (and indeed other humans), we can never truly know if our assumptions about their feelings and decisions are correct, for Carlomusto part of coming to terms with her own grief was about acknowledging Shatzi's agency. And it was also about acknowledging the loss experienced by Rifka. Different to Redmalm's (2015) suggestion that the loss of a companion animal is beyond the margins, and hence a challenge to human exceptionalism, the account provided by Carlomusto suggests that the challenge to human exceptionalism potentially comes when we recognize that human grief is not the only grief to be known when a companion animal dies. Others, such as Rifka, will mourn them, too. As we shall see in the following section, however, this sharing of loss, although potentially a transformative experience when it comes to the loss of a companion animal, may be noticeably absent when the loss is of an unborn child.

Experiences of Pregnancy Loss

As we explored in Chapter 4, heterosexual couples planning for a first child often frame their desire for a child in terms of the dreams they have for the future, and the normative expectation that a child constitutes a core aspect of such dreams. It is not surprising, then, that for many people who experience a pregnancy loss, what is lost is not simply a child, but also a dream about an idealized life. Yet despite the significance of such loss, and similar to the loss of a companion animal, pregnancy loss remains something of a silenced narrative in Western societies (Layne 2003). In part, this is because of the problems associated with according personhood to the unborn. As Julia Frost and colleagues (2007) suggest, at first glance it may appear that apportioning personhood to unborn children in the context of pregnancy loss runs the risk of undermining abortion rights, which are often opposed through an emphasis on the personhood of the fetus. Frost and colleagues, however, suggest that personhood is a relational and social construct, and thus it is entirely possible that in some contexts the personhood of a fetus may be evoked, when in others it may not.

The intersections of abortion and pregnancy loss aside, researchers such as Alice Lovell (1997) suggest that the issue at stake with regard to the latter is whether or not personhood is recognized. If pregnancy loss is not seen as the loss of a person, then the grief that is often associated with pregnancy loss may be invalidated. Similar again in regard to the loss of a companion animal, then, it is important to recognize that the attribution of personhood to an unborn child is part and parcel of the dreams and desires of the child's intending parents. As such, it is understandable that others may be unable to conceptualize the loss as the loss of a person. Yet as Catherine Hackett Renner et al. (2000) suggest, individual attributions of personhood to unborn children is increasingly a feature of kinship technologies across Western societies:

> In a technologically and medically advanced society such as the United States, we can detect and see life at earlier stages than ever before, making the pregnancy 'real' at an earlier gestational period than ever before. This outcome results in the formation of early mother–child attachments that result in a higher expectation that a pregnancy will result in a live birth than is statistically likely to be the case. Once it is known that there is a pregnancy and the fetus can be 'seen', it may be difficult to acknowledge that many factors still exist that could stop the process of development (p. 68).

On the one hand, then, we have medical technologies that foster a sense of kinship from very early in a pregnancy, technologies that are taken up in narratives of kinship by people well beyond the intending parents (i.e. in friends and family members asking to see ultrasound scans, or referring to a pregnant woman as a 'mother to be', or in the convention of 'baby showers'). Yet, on the other hand, pregnancy loss often goes unrecognized *as a loss* by both the friends and families of intending parents, as Hackett Renner et al. (2000) again suggest:

> A large body of literature reveals that women who have miscarried report friends and family responding in ways that reduce or deny the importance of the event, leaving the grieving woman with little sense of support. In addition, the experiences reported by these women are quite different from those reported by individuals who have experienced other types of loss (e.g. spouse or parent). For example, others rarely respond to the loss of a partner or spouse with the statement 'You can have another', yet this is a common response to a woman who has had a miscarriage (p. 66).

The idea that one person is replaceable with another is replete across both lay understandings of pregnancy loss and the loss of an animal companion, as exemplified in films and television programmes where those who have experienced either form of loss are encouraged to 'try again'[1] (for a pregnancy/child) or 'get another' (animal companion). What falls to the wayside in these types of responses are the dreams, experiences, and indeed kinship that may be experienced prior to the loss, and which, for many people, cannot be simply replaced by another pregnancy or companion animal.

The depth of loss, and the lack of recognition of it, was frequently voiced in our survey research with British, American, Canadian, and Australian non-heterosexual women (Peel 2010) and our interviews with South Australian heterosexual women, all of whom had experienced pregnancy loss (Collins et al. 2014). For many of the women, the loss had occurred many years previously, yet it was still keenly felt: 'utter devastation' (USA 'dyke'), feeling 'suddenly that the world had ended' (UK lesbian), and 'hollowed out and dead.' (Australian lesbian) (Peel 2010). Eighty-five per cent of our survey participants reported that their loss(es) had made a 'significant' or 'very significant' impact on their lives (Peel 2010, p. 724). Echoing the research summarized above, the duration of the loss was often reflective of the extent that the loss symbolized the loss of a dream or desire for a particular life that ended with the loss of a

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[1] We have discussed elsewhere how problematic heteronormatively coded notions of 'try again' are for lesbian and bisexual women who have experienced pregnancy loss (see Peel 2012). Based on our research, the experience of loss is amplified for these groups of women because of the 'complex processes, practices and often lengthy time period involved in achieving pregnancy, and the emotional and material investment these women made in impending motherhood' (Peel 2010, p. 724).

pregnancy. For heterosexual women such as Erin, letting go of a desired life was particularly difficult:

> Erin: My journey has been a very long journey. I had trouble letting go. I spoke to the counsellors and they said 'I think you were as much in love with the idea of a baby as much as you loved this baby', because I had invested so much in her. From the moment I was pregnant, the whole world revolved around her […] I think my grief has been extended because I also have all those pink dreams that have not been fulfilled. I desperately wanted a girl. And so I have still got some unfulfilled sort of stuff, which is never going to happen now. I have got two boys, they are beautiful, but I desperately wanted a girl.

For Erin, although she had other children, her 'pink dreams' of a girl child were left unfulfilled following a pregnancy loss. While, as Erin's counsellors noted to her, she was potentially in love with the idea of having a baby in order to fulfil this dream, importantly this does not mean that she was not in love with her unborn child also. We can potentially see this in Erin's use of the pronoun 'her', which accorded personhood to the unborn child as a girl, an attribution that is rendered even more clearly in the following extract:

> Maria: I think from the first moment I saw her [on the ultrasound] I knew her. And I also felt like I knew who she was going to become. She moved when I played certain music or watched certain movies. So I felt already that I knew what interests she would have. So the loss has been profound—I have lost the person I thought she would be. And I know it is all just what I made of a whole lot of little things, but that doesn't change the fact that she felt like a person to me. Of course the problem is that the idea of what she was going to be was all mine, and so there is no one else who knew her like I did, so no one else who understands the loss.

In this powerful narrative, Maria describes how technologies of pregnancy, as well as her own desire for a child, shaped her experience of the child inside her as a person with interests and a future. To have lost that person, then, was to have lost the dreams that were presumed to accompany her child's projected life. In the following and final narrative, Leigh echoes the sentiment that what is lost are dreams for a particular child, in addition to a loss of control over one's life:

> Leigh: For me it was all about the loss of control. I am a very organized person. Everything in my life has been planned, nothing had ever gone awry. And then this threw a whole spanner in the works because no matter how hard I tried, I couldn't control what happened. And so that sense of being out of control hit me hard as well. And I am a perfectionist, so you know, everything I had decided in life before that, I had achieved. I had never tried so hard at anything. It didn't take very long to get pregnant. I was very conscientious. I ate the right things, I did everything the book said. Never tried so hard to do something so perfectly, and it fell apart. That and you lose all your hopes and dreams for that baby.

We would, of course, acknowledge that narratives of control are specifically Western-centric accounts of personhood (Riggs 2005). That Leigh perceived herself as someone who achieved things, and that a pregnancy loss undermined that sense of achievement, is a perception highly shaped by a cultural context in which achievement is valorized. Nonetheless, Leigh cannot be fairly expected to view her life outside of the cultural contexts in which she lives, contexts in which the having of children is socially sanctioned, and in which reproductivity is a hallmark of citizenship (Turner 2001). Yet, as we shall see in the following section, the 'achievement' of having a child appears not to be solely determined by conception and birth. Rather, it increasingly appears to be the case that children are then expected to conform to a particular cultural narrative of Western personhood, otherwise they, too, are experienced as a loss.

Narratives of Loss Among Parents of Transgender Children

In bringing together the diverse range of topics that we cover in this chapter, we were very aware that we could be read as valorizing the losses we have already covered (the loss of a companion animal and pregnancy loss), but then being overly critical of the two forms of loss we now cover.

Our point in bringing together these multiple forms of loss is not to arbitrate over which are valid and which are not. Rather, as we suggested earlier, our intention is to highlight the ways in which kinship-related losses in the context of Western societies are shaped by what counts as kinship, and who counts as a person. As we have already suggested above, if kinship status is not accorded to unborn children or animal companions, and if neither are seen as persons, then their loss will often be unrecognized, or in Butler's (2000) terms, ungrievable. In this section and the next we focus on forms of kinship where a narrative of loss is evoked via the idea that particular groups of children fall outside of normative understandings of personhood, and in so doing are experienced as a loss. Similar to the previous section on pregnancy loss, then, the losses that we now explore are potentially also about the loss of an idealized future.

As we saw with respect to the film *Ma Vie en Rose*, Jérôme's father suggests that were Jérôme to love Ludovic, this would be a loss akin to a death. Similarly, when speaking about Ludovic a neighbour suggests that a transgender child would be experienced as a loss. Over the last decade, as transgender young people have become increasingly visible within Western societies, so has an increasing body of research on this group of young people, research that in varying ways has endorsed the idea that a transgender child will be experienced by their parents as a loss (e.g. McAdow 2008). In their popular book on transgender children, written for both parents and professionals, Stephanie Brill and Rachel Pepper (2008) tell the former group that:

> Initially most parents feel that their world is falling apart. There is a profound sense of devastation, loss, shock, confusion, anger, fear, shame, and grief. This personal, internal crisis, for some, can take years to resolve. Not all the responses described below pertain to every parent, but we imagine that you will find yourself reflected here (p. 39).

In this type of statement, the authors go beyond acknowledging the possible types of responses that parents may experience (all of which are negative), and instead produce something of an injunction to have these types of responses, thus turning a possibility into an expectation. Echoing our suggestions above in relation to normative expectations about children, Brill and Pepper (2008) then go on to state that:

> The grief that parents raising gender-variant and transgender children experience falls into two distinct categories. The first is the grief over lost dreams for your child. The second is the grief that parents of transgender children feel for the child who goes away in order for the new one to emerge […] Perhaps the most painful part of the process of accepting your child is letting go of the fantasies you held for your child—and also the fantasies of what you were going to share together in the future (p. 45).

Again, in this quote grief is treated as a taken for granted fact, rather than one possible response from a whole spectrum. Furthermore, the idea that a transgender child causes 'lost dreams' and the need to let go of fantasies reinforces the idea that all parents will have particular (gendered) dreams for their children. Dreams that are gender normative, and hence are dashed when a child is not normatively gendered. While, as we explored in the previous section and in Chapter 4, it is certainly the case that many intending parents do have dreams about what they think a child will be like, it seems somewhat overdetermined to presume that all parents will share this viewpoint, and therefore that all parents will experience a transgender child as a loss.

As their discussion of grief continues, Brill and Pepper (2008) then introduce a concept that has been given increasing attention in academic literature on the topic of parents of transgender children, namely that of 'ambiguous loss'. They suggest that:

> Your grief is made much more difficult because the object of your grief—the child you have lost—is a bit like a phantom. This grief is unique, because unlike other forms of loss that are socially recognized and acknowledged, the grief connected with coming to terms with your gender-variant or transgender child is not culturally understood (p. 48).

As we shall see shortly, this idea of a transgender child being 'a bit like a phantom' is highly problematic, and also not as socially marginalized as Brill and Pepper (2008) suggest. Indeed, if anything, we would suggest that the idea that transgender children are experienced as a loss is to a certain degree culturally normalized. The normalization of narratives of loss with regard to transgender children appears in the work of both Kristen Norwood (2013) and Jeni Wahlig (2014). In conceptualizing what is referred to as ambiguous loss, Norwood (2013) suggests that although transgender children do not neatly fit within the ambiguous loss framework (in which a person is either physically present but psychologically absent, such as in the case of a dementia, or physically absent in ways that are unresolved, such as when a child is abducted), the framework is nonetheless applicable to the experiences of parents of transgender children:

> The ambiguous loss that surrounds a transition of sex/gender seems different than other noted types; that is, the trans person is not exactly absent in mind or body (barring estrangement) and yet something is lost. […] Parents of persons who are trans-identified often claim to feel the loss of a son or a daughter [as the loss of a] sex/gender identity that is grieved (p. 26).

Wahlig (2014) further claims that the ambiguous loss framework is directly applicable to parents of transgender children:

> Parents of transgender children struggle with *both* types of ambiguous loss—a kind of *dual ambiguous loss*; their child is physically present but psychologically absent, and they are also physically absent but psychologically present. That is, a parent's child is still physically present—they still have a child, but that child's psychological existence *as a certain gender* is significantly changed and may be perceived as no longer there. At the same time, the child's physical presence *as a certain gender* is absent, yet many aspects of their personality, the sense of who they are (psychological presence), is still available to the family (p. 316, original emphases).

This type of statement—which we consider to be highly problematic—reinforces the idea that the veracity (and indeed tenacity) of gender is determined by assigned sex, and hence that a child who is assigned either male or female can be psychologically or physically absent if their gender does not normatively align with the expectations of their assigned sex. Although writers such as Wahlig (2014) position themselves as supportive of transgender young people and their families, the type of logic that they use to warrant an ambiguous loss framework constitutes, in our view, a particularly insidious form of cisgenderism, one in which the assumed normative relationship between assigned sex and gender becomes a justification for experiencing a transgender child as a loss.

Importantly, our claim here is not to deny that for some parents a challenge to their world views about sex and gender may result in feelings of loss. Certainly, as we shall see shortly, this is what some parents of transgender children have expressed publically about their experiences. Our concern, instead, is with the ways in which authors such as Wahlig (2014) normalize, and indeed naturalize, a narrative of loss, and justify it through the idea of absence, which is itself marginalizing of transgender children. Writers such as Katherine Kuvulanka and her colleagues (2014) have suggested, however, that there are alternate accounts possible amongst parents of transgender children (such as accounts that affirm, celebrate and advocate for transgender children). Yet it is of concern to us that the language of loss has come to dominate this literature.

This language of loss is prevalent across texts that are either written collectively by parents of transgender children, or in books that document the narratives of such parents (e.g. Pearlman 2012). Although it is certainly the case that there are many narratives that celebrate and advocate for transgender children, it is notable to us that across edited collections that feature the narratives of parents of transgender children, that loss is a central theme, and one that presents in fairly uniform ways (e.g. Pepper 2012). As we have already outlined above, a common way loss is discussed is in relation to dreams that parents feel they have lost, such as in the following examples:

> While they were living here, I noticed a book called *Body Alchemy* lying around. When I looked at it, I could feel my whole body bracing. It was full of very masculine women and pictures that I couldn't stand looking at. I was pretty horrified. I used to talk about this time as the death of dreams because, one by one, they were going down the drain and I had to face the fact that she wasn't going to be the nice little lesbian I had hoped she would be (Sara, in Pearlman 2012, p. 30).

> Even though I suspected, I was so shocked. It was so foreign. So weird. I guess I kind of cracked up. I couldn't feel worse if she died. It was a horrible way to feel. All my hopes and expectations—gone […] I can't seem to make peace with it. All those weddings. All those showers. Me being a grandmother. I feel ripped off (Mariam, in Pearlman 2012, p. 66, 68).

For these mothers, a transgender child represents the 'death of dreams' or the loss of 'hopes and expectations'. To a certain extent, these mothers, and other parents like them, acknowledge that they were *their* dreams (and not their child's dreams). Nonetheless, there is the sense in which the loss of their dreams is viewed as something that their child is subjecting them to, rather than their loss being of their own making (albeit a making that is framed by culturally normative assumptions about a presumed relationship between sex and gender). Also, as evident in the first two extracts above, is the analogy between a child being transgender and death, an extreme-case formulation (Pomerantz 1986) that highlights our earlier point about intending parents' dreams being tied to assumptions about the particular forms of personhood that a child will display. When a child does not conform to such assumptions, some parents frame their response as extreme grief, as in these following examples:

> That was an extremely painful time, worse than anything I'd dealt with. Although we'd been in denial for some time, John [husband] and I were forced to accept that Alex's feelings weren't transitory. Any tiny hope that she would change her mind diminished and died […] I think I will always feel some small longing for the little girl of my fantasy (Stouffer 2012, pp. 184–5).

> For me, one of the hardest things about Sean's transition has been the loss of Sarah. I have experienced deep grief about this, and I would continue to do so if not for the experience of my friends who have actually lost children to illness or accident (Moore 2012, p. 5).

While in the second quote the mother notes that she is able to put her grief in perspective through comparison with friends who have actually lost a child, in our reading this only serves to perpetuate the idea that a transgender child is a loss, even if not a loss equivalent to death. For some parents, a focus on loss can result in a struggle to reconcile the happiness that their child experiences once they have transitioned, with their own feelings of loss, as can be seen in the following examples:

> It was hard. I felt a huge sense of loss for the child that I'd once known. This child, while wonderful and exuberant, and happy beyond anything I'd ever seen before, was not the son I'd always known. I was grieving the loss of my son whilst watching this happy confident new child emerge (McLaren 2012, p. 32).

> We recently went through old family pictures and there were some of Jenna as a little girl. I started to cry, and John asked me what was wrong. I told him that it was hard to look at pictures that reminded me of all the changes we had been through, and that those earlier times depicted in the photos had been such happy days for me. To see my child, who was such a beautiful woman, transition to being such a masculine looking man, is still very much a shock. And I do miss having my daughter as my daughter (Charbonneau 2012, p. 73).

The literature on the experiences of transgender young people has repeatedly emphasized the importance of supportive parents (Riggs and Due 2015). As such, it is somewhat alarming that there appears to be such a disjuncture, for some parents, between their child's happiness and their own happiness. Significantly, our point here is not to suggest that parents should simply ignore their feelings and support their children. Rather, our point in analysing accounts of loss in connection to transgender children in this section has been to highlight how narratives of loss are increasingly normalized, and to suggest that what is potentially at stake in such narratives are cultural expectations about what children should be, and the forms of personhood that are valued. To compare a transgender child with the death of a child is only logical in a society where children are always already assumed to be knowable and assimilable to a set of dreams and desires predetermined by their parents. As we shall see in the next section, this same disparity between dreams for a child and the reality of parenting a child is also evident in the accounts of parents raising children with a diagnosis of autism.

Narratives of Loss Associated with an Autism Diagnosis

Similar to the literature on parents of transgender children, the literature on parents of children with a diagnosis of autism has increasingly drawn upon the language of ambiguous loss to describe the experiences of such parents. Equally as problematic as much of the literature on parents of transgender children is the fact that literature on parents of children with a diagnosis of autism treats ambiguous loss as a given. For example, Marion O'Brien (2007) states clearly in her work on autism and ambiguous loss that her analysis was deductive in that it sought to identify examples of ambiguous loss. Much like the literature on parents of transgender children, then, if researchers go looking for loss then that is what they will likely find, potentially at the expense of alternate accounts. Missing from this literature, however, is a discussion of the norm of neurotypicality, and the valorization of neurotypical ways of being in the world. In other words, much of the literature on autism emphasizes what is lost, but this loss is not framed by a discussion of the impact of normative assumptions on how a diagnosis is experienced.

Importantly, however, some people living with autism have challenged the assumption that loss is a natural response to a diagnosis. Jim Sinclair (2012), for example, has suggested that:

> Grief does not stem from the child's autism in itself. It is grief over the loss of the normal child the parents had hoped and expected to have. Parents' attitudes and expectations, and the discrepancies between what parents expect of children at a particular age and their own child's actual development, cause more stress and anguish than the practical complexities of life with an autistic person […] This grief over a fantasized normal child needs to be separated from the parents' perceptions of the child they do have (np).

Sinclair's (2012) point is well made, and echoes our central argument within this chapter, namely that it is normative assumptions about what and how children should be that shapes narratives of loss, rather than something inherent to the child themselves. The assumption of neurotypicality and its relationship to dreams of a child was evident in our interviews with Australian mothers of children who had a diagnosis of autism. When asked what their child's diagnosis meant for them as parents, many of the mothers stated that a diagnosis of autism lead to grief, such as in the following example:

> Carol: It's pretty devastating. A friend of mine has got a friend who's just had a child diagnosed, and I was saying to her that it's grief, because you know that your kid's never gonna do lots of things, you know, he couldn't— I still can't trust him to play like sport—he'll lose it and thump someone,

> or so he doesn't play sport, you know, he doesn't, he didn't get invited to a single birthday party last year you know […] I mean I could see what was coming, how it was gonna be, he's never going to fit in properly at school you know.

For this mother, children are meant to 'fit in', particularly by being able to do things that other children do, such as play sport. Although the language of dreams is not explicitly used in this example, implicit to the mother's comments is an idealized version of what having children should be like. For her, being prevented from achieving this ideal evokes a sense of grief and devastation. Similarly, the following example uses the language of devastation to describe the experience of having a child with an autism diagnosis:

> Amanda: I was devastated, we were all completely devastated, and it has taken a lot of time to come to terms with. I developed anxiety, I'd go for a drive and just scream and cry in my car and then go home and be happy, you know the supportive good mum and everything, but it was just devastating, it was so upsetting. I'm lucky, I've had a really good supportive speech pathologist who helped me through the whole thing, but yeah you don't know. It's the shadows in the road that frighten you: those turns in the road that you can't quite see what your child's future will be, and that's the frightening part.

The idea of the 'shadows in the road' presented in this example is a powerful evocation of the expectation of a normative, neurotypical life course, compared with which an autism diagnosis is experienced as 'frightening'. What slips to the wayside in this type of account is the fact that no parent knows exactly what lies ahead for their child. Certainly, for parents whose children more closely conform to a normatively expected developmental pathway, predictability is a lot more possible. But nevertheless, it is the case that, as with all parents, there are likely to be 'shadows in the road' that cannot be seen in advance. For parents such as those reported here, however, the 'shadows' appear to be the product of the diagnosis itself, rather than being understood as produced through a broader society in which neurotypicality is both presumed and valorized.

In the following, and final, extract, a diagnosis of autism is framed as a loss in terms of changing a presumed life that the mother had mapped out for herself:

> Samantha: I would have had more children. But I was too scared to. It's good that we didn't get the diagnosis before [our daughter] was conceived, because if I'd had the diagnosis at 12 months or even 18 months it's quite likely I would have said no more children, but as soon as I got the diagnosis, as soon as I realised this kid had autism I was like 'we can't have any more kids 'cause this could be so much worse than what it is' […] So yeah, it stopped me from having children, it delayed my career, I always wanted to have, like, four kids.

For Samantha, her eldest child receiving an autism diagnosis meant that she felt compelled not to have any more children, and indeed to suggest that had her child received the diagnosis at a younger age she wouldn't have had her second child. Again here there is a neoliberal assumption that what we plan for is what will happen, and that any deviation from that plan must be experienced as a loss, rather than an alternate path. In this way of thinking, a child with a diagnosis of autism, like a transgender child, is not intelligible as something to be celebrated: as an opportunity, or someone to be welcomed. Rather, for some parents such as those documented in this chapter, it is something that impairs or inhibits a desired and dreamed of life. Again, this is not to stigmatize such parents, but rather to emphasize how the dreams that some parents appear to hold are shaped by assumptions about what counts as a 'good life', and what the personhood of children should look like.

Concluding Thoughts

In exploring the ways in which narratives of loss are either marginalized or naturalized, in this chapter we have further developed our understanding of kinship as a technology. Our understanding of kinship as a technology, following Franklin (2013a), focuses on the ways in which claims to kinship produce particular ways of being, and naturalize particular relationships. In differing ways, all of the accounts of loss we have examined in this chapter are reliant upon their comparison to a particular idealized account of kinship, produced through genetic accounts of intraspecies kinship in which the self is reproduced through a child. For parents who are not transgender or who do not have a diagnosis of autism, such as in the narratives we have explored in this chapter, transgender children or children with a diagnosis of autism are a loss, then, precisely because they fail to reproduce that which has come before: they do not uphold a normative location within social hierarchies where gender normativity and neurotypicality are privileged. As such, these children are experienced by their parents as a loss, whereby the loss involves a loss of place, and a loss of normatively formulated dreams. In a sense, then, these accounts suggest the failure of kinship as a technology, and, more specifically, that what kinship produces is only valuable—is only an intelligible or prized mode of capital—when it adheres to a specific set of normative expectations. To fall outside of these expectations, then, is to feel that one has lost something, at least for the parents whose narratives we reported in this chapter.

Conversely, and despite claims to kinship on the part of those who include non-human animals in their family, or people for whom an unborn child is considered already part of the family, the lack of personhood accorded to both non-human animals and unborn children means that, in effect, nothing is seen as produced, and hence nothing is lost. Forms of kinship located at the margins are thus prohibited from being accorded a place within the realms of kinship proper, and in this sense are positioned as futile technologies of kinship, given they are unlikely to be accorded recognition. Yet again, in contrast to parents of transgender children or children with a diagnosis of autism, personhood is attributed to non-human animals by some humans, and some intending parents attribute personhood to unborn children. In this sense, meaning is made despite it not necessarily being valued by society at large. One manifestation of this meaning-making is seen, for example, in private (or semi-private) forms of memorialization to—in some cases literally via tattoos—mark the lost children of intending parents (Craven and Peel 2016).

What sits at the heart of these diverse accounts of loss, then, is ambivalence. If you have a child or family member who is not recognized as such, then you are prohibited in some senses from claiming kinship with them. On the other hand, if you have a child whose personhood is not normatively acknowledged, then your ability to claim kinship is perceived as compromised. The ambivalence of these positions is thus shaped by what we might refer to as an exceptional form of human exceptionalism: not only are humans valued over all animals, but only certain humans are valuable. We *could*, by contrast, view kinship and loss as always, invariably, interconnected. Loss is foundational to kinship, although, as we have discussed, we collectively and individually communicate the opposite, a point we take up in our final chapter.

Before we come to our final chapter, however, and as we shall see in the following chapter, the same logic of value and worth with regard to categories of kinship plays out with regard to certain groups of women who would ordinarily occupy the location of 'mother', but who, for differing reasons, are pushed outside the boundaries of this location due to the perception that they fail to normatively conform to what is expected of mothers in Western societies.

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7

Motherhood and Recognition

A Story

First in 2013, and then again in 2015, actor Angelina Jolie wrote for *The New York Times* about her experiences of a prophylactic double mastectomy and a prophylactic laparoscopic bilateral salpingo-oophorectomy. As Jolie documents in the pieces, she undertook these surgeries because of a family history of cancer and because Jolie has the *BRCA1* gene, which is associated with breast cancer. Our focus in this chapter is not on cancer, so it may seem unusual that we open this chapter with Jolie's story. However, much of what Jolie writes in each of the pieces is about mothering and womanhood, both of which are a focus of this chapter.

Indeed, the first piece, published in 2013, opens with '[m]y mother fought cancer for almost a decade and died at 56' (Jolie 2013). Throughout both of the pieces, while Jolie acknowledges the multiple responses that cancer (or potential cancer) can evoke (such as using traditional medicines rather than surgery), none of the potential responses discussed by Jolie involve accepting that cancer is what is *meant* to lie in her. Although it is understandable that Jolie would not wish to die from cancer, the framing of prophylactic treatment of cancer reinforces the type of 'natural order of

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things' argument that we first discussed in Chapter 2. It could be argued that were an individual such as Jolie to develop cancer, the 'natural' order of things would be death, but the framing of both of Jolie's pieces is that the 'natural' order is more correctly to *not* die.

This injunction not to die is explicitly framed both with respect to the loss of her own mother (with the age 56 implicitly depicted as not part of a natural order), and in light of her own children's possible loss of her as a mother. Reference by Jolie to *BRCA1* as a 'faulty' gene positions cancer as something to be corrected, thus ensuring a 'natural order of things' (i.e. where mothers live into old age). This logic of longevity, however, is not simply an example of human exceptionalism (as we have discussed in previous chapters), but is also evidence of the privileged location of a particular white woman and mother, for whom longevity is a naturalized priority, and something that she can afford to invest in.

Jolie, the agentic Western citizen, having identified that she has the *BRCA1* gene, then 'decided to be proactive' (Jolie 2013). Importantly, and as Jolie is at pains to emphasize, this decision (and the removal of her breasts) in no way minimizes her role as a woman nor as a mother, as she notes: 'I do not feel any less of a woman. I feel empowered that I made a strong choice that in no way diminishes my femininity'. Given Jolie had a breast reconstruction subsequent to her mastectomy, having breasts are, in her narrative, doubtless closely associated with femininity. Jolie frames her reconstruction with reference to her children, emphasizing that:

> It is reassuring that they see nothing that makes them uncomfortable. They can see my small scars and that's it. Everything else is just Mommy, the same as she always was.

Being a mother, then, involves not making one's children 'uncomfortable': it requires being the same as one 'always was'. As such, while Jolie suggests that her decision to have a prophylactic mastectomy was 'empower[ing]', to be empowered by this definition is to be just the same postsurgery, which we would argue is a narrative of privilege, as well as being a narrative that endorses a very particular image of motherhood.

Since the publication of Jolie's first piece in 2013, researchers and clinicians have documented what they refer to as the 'Angelina Jolie effect', referring to a considerable increase in the numbers of women internationally requesting screening for the *BRCA1* gene. Some have suggested that such an increase is positive (e.g. Evans et al. 2014); others, however, have questioned whether or not the increase potentially involves many women requesting screening when they have no family history of cancer (Kirk 2014). Such potentially unwarranted requests place further burdens on already underfunded and stretched healthcare systems. Furthermore, and depending on the country, access to prophylactic mastectomies may be limited to those who can afford them. The 'Angelina Jolie effect', then, is in many ways both an indication of how much a 'natural order of things' that involves longevity is privileged, but that such longevity is potentially only valued when it pertains to particular groups of people.

Also notable with regard to elective mastectomies is the fact that while women such as Jolie can request the removal of their breasts on the basis of a 'defective' gene (rather than a current diagnosis of cancer), other people who wish to have their breasts removed but who do not have the *BRCA1* gene often cannot. This is especially the case regarding transgender men. For such men, access to mastectomies is restricted owing to the requirement of assessment and diagnosis with 'gender dysphoria' in most locales, as well as typically not being covered by either public or private healthcare funds. The same is true for transgender women who want constructive breast surgeries, and for whom a diagnosis along with a lack of public or private funding is often the case. Satya (2013), a transgender men, critiques the framing of Jolie's 'decision', noting as we did above that Jolie's breasts are feminized, that access to services is highly regulated and often restricted to particular privileged groups of people, and further adds that while Jolie's 'decision' was widely celebrated, transgender people's forms of embodiment continue to be pathologized and marginalized.

In Jolie's second piece for *The New York Times* she reports that despite a test indicating that she did not currently have ovarian cancer, 'I still had the option of removing my ovaries and fallopian tubes and I chose to do it' (Jolie Pitt 2015). Here, 'option' is again the key word. Jolie made an agentic decision in the context of a society that privileges longevity (at least in certain groups), and again did so for her children. As she notes:

> I feel feminine, and grounded in the choices I am making for myself and my family. I know my children will never have to say, 'Mom died of ovarian cancer'.

Again the narrative of femininity, again an emphasis upon choices made for children. And again we must question how it is that Jolie's narrative privileges an account of femininity that links it to bodily parts, in addition to questioning what it means for people who *do* have to say my 'Mom died of ovarian cancer'. This paired contrast arguably does less to celebrate women's autonomy and decision-making than is otherwise suggested in both of Jolie's pieces, which emphasize the empowerment of women.

Finally, it is notable to us that Jolie discusses 'not be[ing] able to have any more children' in this second piece. For a women who has both birthed and adopted children, it is somewhat surprising that Jolie would so readily equate the removal of her ovaries and fallopian tubes (though notably *not* her uterus) with having children. In this statement by Jolie, there is a sense in which being a mother is directly related to not simply raising children, and not simply even gestating children, but more precisely conceiving children through one's own ovum.

In presenting the above account of Angelina Jolie's narratives about motherhood and cancer, we are of course not wishing to discount the complex decisions that many women must make in this respect. Rather, our intention has been to highlight how femininity is all too easily attached to particular body parts, how motherhood is depicted as being around for one's children as long as possible, and how being a mother involves the tripartite of conceiving, birthing and raising children. In the following sections of this chapter we explore what it means for women who do not have the normative markers of femininity emphasized by Jolie, for whom the category 'mother' is often denied, and for whom the many privileges that Jolie appears to take for granted in her two pieces are often unattainable.

Transgender Women and Mothering

As we noted above, Angelina Jolie's accounts of elective treatment for potential future cancers configure both motherhood and femininity in particular ways. Fundamentally, in the context of this section, in both of her pieces Jolie emphasizes that the removal of her breasts, ovaries, and fallopian tubes make her no less a woman, no less a mother, and no less feminine (Jolie 2013; Jolie Pitt 2015). Above we questioned how these three are rendered intelligible in the context of particular body parts—and we critiqued the idea that there should be an automatic relationship between them. In this section we return to the topics of womanhood, motherhood, and femininity, and this time question why it is that women such as Jolie are still considered mothers and women when their normatively feminized body parts are removed, yet other women (here specifically transgender women) who similarly do not have ovaries or fallopian tubes, and who in some cases may not have breasts, are usually denied access to the categories of 'woman' and 'mother'.

As we have suggested in previous chapters, motherhood is ordinarily treated as part of a naturalized life-course trajectory for women, so much so that childlessness (whether voluntary or involuntary) is stigmatized. Our question in this section, then, is why it is that this same logic is not applied to transgender women? Conversely, we must ask the question of why transgender men who have had children prior to transitioning are often expected to continue to identify, or allow their children to identity them, as mothers. For such men—who have often had mastectomies and potentially also hysterectomies and salpingo-oophorectomies—their bodies do not normatively accord with that expected of the category 'mother', yet so often it is the case that they continue to be called 'mothers'.

Turning to the literature on transgender people and parenting, to a certain degree this literature is almost silent on the questions we raise above. Certainly, there is a rapidly growing body of literature on transgender parents, some of which we briefly outline below. Yet this literature most typically refers to 'transgender parents' or transgender men or woman who are parents, rather than specifically referring to, for example, 'transgender mothers' or 'transgender fathers'. What slips through the cracks in the language used, then, is an understanding of how normative accounts of mothering and fathering are applied (or not) to transgender parents. This is a concern we turn to explore in more detail through the data that we analyse below.

In terms of claiming the category 'mother', a small body of research indicates that this is most easily achieved for those women who have children post-transition. Paul De Sutter et al. (2002), for example, asked a sample of 121 transgender women from France, the UK, the Netherlands and Belgium who intended to store sperm prior to commencing hormone therapy what descriptor they would use if a child were conceived from their stored sperm, and half of their sample clearly claimed the category 'mother'.[1] Similarly, Elena Faccio et al. (2013) asked 14 Italian transgender women who were considering parenthood in the future to describe themselves as potential parents, and most used the descriptor 'mother' when speaking about the attributes they believed they would have has parents.

The issue of descriptors appears to be different, and somewhat more complex, for women who have children prior to transitioning. For such women, it appears much more difficult to claim the descriptor 'mother'. Sally Hines (2007), for example, suggests that for many of the women in her sample of transgender people who became parents prior to transitioning, their children called them by their first name post-transition, rather than switching from calling them 'Dad' to calling them 'Mum'. So, too, was the case in research by Henry von Doussa and colleagues (2015), who found that some of the ten Australian transgender women they interviewed felt compelled to accept their children and grandchildren calling them by their first name, rather than insisting upon being called 'Mum' or 'Nana'. Some of the women interviewed accepted this as a relatively small price to pay for the inclusion they experienced from their families; however, for others they reported it as undermining them as women.

This point about feeling undermined has important implications in terms of what it means for children to not accept their parent's gender identity. Faccio et al. (2013) suggest that:

> Children who can vary the words they use to identify the transitioned parent tend to better manage emotional reactions. By changing the term used, children modify the symbolic construction of the father or mother figure, thereby gaining a better understanding of his/her parent's chosen pathway and story (pp. 1057–8).

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[1] Twenty-seven of De Sutter et al.'s (2002) sample reported that they would feel like a 'father' (but half of these respondents reported considering this thought unbearable), and 25 of their respondents did not think that their parental identity was an important issue.

Refusing, or feeling unable, to alter the terms used to refer to one's parent post-transition can not only result in a lack of understanding of one's parents gender identity and experience, but can also result in failing to support one's parent. This point is especially evident in a case study reported by Jeanine Marshall et al. (2015), where they document an experience of one transgender woman living with a dementia. Upon moving into a care facility, the woman was reported as alternating between differing gender expressions and descriptions of her gender identity. When the facility staff asked her daughter how they should respond to this the daughter, who had never been accepting of her parent, instructed them to refer to her parent as a man. The daughter reportedly removed her parent's female clothing when she visited, which added to her parent's confusion about their gender. This type of example highlights how a lack of acceptance can have serious implications for a transgender parent (see also Peel and McDaid 2015).

Turning to our data, in what follows we consider narratives from two books: one written by Jennifer Finney Boylan (2013), an academic and transgender woman who has most recently appeared on the reality television show *I Am Cait*, and one written by Noelle Howey (2002), the daughter of a transgender woman. We also consider a brief narrative presented as part of an Australian news story that focused on the daughter of a transgender woman who has written a children's storybook to assist her own child in understanding their grandparent's journey, as well as a short story written by Laurie Cicotello (2000). As we shall see from these excerpts, the points we made above about how the category 'mother' is defined are evident in the narratives of these women.

Echoing the findings of Hines (2007) and von Doussa et al. (2015) outlined above, in some of the sources we examined the same struggles were evident in making a shift from referring to a parent as 'Dad' to referring to them as 'Mom'. In her memoir *Stuck in the Middle With You*, Finney Boylan (2013) recounts a scene where she negotiated a change of name with her two sons:

> We were sitting around the kitchen table, the four of us, eating dinner. Zack gave me a look.
>
> 'What?' I said.

> 'We can't keep calling you "Daddy",' he said. 'If you're going to be a girl. It's too weird.'
>
> 'Well,' I said to my sons. 'My new name is Jenny. You could call me Jenny.'
>
> Zach laughed derisively. 'Jenny? That's the name you'd give a lady mule.'
>
> I tried not to be hurt. 'Okay, fine. What do you want to call me?'
>
> 'The important thing, boys,' Deedie said, 'is that you pick something you're comfortable with.'
>
> Zach thought this over. He was pretty good at naming things. For a while we'd had a hermit crab named Grabber. Later on, we'd owned a snake named Biter.
>
> 'I know,' he said. 'Let's call you Maddy. That's like, half Mommy, and half Daddy. And anyhow, I know a girl at school named Maddy. She's pretty nice.'
>
> His younger brother, Sean, who was 5, said, 'Or Dommy.'
>
> We all laughed. Even Sean. Dommy! What a dumb name for a transsexual parent!
>
> After the hilarity died down, I nodded. 'Maddy might work,' I said (p. 111).

There is a degree to which this account echoes that provided by Angelina Jolie earlier, where being a good mother requires not making one's children 'uncomfortable'. For Finney Boylan and her wife, it appears important that the children picked a name that they're 'comfortable with'. While the name suggested by Zach is accepted by Finney Boylan, the 'half Mommy, and half Daddy' logic that it evokes potentially negates Finney Boylan as a whole woman. Similarly, in her biographical account of her own journey, in addition to that of her parents, Howey (2002) writes about how she came to a new descriptor for her transgender parent:

> Names, like pronouns, had always been a challenge for us. This conundrum might have been solved by defaulting her title to 'mother', as most children of transsexual are inclined to do. Call us 'old-fashioned', but my father and I had little intention of altering the name of our relationship, regardless of peer pressure. I already had a mother, who was a bit proprietary about the title and rightfully so, as she had virtually raised me solo. Also, I *had* a father. She might have changed her gender, but that didn't change who originally

> brought the sperm to the party […] It also seemed unlikely that I would ever adjust to calling her Chris. No matter how liberal we were, I couldn't deal with abdicating title entirely. After obtaining no help whatsoever from the thesaurus, I shorted and softened my father's appellation into 'Da'. Not as frontier woodsmanesque as 'Pa' and not as baggage-laden as 'Dad', but still fatherly all the same (Howey 2002, p. 290).

Howey's (2002) justification for continuing to see her parent as her father echoes our discussions in Chapter 5 in terms of how sperm comes to stand in for a person. For Howey, it would appear, sperm is masculinized, and always bears the trace of a person who is similarly rendered masculine. Although Howey uses the female pronoun, her insistence upon the fact that her parent is still her father treats sperm as containing a truth about gender, one that persists regardless of the person's gender identification. This stands in contrast to the research of De Sutter et al. (2002) summarized above, where half of their sample of transgender women did not view their sperm as potentially making them a father, but rather potentially made them mothers. As such, while Howey suggests that her decision to refer to her parent as 'Da' 'softens' the word 'Dad', it nonetheless intentionally retains reference to her parent being her father.

The final two examples that we include here pertaining to transgender women involve children referring to their parents by their first name, rather than negotiating a new category descriptor. In an Australian news media report (Schafter 2015), Jessica Walton, author of the book *Introducing Teddy* (Walton 2016), refers to her parent as 'Tina' rather than 'Mum', although in the report she also shifts between referring to her 'Dad' in the past tense, and 'parent' in the present:

> When we were growing up, Tina was so much fun. She was just such an involved, happy, down-to-earth dad. […] Tina came out to me when we were sitting together in a parked car in Fairfield and she had such a serious look on her face. I was so nervous about what it was that she was going to tell me and I didn't expect it—it was just the last thing I would've expected. And then I went through, I guess I would call it grief, where I was really worried that I was going to lose my dad. […] Eventually you come out the other side and realise that you now know your parent better than you ever did (Walton, in Schafter 2015).

Walton's account echoes in some ways the accounts we explored in Chapter 6 of parents of transgender children, for some of whom grief is treated as a natural response to a child being transgender. For Walton she is able to work through her grief and 'know [her] parent better', yet for other children this working through is not so easily achieved, and pronouns become weapons used to punish a transgender parent, as can be seen in the following narrative:

> In public, we became adept at blowing pronouns. Today I still slip up sometimes and call Dana 'he' or 'him' but back then we did it on purpose, to show Dana that we still thought of her as a man, a husband and father, not this strange new woman who wore frilly, fancy sweatsuits and pink lipstick and who spoke in an artificial-sounding falsetto. Every time my mother or I said 'he' or 'him' in public, Dana would response with a dirty look, an elbow in the ribs, or a kick under the table. But being corrected in public just made me angrier, and I would keep calling Dana 'him' (Cicotello 2000, p. 133).

This narrative comes from a short story titled 'She'll Always Be My Daddy', which from the onset highlights the insistence of the author, similar to Howey, that a father remains a father, regardless of their gender identity. For Laurie Cicotello, and despite the potential physical and psychological danger she was placing her parent in by misgendering her, using the wrong pronoun was a tool that both Cicotello and her mother used in public to undermine her parent's identity as a woman.

In most of the accounts we have examined here, there is something of an affective ambivalence evident, where the children of transgender women seem willing or desiring to affirm their parents as women, but at the same time they appear to struggle to reconcile this with their own feelings—whether such feelings are framed as grief, anger, or otherwise. It is possible that such ambivalence stems from the fact that when a parent whom one has known as 'Dad' becomes someone who would normally be understood as 'Mum' (i.e. a woman), one's sense of place within normative gender binaries and social norms is disturbed. Our point here is not to level an accusation at transgender women: far from it. Rather, our point it that the potential ambivalences we highlight above demonstrate that kinship categories rely upon a sense of fixity and permanence in order to maintain their discursive effects. When assumptions about fixity are troubled, then what appears to be brought into question are the very feelings associated with kinship itself.

In exploring these accounts, we are, of course, respectful of the rights to self-determination of all families, and that these public narratives are likely simplifications of complex and ongoing negotiations that occur within families where a parent is transgender. Certainly it may well be the case that some transgender women do not mind being called 'Dad' or referred to as someone's 'father'. And certainly there may be instances where children embrace a parent as their mother. Yet despite Howey's (2002) claim that the latter is the norm among children of transgender mothers, we certainly do not see evidence for this, either in the academic literature or in broader public discussions and narratives about transgender women who are parents. Instead, what the examples we have included here highlight are the ways in which mothering is often closely wedded to particular normative forms of gendered embodiment, and how acceptance of a transgender parent as a woman is not always (or perhaps even often) connected with accepting a transgender parent as a mother.

Notwithstanding that these issues of acceptance and recognition are likely very different for children conceived or who come into a family after a parent has transitioned, the analysis we have presented above provides something of an answer to the questions we raised about the discrepancy between Angelina Jolie's experience and continued recognition as a mother, and the recognition accorded (or not) to transgender women who are mothers. It would appear that while someone who was assigned female at birth, and who has body parts removed that are often seen as key signifiers of femaleness, and who still identifies as a woman, retains her status as a mother, people who are assigned male at birth, who have children, and who later transition gender, are largely denied the status of mother. Despite it not being her intent, in many ways this echoes the findings of Andrea Doucet (2006), who sought to answer the question 'do men mother'. From her more than 100 interviews with primary caregiving Canadian fathers, Doucet suggests that men, indeed, do not mother: that only women mother. Yet in reality what Doucet found, we would suggest, is that only *cisgender women* or women who are living as such before having children are considered mothers. Women who have at some point raised their children as fathers, however, appear to be excluded from the category 'mother', even if many such women closely conform to what Doucet and others define as aligned with the maternal.

In this section we have focused closely on bodily norms and their intersections with identity, and the ways in which this may in some cases discount transgender women from the category of 'mother'. In the following section, by contrast, we focus on women who were assigned female at birth, and who are mothers, but who, owing to cognitive impairment (i.e. a dementia) 'fall' from the category 'mother' due to their children's changing perceptions of them as the dementia progresses and their ability to enact the role of mother diminishes.

Motherhood and Dementia

Before delving into the specifics around motherhood, dementia and (lack of) recognition it is worth setting dementia in context. Dementias are generally invalidating in a number of senses, in terms of the person themselves becoming increasingly dependent, disabled, and unable to engage in the roles, skills, and interactions they previously did; and also in terms of increasingly becoming less valued as a result of the degenerative symptoms. The term 'social death' was coined by Helen Sweeting and Mary Gilhooly (1997), based on their interviews with 100 family carers of older people with a dementia, to describe how society may view the person with dementia as a 'a liminal or non-person, who is demonstrably making the transition from life to death' (p. 99). As well as this, the oxymoronic notion of a 'living death' has been associated with dementia for much longer, and in some cultures and countries people with dementia are currently labelled 'mad' or 'witches', and are ostracized from their communities. Thus, experiencing a dementing illness can position an individual, and by extension their family, on the margins of kinship as it is normatively constructed.

Although, in the intervening period in Western cultures the public discourse has shifted—owing, in significant part, to a self-advocacy movement led by individuals with younger onset and/or more atypical forms of dementia—from that of ‘dementia sufferer’ towards ‘dementia survivor’ (Bryden 2015), the lack of effective treatment, and inevitable decline in functioning has remained constant. By the same token, in public health discourse there has been a shift away from a ‘social death’ frame towards a more positive ‘living well with dementia’ stance that emphasizes maintaining functioning, enhancing quality of life, and health and social care improvement (Department of Health 2009; Peel and Harding 2015).

Recently, there has also been effort to raise the profile of dementia as a women’s issue (two-thirds of those diagnosed with dementia are women (Alzheimer’s Society 2014)), which speaks to our argument here regarding the deleterious impacts that dementia has on women’s capabilities to enact their role as mothers and (often) carers for the family (Erol et al. 2015, 2016; Savitch et al. 2015). As the experience of dementia is one that disproportionately affects women globally, both in terms of living with the condition, and in terms of providing paid and unpaid care (Erol et al. 2015), for women who develop a dementia in later life, it can be challenging for themselves and for those around them to adjust to the changes in their role and in their identities. The transition from typically being the main care provider within a family to the one now requiring care can be a profound one, and a change that is often resisted. Retaining pre-dementia identities and independence can be a strong personal driver for many who experience dementia symptoms, and while there is great diversity in individual’s experiences, gender roles likely impact on adaptations to dementia within families. There are challenges linked to adapting to changing needs as the dementia progresses, and the inevitable relinquishing of roles, tasks, and status within the family.

For example, Gayle Borley et al. (2014) discuss the experience of Barbara, an 83-year-old white British woman who was born in the 1930s, was heterosexually married in the 1950s, and who undertook a traditionally conventional role throughout her adult life of full-time housewife and mother to two children, while her husband engaged in paid work outside the home. Barbara has mild-stage Alzheimer’s disease and was going through the transition from a carer to being cared for. She expressed denial of her condition, maintaining that she was ‘just the same’. Her husband now does the majority of the housework, the shopping, the food preparation, and the cooking; all previously core components of her daily life:

> R: So can you tell me a little bit more about how you feel when you see [your husband] doing all the jobs around the house?
>
> Barbara: Well, I don't feel very good but I mean, it's one of them things, I can't do it and that's it…
>
> R: Can you tell me more about how it actually feels?
>
> Barbara: Horrible really…to think that I used to do all that and now I can't…you know, it's horrible not being able to do it but it don't make me feel [pause] un useful (p. 12)

We can see in this interview extract with Barbara that her husband's role around the house is positioned, by the researcher, as an extreme case formulation ('all the jobs'), one that likely frames Barbara as accountable for her lack of engagement around the house these days. Her 'Well…' formulated response projects that the answer is not going to be straightforward (Schegloff and Lerner 2009) and she moves swiftly from expressing feeling ('I don't feel very good') to offering the idiom 'it's one of those things' as an opener to a pragmatic, and perhaps stoic, unelaborated account of her current situation. Rather than receiving an affiliative response from the researcher, which is commonly the response to idiomatic formulations because they evoke and constitute taken for granted knowledge (Kitzinger 2000), the researcher reformulates her question, pursuing an emotional response from Barbara. As would be the preferred response, Barbara upgrades her previous assessment of [not] 'very good' to 'horrible'. But, interestingly, she ends with a statement of her ongoing value, she does not feel 'un useful'. Borley et al. (2014) suggest that maintaining her identity as a central figure in her family life, and reinforcing perceptions of self, usefulness, and value within the family would be a key factor in maintaining her quality of life as the disease progresses.

This was reflected in our own data[2] with daughters and sons. Sue, for instance, discussed how resistive her mother was to 'hands-on' care from

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[2] In our dementia projects, of the total sample of 185 original questionnaire participants 62 (33%) were caring for a parent (see also Harding and Peel 2013; Peel and Harding 2014; Peel 2014). Semi-structured interviews and focus groups were conducted with eleven participants, nine of whom were caring for their mother with dementia.

her, and how challenged her mother's perception of herself as competent and capable was by 'the path from independence to dependence':

> Sue: [T]he hands on caring […] She was awful, I didn't do anything right. 'Don't treat me like a baby' and, you know, it's very difficult to get it right, isn't it? She was doing things which … 'I can walk, I'm not an invalid'. […] the path from independence to dependence […] For us as a family, perhaps not for the professionals because she'll take it from them, but for the family it's been really difficult.

Through her use of active voicing, Sue offers an evocative account of her mother's perspective about accepting care from her daughter—a perspective that challenges being infantalized ('don't treat me like a baby') and being invalidated ('I'm not an invalid'). Noticeably, the projectable ending 'she was doing things which… *were unsafe or were putting her at risk*' is left unspoken by Sue, arguably because Sue is attending to not wanting to be seen as positioning her mother as childlike.

Taken together, what this all seems to suggests is that the identity of the mother with dementia needs to be considered as part of a whole family system (Beeber and Zimmerman 2012), in order to understand their wider role prior to the onset of dementia, and to ascertain how the dynamics of the family interactions change when caring for a person with dementia. In Barbara's case (and potentially in Sue's mothers) she reportedly lacked insight into her Alzheimer's and was 'in denial', a situation not uncommon for people with dementia (e.g. see Peel 2015a).

By the same token, recognizing the need for help, and accepting support can be challenging when maintaining identities and independence are still important to the mother with dementia. Canadian mothers with dementia, interviewed by Catherine Ward-Griffin et al. (2006), described their gratitude for daughters taking care of them but at the same time described feeling that they were a burden to them. This combination of individualism and familism led Ward-Griffin and colleagues to use the concept of 'grateful guilt' to describe how mothers with dementia make sense of this situation. Various dynamic types of mother–daughter relationships have been identified in this context, namely custodial, combative, cooperative, and cohesive (Ward-Griffin et al. 2007). Some are focused on the provision and receipt of tasks (custodial and cooperative), the other two are emotion focused (combative and cohesive). And two of these four mother–daughter relational styles (custodial, combative), identified based on interviews with mothers with dementia and their caring daughters, are underpinned by a focus on deficits, rather than strengths.

A deficit emphasis is common when considering dementia's progressive and untreatable protracted pathway, and, as we now briefly consider, chimes with our discussion, in Chapter 3, of ambivalent affect, and in Chapter 6, of ambiguous loss in connection with transgender children and parenting children with an autism diagnosis. Barbara Lloyd and Christine Stirling (2011) have applied the concept of ambiguous loss to the dementia care context based on their interviews with Australian primary family carers. To reiterate and extend the discussion of ambiguous loss in Chapter 3, Lloyd and Stirling write:

> Ambiguous loss denotes a loss that is unclear… physically present but psychologically absent, as in the case of a person with late-stage dementia…. it becomes unclear whether the person with dementia is in or out of the family, and in what category of personhood he or she is located. This category confusion leads, in turn, to behavioural uncertainty (Boss 1999). When a parent is perceived to be more like a child, for example, adult children can become unsure as to how to orient themselves towards that parent. Carers may also feel a guilty ambivalence towards the person with dementia, simultaneously dreading his or her death and longing for the closure that the person's death would bring (p. 900).

Of interest to us here is the extension of ambiguous loss to incorporate 'guilty ambivalence' in the dementia context; a context that, although related to the cases of parenting transgender or autistic children, diverges in that death is an actual aspect of the experience rather than the death of an anticipated normative future for the person. This is not, of course, a simple divergence and there may be elements of overlap in terms of, say, normative expectations for a parent's enjoyment of retirement perhaps which resonate more closely with notions of disrupted developmentalist logic. Nevertheless, the literature about parenting a transgender or autistic child rarely foreground longing for actual death in the family in the folds of kinship narratives they engender. Pauline Boss's (1999, 2007) concept of ambiguous loss also includes the underdeveloped concept of 'ambiguous gain' or unclear benefit, which Lloyd and Stirling (2011) applied in their research to unpack the potentially negative impact that contact with dementia services can have on family carer identities. They suggest that 'when experienced by dementia carers, ambiguous gain can be understood as a product of a mismatch between the operational logics of bureaucratic "systems" and domestic "lifeworlds"' (p. 900). Ambiguous gain was a useful concept, too, in our own research with carers of people with dementia discussing health service and social care provision as a 'maze', and deploying battle and fighting discourse (Peel and Harding 2014). Ironically, rather than these military metaphors being levelled at the disease (see Lane et al. 2013), in our research military metaphor was levelled at accessing and navigating services and support. For instance, in the words of James:

> James: You're under immense strain caring for somebody who has, in effect, behavioural difficulties through no fault of their own and you're under that mental, emotional, physical effort and at the same time you're having to battle the system […] you're having to go to… it's like being in World War III, you'll go into one battle and another one starts (p. 656).

Therefore, we see here that while James stops short of describing going to 'war' explicitly, he makes vivid and detailed use of military metaphor directed at 'the system' which is ostensibly designed to enable and support people with dementia and their families. Both ambiguous loss and ambiguous gain, then, can be imbued in carers' narratives.

Insight based on the perspectives of mothers with a dementia themselves is scant. Much more developed is a broader perspective largely predicated on the perspectives of those family members cast in a caring role. We have suggested elsewhere that the 'role reversal' associated with caring for a parent with dementia is, on one level, a superficial concept (Peel 2010). There is, though, a prevalent cultural discourse, manifest in both lay accounts of dementia care and in the literature, that those with dementia become more 'childlike' (Toepfer et al. 2014). One instance of this reconfiguring of normative familial relationships is evident in a personal account from a daughter, Jennifer Davies (2010), entitled 'We don't know what's going through her mind':

> Mom was a rather dominant character and very loving. She was a worrier, especially about her children […] Mom hated staying in during the day, and once she had retired she went into town […] every day, come rain or shine. […] I find myself writing in the past tense, although Mom is still living. […] The terrible dementia from which Mom suffers began about eight years ago. […] She became obsessed with certain things. It started with the wrinkles on her face. She would have no other topic of conversation. However hard we tried to convince her that her wrinkles were no worse than those of anyone else her age, that it was normal and they weren't that bad anyway, she couldn't accept it or understand why it had happened to her. Then, after some months, she moved on to her breasts. She was perplexed as to why they were so large and hung down. She took to getting her breasts out in public to illustrate to others what she was talking about. […] Dementia is such a dreadful disease, rendering the sufferer childlike. But a baby can cry when hungry or thirsty, Mom can't. She has to remain hungry and thirsty until she is fed and watered. She is incontinent, which still greatly upsets her. We don't know what is going through her mind. What if it is fear and we can't reassure her? What if she is in pain and can't make anyone understand? Babies are cute and appealing. Elderly people often aren't (pp. 35–37, 39).

What we see in Davies' account is a representation of the mother with dementia as more primordial than a human baby. While bleak, this is resonant with our own experience of a father—hunched over, head in hands, dribbling, inert—being co-located with a human baby. This human baby, a few weeks old, was screaming, perhaps because of the unfamiliar smells and sounds of the nursing home. She was screaming loudly, constantly and inconsolably, and the grandparent with dementia remained utterly inert. No flicker of recognition or response to this primordial scream.

We briefly explore now some more of our own data from carers of parents' with dementia, before returning to a discussion of the social representations of caring in this context as 'child care' and notions of the 'good mother': a discussion that extends our challenge to the discussion, which opened this chapter, of Angelina Jolie's elective surgeries and the tripartite conception of mothering it inheres.

Worry, vigilance, and guilt were key terms embedded in our participants' accounts. As Jan—whose mother was now in residential care—explicitly recounted:

> Jan: The worry never goes away, you wake up with it, you wake up with this sinking feeling (laughs) in the pit of your stomach, oh, you know, what's going to happen today, is she going to be all right.

The extreme-case formulation 'never' and the ever-present constancy of the worry, conveyed as somatized, as well as conscious, works to emphasize the embeddedness of the concern. Chloe, reflecting on her relationship with the nursing home care provision during the last months of her mother's life, also communicated concerns connected to care in this context.

> Chloe: One of the most important things for me was knowing, especially when Mum was in bed, that she wasn't left for hours. […] the thought of her, not having anybody go in that room for three hours was horrendous, and that always used to worry me and… and I often used to think at different times during the day, I wonder if Mum's seen anybody today. […] And, of course, once she was in bed, they did have to go every two hours to turn her. But it was that… it was that horrible feeling of thinking that… have they forgotten she's in her room, that was really, really important to me.

We can see in Chloe's account a similar emphasis on the anxiety created through not 'knowing' whether and when her Mum was having contact with care staff when she was bed bound. Chloe had liaised with staff in the nursing home to operationalize a chart in which staff documented when they went into her mother's room to turn her in order to prevent bedsores. Another daughter, Sue, who we introduced above, also conveyed this sense of anxiety about her mother: 'she's gone into a nursing home now but my sister and I both still have to be quite vigilant, I'd say'. Thus, keeping a careful watch for potential poor care or abuse, when mothers were in residential care was, partially, about monitoring care provision, and partially about attempts to ensure sufficient recognition outside of the filial framework. Megan Edwards (2014) uses the phrase 'orchestrator in the background' (p. 176) to reflect the demanding commitment that arranging and monitoring care is for family carers at a distance. But more than this, when the entirely dependent mother with dementia is approaching the end of life there is a sense that (primarily) daughters are orchestrating, or attempting to orchestrate, a recognition of the mother *through* the bodily and communicative care practices of others.

Jennifer Day and colleagues' (2014) interview research with adult daughters caring for a parent with dementia (likely mothers themselves) concluded that this group is at risk of the combination of helplessness, hopelessness, inability to be empathic, and sense of isolation that results from prolonged exposure to perceived suffering. Similarly, Chloe, who we quoted above, emphasized another difficulty with distance care giving: 'if you don't go, you then feel terrible for not going'; and Victoria articulated the 'chore-like' character of caring for her mother who was living, with support, in her own home:

> Victoria: It feels like sort of like a chore, you know you've got to keep communicating with this person because if you don't it's going to get even worse so that… because the faster she deteriorates the bigger the problem for my sister and I looking after her. You know, even if we're paying other people to do it, it's still actually, in one way or another, is more of a problem because it's us who's having to take decisions, it's us who's having to be the intermediary, even if we do less and other people do more. So… so keeping her healthier for longer, there's like a… there's something in it for me, but it is a chore. There… no, I would say there's no pleasure in it whatsoever, no, no.

Therefore, the lack of 'pleasure' in caring for a parent with dementia, the worry, guilt, and vigilance were all evident in the fracturing of normative familial relationships between adult child and parent for the adult daughters. And duty and responsibility were also foregrounded, most explicitly in the adult sons' accounts as we will go on to see below. The reconfiguring of relationships—particularly with respect to being mis-perceived—was present in adult sons' but not daughters' accounts. Derek, for example, provided a lengthy account of his mother wanting him to sleep with her:

> Derek: [I]t's terrible to think that your… your own mother doesn't know you. […][S]he came up to my bedroom, and erm, it… it was quite obvious from the things that she was saying to me that she thought I was her husband, because she was saying things like 'you don't want to get in… you don't want to be in bed with me, do you? Why? What have I done? Why won't you get in? Why won't you come to bed with me?' So I said 'look, Mum, I'm not Dad. I'm Derek. I'm your son'. 'How can you be my son? I'm not… I haven't got a son.' Well, she… she became very, very aggressive. We came back downstairs, and uh, then she started banging and slamming all the doors, and knocking on the walls […] I didn't know how to cope with it, Liz, so I thought 'what am I going to do?' So in the end, I phoned […] and a very, very nice doctor came out […] [he said] it's not fair on you. You can't possibly cope with your mother in this condition. So he got my mum admitted.

There can be serious consequences to the manifestation of behavioural and psychological symptoms commonly evident as dementia progresses (e.g. the prescription of antipsychotic medication; see Harding and Peel 2013). While not wishing to derogate the distress that Derek evidently must have experienced at this point when his filial relationship was, temporarily, reconfigured as a matrimonial one, it did precipitate his mother's permanent removal from her home.

The gulf between who, and how, the before dementia person was and their current behaviour was especially marked in sons' accounts of caring for their mothers. Derek also, for example, reported the disconnection between his mum swearing at him and his understanding of her previous self: 'my mother wouldn't say boo to a goose, she was a very gentle lady'. James discussed the reconfiguring of his relationship with his mother in different terms:

> James: Strange to say, even though she wouldn't recognise me as her son, deep down there was something there, because I was the one person she would be at most ease with, is probably the best way I can put it. But it got to stage whereby, for example, my Mum would see my car in the front drive and say 'oh my boyfriend is here, my boyfriend is here'. […] The first time this happened I thought 'now what do I do now?' [Laughs]. So I decided to change my clothes, my top and trousers, and suddenly I was her

> boyfriend. And this went on for quite a few months and it was not only just once a day, every time she saw my car—it might be four, five, six times a day. […] That was the most, you could say, the strangest story I could, I could quote. Erm, but I took it as, erm, a compliment, because I was assuming she was going back to times when she… when my father… late father was, ah, courting my… my Mum.

James, here, recounts engaging in role play with his mother in order to maintain her reality that he was her boyfriend rather than her son. While use of deception, on both sides, has been described with respect to mothers and daughters (Ward-Griffin et al. 2006), it is interesting in James's case that by actively engaging in his mother's reality—and rationalizing the situation as 'a compliment'—this reportedly circumvents any upset, distress, or agitation on his mother's part. A different type of 'ambiguous gain' perhaps, although essentially embedded in loss.

James's positioning of these relationship-reconfiguring events as the 'strangest story' in his experience of caring for his late mother sit very differently to Derek's experience of not 'know[ing] how to cope'. While clearly very different approaches to managing the 'challenging behaviour' of their respective mothers, these two examples vividly illustrate the point we introduced via the privileged tripartite notion of motherhood in the Angelina Jolie case; these accounts are the antithesis of that conceptualization of motherhood. In these instances of mothering, the basic category of mother is troubled and unattainable.

There were numerous examples in our data of participants' being cast in a parental role, and utilizing many of the strategies and approaches that their parents may have used with them as children. For instance, some participants reported using 'time out' as a strategy to manage their frustration with their parent's behaviour. Victoria, for example, reported this with regard to her mother, stating that at times she had been 'furious enough that' she had 'just walked away'. All the participants talked in ways that suggested that they were mindful of simplistic role-reversal notions regarding the progression of dementia. Yet, as Victoria suggested, as symptoms of dementia worsen and parental dependency increases over time, 'the adult relationship has gone and all you're left with is the fact that you're mother and child and therefore you are irrevocably tied together'.

As we discuss in the next chapter in connection with the Australian television series *Mother and Son*, the filial roles and responsibilities, and tensions in these roles and responsibilities as they change, are highly salient in the dementia care context. Victoria and Sue especially reflected on their changed relationships with their mothers. In our final example in this chapter, Victoria's account highlights how deception and concealment reconfigure the relationship in ways outside of normative patterns 'at this stage of life', which positions a woman in her 50s as a 'teenager'.

> Vic: I've learnt to lie, I lie to her. […] I've learnt to deceive her. You know, like my sister erm, when she was at the stage of… sometimes she'd like appear on my sister's doorstep for the fifth time, erm and sometimes it would be to ask the same question again, and my sister was like oh, going completely crazy, it's like she would not answer the door even though she was in the house.
>
> Liz: Right.
>
> Vic: Cos she said 'If I'm not there she'll just go off and wander back home, and it won't be the end of the world and she'll cope and she'll get on. No, no, it doesn't matter, if it really is urgent she'll come back again another hour later'. You know, so… you know, that's a lie isn't it?
>
> Liz: Yeah, yeah, yeah. And I mean how does it feel being- like doing… like you and your sister doing that with your mum?
>
> Vic: A bit of a surprise (laughs) no, a bit of a surprise. And… and odd because it's the sort of thing you do when you're a teenager (laughs) you know, yeah, and I'd say it's the same sort of feeling, you feel you're being a bit of a naughty teenager. You're hiding things from them that at this stage of life you weren't expecting to, you know, you would be open with them. […] it's just that like the truth is going to be more hassle than I can cope with, I'm not going there today, you know.

That Victoria was 'surprise[d]' by her own behaviour and the way she interacts with her mother is reminiscent of James's 'strange' role playing and Derek's verbalized distress at his mother wanting him 'to go to bed with her'. So, it would seem, motherhood plus dementia creates a hitherto unchartered landscape and shifting sands for roles that, for many, may have been well sedimented previously. To return to the discursive folds of Chapter 3, it is clear that the impact of dementia on families not only causes many undulations in those folds, but also causes tears—many of which are not repairable. And, ultimately, the folds of subjectivities, despite the rhetorical optimism of 'living well', completely disintegrate when the dementia trajectory runs its 'natural course', in juxtaposition again to the cancer narrative typified by the Angelina Jolie case.

Before concluding this chapter on motherhood and recognition, we consider the work of Nils Toepfer et al. (2014) on patterns of anchoring in social representation of dementia caregiving. Toepfer and colleagues base their perspective on interviews with women carers and German national newspaper coverage pertaining to dementia. They found that 'child care' and 'the good mother' were the most prevalent domains in which dementia caregiving was embedded. In terms of childcare representation, they provide examples such as 'It's like I'm living with a child', 'I feel like I'm the mother here, that she's my child', and 'she has to treat her mother like her children' (p. 240) to illustrate this representation of people with dementia. They also draw attention to descriptions of women with dementia as engaging in child-like behaviours, such as carrying around stuffed animals, or dolls, or shouting for their deceased mother.

So-called 'doll therapy' is one of a range of non-pharmacological approaches aimed at improving well-being in dementia care that can result in less agitation and visible distress in (mostly) women with advanced dementia (Tamura et al. 2001). There is limited empirical evidence to support the use of 'doll therapy'—in the UK most studies have been conducted by the Newcastle Challenging Behaviour Service which foregrounds the agenda here—but it is widely practised (Mitchell and O'Donnell 2013). Its theoretical justification stems from John Bowlby's (1969) attachment theory that, of course, was developed from research with children (Mitchell and O'Donnell 2013). Critics within the dementia care field firmly position the uses of dolls as transitional objects as an infantalizing form of deceit; proponents argue that dolls can assist in the expression of unmet needs, such as cuddling and kissing, because they are perceived as babies. We have seen the use of 'doll therapy' in our observational research in a specialist dementia care home. The particular resident in question, a woman with severe aphasia, appeared to potentially gain comfort from cradling a teddy bear. But equally we also saw her eyes silently fill with tears, or she babbled incoherently with tear filled eyes.

A recent quote from a daughter of a mother with younger-onset Alzheimer's disease, 36-year-old Liz Allen, embedded in a biomedical Alzheimer's research charity's public awareness campaign, clearly illustrates this assemblage of 'impaired' affect, broad sequential change in kinship relationships, and mother being 're-folded' into the family logic as child:

> Although Mum has no emotional attachment to her grandchildren, my sister's two kids are almost developing at the same rate as she is—albeit forward in time rather than backwards—and in many ways, we treat all three of them in a similar way (Liz Allen, in Alzheimer's Research UK 2016).

This quote, from the daughter not the mother, also speaks to what Toepfer and colleagues term 'the good mother' representation. They discuss how the normative demands of mothering and 'motherhood' position the woman caregiver as 'the ever-present mother' (p. 242). This lens, they suggest, may 'help to explain why many female dementia caregivers subordinate their own needs, shoulder the whole burden of care, and ultimately run the risk of overexerting themselves' (Toepfer et al., p. 242). They argue that the cultural model of intensive mothering bleeds through and is projected into the dementia caregiver role.

However, a key challenge to this, which we hinted at earlier in the extract from Jennifer Davies (2010), is that there is an 'unpleasant truth' in the association between child care and dementia care: an unpleasant truth that has at its heart perceptible sentience and norms of reciprocity. As Toepfer and colleagues communicate through their data excerpt '[w]ith an infant you're happy to believe that they notice your affection, but it's much harder to believe that with a child-like old person' (p. 243), caring for a dependent adult with a dementia departs rather radically from care of a dependent child. And so the child-like analogy, popular in the gerontological literature, rather unravels. For Toepfer and colleagues, then, this phenomenon of ‘role reversal’ or ‘infantilization’ within informal dementia care contexts ‘can rightly be conceived as a social strategy of symbolic coping’ (p. 244). While this may well be the case, we would—in line with many working in the dementia studies field (e.g. Kitwood 1997)—take issue with this representation of the personhood of those with a dementia diagnosis. But rather than ask ‘how can the personhood of those living with a dementia be best maintained?’, our concern has been with what kinship connections in the dementia care context throw into relief about the necessary fictions of kinship in general.

When considering how dementia affects women directly and vicariously as family carers we can see how cognitive, communicative, and behavioural ‘decline’ all intersect in ways that mean people ‘fall’ from the category ‘mother’. As we intimated in this section, not only is the woman with dementia positioned outside of the category of mother, but also the caring daughter (or perhaps son), while ‘mother-like’ in some senses, doesn’t and can’t (or shouldn’t) fully realize the category ‘mother’ in this situation.

Concluding Thoughts

In writing in this chapter about how some women are denied the category ‘mother’, and other women ‘fall from’ the category, it would be remiss of us if we did not return to our arguments in Chapter 4 about how children are stolen from Capuchin and chimpanzee mothers, and how their role as mothers is routinely discounted. While, as we argued in that chapter, human exceptionalism is at work when non-human infants are seen as objects who can be taken away from mothers who are equally seen as (uncaring) objects, in this chapter we have argued, following on from the previous chapter, that human exceptionalism has its own exceptions, namely in the ways that only particular humans are treated as valuable. In the case of Angelina Jolie, she was widely celebrated for her elective surgeries—and especially celebrated as a caring mother. In the case of the transgender mothers and cisgender mothers living with a dementia we have considered in this chapter, their journeys, decisions, and enactments of the category ‘mother’ are arguable less celebrated or recognized. And, indeed, in some cases viewed as explicitly transgressing what ‘mother’ means beyond simply a labelling term.

Thus far, we have seen how baby monkeys are assimilated into some human kinship contexts, and how ‘dolls’—as substitute human babies—are seen as a sufficient proxy for genuine human exchange in others. Human adults with dementia being given inanimate human baby substitutes in the institutional context of the dementia care home, for instance, tells us as much about those (hermetically sealed) institutional contexts as it does about kinship. We have furthered our argument about development and change in human–human filial relationships, in this chapter, through bringing together the unlikely companions of filial change brought about by a change in gender and by changed cognition, communication, and behaviour associated with dementias. A key aspect of development and change in kinship, however, and one that we have alluded to in this chapter, but will explore thoroughly in the next, is context. How kinship is enacted is highly contextually dependent; it is shaped by and through institutional settings at a broad discursive level and also in the fine-grained elements of institutional interactions. And this we discuss in Chapter 8, our final substantive chapter, with particular reference to the incongruent institutional contexts of a residential mother-and-baby unit and a health service memory clinic.

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8

Kinship in Institutional Contexts

A Story

Mother and Son was a popular Australian television series that ran for six seasons spaced over a decade, from 1984 to 1994, winning, in 1987, a television drama award from the Australian Human Rights Commission. The show was a family comedy, focused on the life of one family—the Beares—and particularly the mother Maggie Beare (played by Ruth Cracknell), and her adult son Arthur (played by Gary McDonald). In the series Arthur lived with Maggie in order to support and care for her owing to issues associated with her memory (issues that are never referred to as a dementia but which clearly reference the symptoms of a dementia). Given the topic, the series may not much sound like a comedy. The comedic aspects were achieved through both the depiction of Maggie as wilfully playing on her 'forgetfulness' in order to manipulate Arthur, in addition to the genuinely endearing but nonetheless antagonistic relationship between, Maggie, Arthur, and his older brother Robert (played by Henri Steps).

As the series progressed, while the loving relationship between Maggie and Arthur was a constant, it was increasingly shaped by the depiction

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of Arthur's frustration with, and indeed anger towards, his mother. This resulted in a finale to the fourth season (originally aired in 1988) in which Arthur announced his plan to leave for a holiday, insisting that Robert care for their mother. Throughout the series, Robert was positioned as both ingratiating himself to his mother and humouring her memory issues, but at the same time always scheming to achieve his own ends. In the season four finale his agenda is to 'sell' his mother's home to himself and then rent it out, by placing Maggie in an aged care facility (residential care home). The following exchange occurs a third of the way through the episode, as Robert attempts to convince Maggie that she should move into an aged care facility:

Maggie: Thank goodness you're here Robbie, you're the only one I can trust.
Robert: Mum. Come and sit down. I want to explain something to you.
Maggie: You're not in trouble are you? [Audience laughter]
Robert: No. I just want to run you through a couple of thoughts I've been having about your future.
Maggie: Yes?
Robert: As you know, we all go through stages. We grow, and we change. Like the caterpillar. You know? The little caterpillar grows up, and changes into a beautiful butterfly, and flies away.
Maggie: Is this about the birds and the bees? [Audience laughter]
Robert: No, no, Mum. It's about change. We all change… We're born, then we go to school, then we grow up and get married, and then our children grow up and get married, and then… the logical next step is when we go and live with a lot of other old people. [Audience laughter]

This quote, similar to many others from across the six seasons of the show, highlights the type of linear, developmentalist logic that we consider to be a central point of critique within critical kinship studies. By Robert's account, 'change' follows a predetermined sequence: from childhood, to adulthood, to marriage and children, and, finally, to old age. Although the sequence of birth to death might be fairly accurate, the ways in which Robert is able to treat this sequence as a 'logical' pathway is indicative of more than just a scripted comedy television show. Such scripting relies upon the assumption of cultural intelligibility: Robert's machinations to remove his mother out of her home are only intelligible because of her age and presumed dementia. Had Robert been, for example, 16 years old, and Maggie 20 years older than him, and in the absence of a chronic illness, the argument he presented would not have been readily intelligible to the audience, and certainly would not have been a prompt for audience laughter.[1]

Instead, the normative developmental pathway narrated by Robert makes sense because of the presumptions that exist within Australian society (and arguably most other Western societies), in which ageing is associated with both a loss of capacity, and thus a loss of options. Such a presumed pathway is also indicative of a cultural context in which children do not typically provide personal care for their parents,[2] where heterosexual marriage is normative, and where monetary factors are a necessary consideration in the context of decisions about caring for family members (i.e. having the necessary funds for someone to live in residential care). Our point here is not that writers of *Mother and Son* could necessarily have provided a radically different narrative about kinship and ageing: they were, to a large degree, bound by what would be intelligible to a viewing audience. Rather, our point is that the narrative has much to tell us about Western kinship practices, and the norms that underpin them.

Furthermore, the analogy of the caterpillar turning into a 'beautiful butterfly' (and, indeed, Maggie's question as to whether Robert was referring to the 'birds and the bees'—a euphemism for sex) demonstrates how the Western model of kinship life course narrated by Robert is naturalized through recourse to the presumed naturalness of the stages a caterpillar goes through. Similarly, the implied 'just like' generalizes Western understandings of kinship to construct an account of a nor-

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[1] It is important to acknowledge, too, that the cultural framing of dementias and Alzheimer's disease as 'old-timers' disease and a normative part of ageing has shifted in many Western societies since the 1988 broadcasting of this episode. Latterly, in health policy and practice, and in wider cultural representation (Peel 2014), dementia has increasingly been (re)configured as a neurodegenerative syndrome distinct from 'normal ageing'.

[2] Although, of course, we are glossing the nuance here around informal care generally and personal care, in particular provided by children and families to parents as they age and/or are affected by a dementia. And we recognize that this is often mediated by gender, ethnicity, and social class. The residential care sector, however, is substantial and predicted to grow exponentially as the population ages. In the UK alone, for example, the revenue from residential care by 2020 is predicted to be over £20 billion (Technology Strategy Board 2013).

mative developmental trajectory that is imposed upon the physiological life course of a caterpillar. What slips through the cracks in this type of anthropomorphizing account, then, are the ways in which Western kinship practices are not a reflection of nature, but rather are culturally determined understandings of what counts as kinship, and what counts as an appropriate developmental pathway.

To return to Robert's attempt at placing his mother in an aged care facility, the episode described above ends with Maggie agreeing to move into the facility, although only because of a misunderstanding about what this meant and about the ownership of her home. The next season of the programme then begins with Maggie living in the aged care facility, and distinctly unhappy. Over the course of these paired episodes, Maggie convinces Arthur to support her in returning home, largely by at first feigning that she doesn't remember him. In order to prompt her memory, Arthur takes her for a drive to familiar places, where he reminds Maggie that she can't return home as she signed the deed over to Robert. Maggie replies, saying 'you know I don't like it when they treat me like a child. And you know what I do when they treat me like a child? I act like a child'. In this statement Maggie echoes a point we made in Chapter 6, namely that while human exceptionalism privileges the worth of human animals over all others, at the same time some humans are valued over others. In Chapter 6 we made this claim regarding accounts of pregnancy loss, a child receiving a diagnosis of autism, and children who are transgender. In Chapter 7 we explored the child-like comparison related to motherhood and dementia, and in the context of *Mother and Son* we would make a similar claim regarding how Maggie is positioned as less than an adult: as she notes, she is treated like a child owing to dementia.

The episode ends with Maggie returning home, owing to the fact that she had 'forgotten' to sign the transfer of deed properly, and hence had retained ownership of the property. In staking her claim to her home, much is made by Maggie of the difference between the aged care facility—which is not like home—and the scope that being at home provides her to care for Arthur, as his mother. Maggie repeats the claim that home is where her memories are, home is the place in which she is Arthur's mother. These points about homes, as opposed to institutional contexts, as the places that best facilitate kinship practices is a topic that we now turn to explore in more depth, drawing on our own data from women with mental health concerns living with their children in mother and baby units, and people living with a dementia accessing healthcare.

Kinship in a Mother and Baby Unit

In this first section we focus on our findings from an ethnography conducted in a purpose-built mother-and-baby psychiatric unit located in one Australian state. We use the language of 'mother-and-baby' unit advisedly. The particular unit did notionally accept referrals for any parent with mental health concerns, but during our period of observations no fathers were admitted as patients (although we were told by unit staff that in the past a father who was a primary caregiver had been admitted, and that more recently both a mother and father had been admitted together, along with their child).

Also of note is the fact that although the unit encourages visits from family members, and is able to accommodate partners of admitted patients for overnight stays, the unit policy does not permit non-human animals to visit the facility. While in some cases exceptions could be made to this policy, this was typically the case with regard to smaller animals, and was contingent on whether or not toddlers were present in the unit (which stemmed from concerns about the risk of larger animals—such as dogs—to toddlers). Given the central role of animal companions in the lives of many people, and given the role that such companions can play in facilitating positive mental health outcomes, it is notable that they are largely excluded from the facility. For us, their exclusion highlights the boundaries placed on what constitutes kinship proper (i.e. only human–human relationships).

Beyond animal companions, however, it is notable to us that across the literature on mother-and-baby units, family practices in institutional contexts are seldom attended to. This is salient, given that the literature indicates that outcomes for mothers are contingent upon support from family members, and particularly male partners (e.g. Glangeaud-Freudenthal et al. 2014; Salmon et al. 2003). Research with children of mothers housed in psychiatric facilities who are not admitted with their mothers also suggests that, for many such children, being separated from their mothers can be distressing. Further, previous research suggests that visiting their mothers can, for some children, be distressing, given the less-than-welcoming nature of some psychiatric facilities. Sophie Isobel and her colleagues (2015) advocate strongly for the provision of family rooms in psychiatric facilities; however, what requires attention in this regard is whether or not family rooms in generalist facilities, or entire wards in mother-and-baby units, actually facilitate practices of kinship.

The unit in which we undertook our ethnography contained six individual bedrooms with en suite bathrooms. As we mentioned above, partners could stay in the unit, although they were discouraged from staying all of the time. The logic behind this was to encourage mothers to move towards independence, in addition to having the necessary space to focus on the mental health concerns that had led to their admission. Unlike most mother and baby units in Australia, which limit child admissions to 12 months of age, the unit we undertook our research in allowed children up to the age of three years to be admitted along with their mothers. Depending on their need and capacity, mothers were given significant levels of support from unit staff, although they were nonetheless expected, when possible, to provide primary care to their child(ren) when in the unit. This included feeding, bathing, and generally tending to their child(ren). The unit provides meals for mothers and children, as well as visitors; however, mothers are expected to contribute to tidying and washing dishes, and are able to bring in their own foods (e.g. snacks).

In our observations, we were primarily focused on how people in the unit (including staff, mothers, children, and visitors) moved in, and interacted with, the built environment, and how the latter potentially shaped patients' experiences of family within the unit. Our observations took place over a two-month period in mid-2015, where a total of thirty hours of observations were undertaken. Throughout these observations, there were three key areas in which we witnessed experiences of family potentially being shaped by the built environment. The first of these related to the ways in which, in some cases, the fact that mothers were living in the unit meant that they came to envelop staff in their practices of family. This is unsurprising, given staff played a very hands-on and interactive role with patients. One exchange that was witnessed involved a patient services assistant (PSA) greeting a mother with a kiss on the cheek, before then speaking with her about having brought in food for her. This level of familiarity appeared unremarkable to the mother and the PSA. Yet it also highlights the boundary blurring between caring intimacy, and service provision (given the mother had asked the PSA to buy snacks for her and bring them to the unit).

Another example of how lines between staff and patients became blurred occurred during an evening meal, when one mother's male partner joined her and their children for dinner. The mother appeared uncertain if her partner was allowed to eat food provided by the unit, and a PSA replied, saying 'yes, he's part of the family now'. In this example, a staff member evokes the language of family to refer to all people present in the unit. Conversely, another interaction witnessed a father who was visiting and spending time with his child asking the child if 'Aunty X' or 'Aunty Y' was going to be there tonight, with the women who he referred to being staff members. Again, in this example, kinship categories are extended to other people in the unit, in this case staff.

Beyond specific examples of claims to kinship within the unit, we also witnessed moments where mothers (and sometimes their partners) engaged in behaviours that suggested that they viewed the unit as a home. A clear example of this was mothers often walking around barefoot, or in socks, and often in pyjamas. On occasion, we also witnessed some partners walking around in socks when visiting. Another example appeared in the constant presence of the television in the main socializing area in the unit. Often the television was on despite no one watching it, and often it was airing a programme that was neither child focused nor necessarily of interest to patients. In many ways it appeared as though the television was often on as a form of background noise, as might have also been true in the home environments of some patients and their families. A final example of the potentially homely nature of the unit appeared when we witnessed a mother receiving a phone call. A nurse had brought the phone to the mother, and then asked if the mother wanted her to leave. The mother appeared comfortable with the nurse being nearby during the conversation, much as might be the case if she were at home.

Yet despite these evocations of family, and the apparently homely nature of the unit as potentially experienced by some patients (and, indeed, staff and visitors), there were also many reminders throughout the unit that it was not, in fact, home. Key examples of this appeared in the large number of instructional notes posted around the unit, particularly in the communal spaces. These notes instructed mothers to wash cups after use and to wash hands when preparing food, among other such examples of requests for cleaning and self-care. Given the institutional context of the unit, it is unsurprising that occupational health and safety standards would be emphasized. Whether or not notes such as these undermined a sense of being at home, however, is something we can only conjecture about. Similarly, it was of note to us that while there was a kitchen provided for patients, it was clearly signed 'No children allowed in kitchen'. Again, this would likely be different to a patient's home, from which children are not typically excluded. Whether or not mothers accepted this as an institutional requirement, or experienced it as a reminder that they were not at home, is something upon which we cannot comment any further.

The examples that we have provided in this section, from an ethnographic study undertaken in an Australian mother-and-baby unit, suggest that the unit both appeared, in some instances, to engender a sense of both home and family, yet in other instances potentially engendered a sense of being out of place. Kathleen Connellan and colleagues (2015) have suggested that psychiatric units are inherently uncanny in that they offer a semblance of home, while always already containing reminders (and being designed to serve as reminders) that patients are not home. Obviously, psychiatric facilities, including mother-and-baby units, are designed to achieve therapeutic outcomes, and hence that is their primary focus. Furthermore, and given institutional requirements, it is not surprising that risk management is potentially given priority over animal visitors, just as it is not surprising that movement with the space (such as children in kitchens) is regulated by concerns about risk management.

What potentially is marginalized, however, is the centrality of kinship to well-being for many people, including relationships with non-human kin. At the same time, however, we might want to consider whether or not evocations of kinship from staff to patients do more than simply serve as insertion points into networks of power (as we explored in Chapter 2). It is possible that evocations of kinship within institutional spaces serve to produce patients as docile subjects willing to comply with staff requests, particularly if staff are seen as 'part of the family'. This is not to suggest sinister motives on the part of staff *per se*. Rather, it is to highlight the ways in which discourses of kinship are both flexible (so a nurse in a mother-and-baby unit can be interpellated as an aunty), yet always already laden with power. How institutional spaces facilitate or inhibit practices of kinship, and how such practices are enmeshed with broader networks of power, are topics that we continue to explore in the next section.

Kinship in a Memory Clinic

As we highlighted in Chapter 3 with respect to subjectivity, and as we have discussed elsewhere in this book, it is important to focus not simply on the immediate discursive contexts in which personhood is formed or accorded, but also the broader discursive contexts through which particular modes of personhood become intelligible. By the same token, however, much can be learned that may further a critical kinship studies by interrogating the operations of power at the 'local' level of sequential interaction. To that end, the final examples on which we draw in this book are taken from a dementia health care setting, a (somewhat euphemistically named) memory clinic in the UK.

We focus on our findings from observing and recording interactions in a secondary care health service that is embedded in a primary care practice in a rural community. About fifteen hours were spent in the setting, with eighteen appointments (including three home visits) recorded over four memory clinics, held monthly. While it is normative in most (neurotypical) adult patient–doctor interactions that these are dyadic interactions, the norm within dementia healthcare is (at least) triadic interaction (Karnieli-Miller et al. 2012). Indeed, having an accompanying person present (usually a partner, daughter, or son) with the patient in the clinic is encouraged and forms an important part of consultations, particularly the detailed history-taking component. In our data, fifteen patients and fourteen accompanying persons consented for their appointment(s) to be video-recorded with the average age of patients being seventy-seven years (range 55–92 years). Although it would be crude to position the accompanying family member(s) as 'corroborating' or disconfirming the patients' own account, given aphasia, personality changes, memory problems, and lack of insight into the difficulties the person may be experiencing are all common in dementia, the family nexus is an important one both diagnostically and in terms of ongoing support (Peel 2015a). But, of course, these multiple stakeholder positions are complex, dynamic, and potentially difficult to navigate. The fictional example from *Mother and Son* between Robert and Maggie that we used as the departure point for this chapter, then, is not so removed from the everyday lives of people as to be unintelligible (Harding 2012).

In the observational data we now explore there is neither conflict about 'big decisions' such as where a person lives, nor whether the person with dementia is capacitous (at that moment). However, in our data the perspectives of family members are certainly foregrounded. As such, we suggest that kinship is indexically relevant, and a discursive resource that can be marshalled for a range of different purposes.

In the first extract, Pete—a recently retired teacher—unusually visits the clinic for the first time on his own. He discusses 'worrying' about his memory and provides numerous examples: '[i]t's things like names people I worked with only four years ago I think ((clicks fingers)) what on earth was their name and it's totally gone'. Towards the end of the appointment, the clinician invokes Pete's wife:

> Doctor: So it… it's very important to you and your wife and I'm aware that things are not quite what they used to be and I take it that Justine [Pete's wife] although she's only one year younger than you is still functioning a bit better in these things.

Leaving to one side the fact that conversational analytic research suggests that it is possible, given Pete was unaccompanied, that he is experiencing non-progressive functional memory disorder rather than a degenerative dementia (Elsey et al. 2015), it is interesting to us that a contrast with Justine's putative 'functioning' is inserted into the interaction. Ultimately, this appointment concludes with a referral for Pete to have 'a brain scan, see what it shows'. A referral predicated less on Pete's cognitive performance (indeed the doctor says 'you're performing pretty well on those tests') and more on his account of his wife's concern, and the doctor's perspective that 'your wife is very important'. Early in the appointment Pete reported that: 'Justine will say "Your memory's getting worse, you're forgetting things". And it was really my wife's prompting that brought me'. This spousal push to engage with health services is highly typical in heteronormative relational contexts for men (Seymour-Smith et al. 2002), and one that is omnipresent in this particular clinic appointment.

Whether a non-present same-sex spouse, or friend, or neighbour would have the same significant impact in shaping the trajectory of this institutional context cannot be ascertained from our data, but we suspect not. We have one example of a neighbour, Sal, accompanying Beryl (who had a range of comorbidities including dementia) and her husband George both in their 80s at their clinic appointment. Although Sal is characterized by George as '[l]ike the very, very best daughter we could have, just across the road', we can see the boundaries of kinship being drawn rather differently in this exchange between the doctor and Sal:

Doctor: And she's got some changes, like small stroke disease in… in the brain.
Sal: Oh I didn't know that.
Doctor: Well that's what the… the brain scan showed, you see. So she's got that
Sal: So if I was her daughter… how would I know, you see?
Doctor: Well, yeah.
Sal: You know, it's, you know, I don't know how far to…
Doctor: No, you're right.

Although much of this exchange is implicit, it is 'news' to Sal that Beryl has vascular dementia. Her lack of knowledge of this significant information is indexically linked to kinship ('so if I was her daughter') in that she is suggesting that if she were closer to Beryl or knew her history more she would be noticing more signs of cognitive impairment. Although George frames Sal as like the 'very best daughter', this exchange suggests that Sal is aware that her normatively accorded position is kith rather than kin (in the context of the clinic), and this forces her to make a concession (i.e. to say 'if I was her daughter'). Her expressed lack of certainty about where to draw the boundary in her relationship with Beryl and George ('I don't know how far to…'), is confirmed by the doctor. Interestingly, this does not signal a general lack of medical comment on the nature and status of people's relationships in the clinic. As we saw above, Pete's wife was unequivocally positioned as 'very important'.

The contrast between the power of the non-present heterosexual spouse and the co-present neighbour in access to clinical knowledge and resource is stark when these two cases are collocated. And, we would suggest, that by considering them together we can learn something of the taken for granted landscape of kinship as it operates within this institutional setting. A setting, notably, from which animal companions are excluded, despite them potentially being important sources of information (e.g. identifying malignant melanoma, prostate or bladder cancer; i.e. Cornua et al. 2011) and support for activities of daily living.

The final two examples from this setting are also heternormatively coded and concern male patients and their female spouses. In the exchange below, taken from towards the end of an appointment, the doctor constructs Alex and his wife Eve as very much a unit ('both of you', 'between you'). The doctor does this in a way that deploys an authoritative 'we', common in institutional talk, which signals that his assessment of the situation is predicated on epistemic authority (Peel 2015a):

Doctor: We're doing well, and you're… I think er both of you…
Alex: Eve looks after me very, very well indeed.
Doctor: She does, she does and er it'll be interesting to see…
Alex: With my memory the short-term memory can be a bit funny.
Doctor: I… well we understand it we think… we know it's there I don't… I haven't got any magic that's gonna to make it go away I'm afraid. […] but er it… y'know between you having ways to deal with it y'know just that simple thing of writing stuff down and having it out there is very powerful isn't it?

Notably, the patient makes reference to his wife here and shifts the conversation temporarily to focus on talking about the carer (jointly assessing her caring qualities), which is very different to the practice identified in previous research of moving towards 'talking about' the patient in memory clinic interaction (Karnieli-Miller et al. 2012, p. 389). Our point here is not a directly contrastive one; without delving into the detailed specifics of the context of use we're unlikely to be able to say with certainty what the valence of 'talking about' either the patient or the caregiver in these triadic interactions is. Rather, our point here is that in the workings of the interactions in the memory clinic we can see kinship (albeit heteronormative kinship) being played out in ways that, at least in this instance, display relationality in operation (Harding 2017). That is, the *doing* of kinship as it is enacted through people's relationships with each other.

The final example is taken from two memory clinic appointments a month apart with the same patient, Bob, who has younger-onset Alzheimer's disease and a longstanding diagnosis of bipolar disorder. In the first observed appointment he is accompanied by his wife, Annabel; in the second he attends the appointment without her. This example usefully bring together the points we have made in this section, namely, that (1) particular kinship forms are omnipresent, highly salient, and, indeed, 'inserted' into memory clinic interaction; and (2) that relationality is demonstrably inherent to dementia care. As we intimated above, it is the patient who opens the floor, in this case for his wife to discuss her 'worries', admittedly because he falters in his own report on her concerns about him:

Appointment 1

Bob: Erm now An-Annabel's w-worried that erm… you tell your worries.

Annabel: Well I think he's going down hill I can see a big difference I can even since Christmas […] it's the small things that he can't do, erm, or forgets like I gave him a pound to put the car park.

Bob: No I haven't done I hardly put I've never…

Annabel: Well if you can read put money in slot press green button wait for ticket it is not a hard task, y'know, simple things he can't do.

Appointment 2

Doctor: There's no doubt that we've seen you have increasing difficulty with getting words to flow and memories to come reliably to you and as described by your wife last time I mean that was making it very, very difficult to make decisions.

Bob: She's [Annabel's] got this thing that, erm [pause], if the Qu-Queen came through the door I would hope I wouldn't stammer but, erm, she seems to think I pick and choose to when I am on song or backwards. It- it- it- it just plays up with you y'know sometimes when you just want to it won't come.

Doctor: Quite.

Bob: And then the next day you could be chattering y'know forever.

Doctor: That's true.

Bob: And…and not y'know er so it sort of jumps about.

Doctor: It does.

There is much that could be made of these data, which display relational conflict, and in the longer sequence that we have not reproduced, a complaint about the service provided by the clinic around the intelligibility of the language used to convey the diagnosis (see also Peel 2015a). However, for our purposes here, suffice to say these sequences demonstrably highlight the power of (particular, normative) carers' account of events in the memory clinic—despite direct challenge from the patient about the representation of events ('No I haven't done I hardly put I've never…') and spousal levels of empathy and understanding ('she seems to think I pick and choose to when I am on song or backwards'). In other words, what this broader sequence highlights is the power of this specific kinship form in a neuro*atypical* context; it is like a pebble in a pond, an ongoing ripple in subjectivities that ultimately support, or, indeed, arguably shape, clinical decisions about patient capacity.

Concluding Thoughts

In this final substantive chapter we have sought to demonstrate that while how kinship is enacted is highly dependent on context, by the same token it also privileges particular forms of kinship, such as relationships between cisgender mothers and babies, and heterosexual cisgender family carers or people with a dementia or a suspected dementia. And we have indicated how this privileging is done in ways that might, arguably, shape clinical and material outcomes.

Kinship, as we have highlighted through findings from these two incongruous settings, is shaped by and through institutional frameworks at an environmental and broad discursive level *and* is visible, too, in the sequential unfolding of talk-in-interaction. In this sense kinship is not only dynamic *and* contingent on context, but also, as we saw earlier, bounded in specific, largely taken for granted, ways. By foregrounding institutional context *per se*—and particularly communication in contexts respectively positioned as more 'homely' and more 'medical'—we have especially drawn attention to how, in our view, examining context it is vital for the critical exploration of kinship. Contexts, and specifically those where heteronormativity and human exceptionalism are omnipresent, serve to render either less intelligible or even unintelligible forms of kinship that do not conform to the norm of human–human relationships between those conventionally seen as kin.

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9

Conclusions

A Story

Our final story is one that is very mundane and, in some respects, highly normative. It involves a school drop off; a daily weekday occurrence for many involved in caring for children. In focusing on the mundane, this story brings to the fore how taken for granted assumptions about kinship infuse and infiltrate assumptions about who and how Western human kinship practices operate. The context for this story is the social media platform Facebook, a form of virtual communication with friends that is commonly more intimate than other forms of social media such as Twitter.

Our story is in the form of a 'status update' posted in October 2015 and selected comments on the status, which according to survey research often function as a form of emotional disclosure (Manago et al. 2012). While it has been suggested that social media such as Facebook is skewed towards the disclosure of good news and positive impression management (Barash et al. 2010), it would be fair to acknowledge that this virtual space can also operate as a nexus of social support and, arguably, a site of kinship. Also of note is that in this written form

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of interaction people orient to the same contingencies that operate in spoken interaction, such as sustaining intersubjectivity and forming sequentially organized courses of action (Meredith and Stokoe 2014).

This particular status update happens to be a 'bad news' rather than a 'good news' story, which received 24 'Likes' and 45 comments and replies from 24 different friends, some of whom were geographically proximate, as well as distant. It takes the form of a reconstructed interaction between one of us, Liz, and the local lollipop woman (a person in the UK who assists school children with crossing roads by stopping traffic). The comments from friends that we have sequentially reproduced here are anonymized, although we have chosen to note explicitly the sexuality and gender of the commenters because these categories are pertinent for our interpretation of the story.

Facebook Status (*1 October 2015*)
Lollipop Woman: Is it your sister that takes her to school sometimes?
Me: No my wife.
Lollipop Woman: Ah! Right, right, right [clearly shocked and struggling to process this information].

Comments
Lesbian friend 1: At least you got sister. I have been mistaken for [wife's] mother on more than one occasion. Um—there's only 6 years between us and we're in our 30s!
Lesbian friend 2: *thud* as the penny drops.
Gay male friend 1: *Facepalm* Why am I not surprised.
Heterosexual female friend 1: sadly like what [Gay male friend 1] said x.
Lesbian friend 3: Awww she might have been embarrassed and felt rude she'd asked, I hope x.
Heterosexual male friend 1: Typical [Name of place] folk.
Heterosexual female friend 2: [Name of place] is pretty behind the rest of the world. She probably felt awkward. I hope the day gets better x.
Heterosexual female friend 3: Stupid woman!! X.
Gay male friend 2: Classic pick up line. She was just checking if you were single. Lolly was crackin' onto you. You've still got it.

Lesbian friend 4: I'm sure there's a paper to be written on this! First day in [Name of place] and a retail worker asked if [my wife] was my mother. As if that weren't bad enough, when we informed her that we were a couple she delighted in 'educating' us about the existence of Sydney Mardi Gras (as if we'd never heard of it) and informing us of where the venues for 'our type of people' are located in [Name of place]! Very cringe-worthy.

Bisexual female friend 1: Well you have at least helped to drag someone into the 21st century today Liz.

Heterosexual female friend 5: Educating one person at a time. Xx.

Heterosexual male friend 2: Sounds like Lolly lady was being friendly, got an answer she didn't expect and took a moment to process it. On the positive side, I'd be comforted that she is taking an interest in the children she crosses over the road. I doubt that her motivation for being there in all weathers is for personal reward.

Heterosexual female friend 6: Can you imagine the scenario that it was your sister and the lollipop lady said 'is that your wife that sometimes collects' especially as the probability is the least likely in the wider world. Don't think it's a blinkered view just probably thought it was the most likely relationship. Hey I'm a mother to a vast spectrum of children but I just smile and explain it away. I don't think it's rude just uneducated as one friend commented.

Liz [Reply]: Can you imagine a scenario when the likelihood of your husband being 'read' as your brother, or father, or son by strangers was more likely than him being assumed to be your husband? Not to mention him being assumed not to parent his child/ren when he's engaged in routine parenting work (ie school run).

Liz: Thanks for feedback y'all. Heteronormativity is systemic rather than endemic for sure.

Lesbian friend 5: It gets so boring doesn't it.

Heterosexual female friend 7: My mum and her [female] friend [Name] live together—they both take [name of daughter] to school and sometimes collect her together—the number of people that seem to be fascinated about their relationship amazed me!! What does it really matter :/ xxx.

Heterosexual female friend 6: I don't think it really matters to folk I'm of the opinion of [Name Heterosexual male friend 2], she was taking an interest in [Name of child]'s family and gain comfort from that.

Liz: I'm all for folks communicating with each other, this type of scenario typically runs off a lot more smoothly with open questions!

Heterosexual male friend 3: Just had to Google 'Heteronormativity' and am glad to have extended my tiny vocabulary a little bit…now I need to find the [Name of language] translation before I can use it. Damn!

Lesbian friend 6: We were asked a similar question at ante natal class. I refrained from asking if their husbands were their brothers.

Lesbian friend 7: We used to get, is that your mother? Double insult!

Gay male friend 3: We had a similar scenario with the dog 'is that your brother I saw with him the other week?' When I said 'no my partner' she still didn't understand. Finally, when I said 'he's my boyfriend' the woman looked horrified!

Heterosexual female friend 8: Well you educated her!!

Lesbian friend 2: Having reflected on this a bit, I find it quite interesting. We've not had 'sister' for a while though we have had a few clarifying questions from other parents on our daughter's school in our time. But I was thinking about the fact that sometimes I wonder if people like this lollipop lady are trying to open a door by asking these questions. For sure, she's operating within a heteronormative framework when she reads you as sisters. But also, living in a heteronormative/

sometimes homophobic society, I wonder if everyone has the confidence to ask the question 'is that your partner?' Certainly, as a lesbian, I've learned to approach others I think might be gay obliquely. I'll out myself, mention a partner, ask neutrally about their partner…. It's because I live with homophobia and I'm wary of inviting a homophobic response. Saying straight (ha!) out that you've taken someone to be gay would definitely be taken amiss in some quarters. Maybe this is what you mean by 'systemic' heteronormativity. Maybe the true test is how friendly she is tomorrow. Don't get me started on 'which one of you is the real mummy', or indeed the concept of real mummies….

Gay male friend 4: We have taken great strides, I know, but all around the sound of little steps still resonates. Slowly but surely people come to know us as the new 'normal'…

This Facebook sequence, while long, is worth reproducing almost in full because it highlights a number of issues that we have been concerned with throughout this book. To return to the three objects of critique that we detailed in Chapter 2, we can see how the original post, and many of the resultant comments, demonstrate how normative Western human kinship practices operate as a nodal point of power, that they do so through the normalization of a particular taken for granted order of things, and that they are always already framed through an assumption of genetic relatedness (which leads to, for example, one commenter noting the ubiquitous questioning of 'which one of you is the real mummy?').

In terms of the family as a nodal site of power and how that site of power is heteronormatively coded, this story is illuminating in a number of ways. First, the very fact of school-crossing monitors (colloquially, and alliteratively, gendered as 'lollipop ladies') serves to regulate families in particular ways. Although one commenter innocuously constructs the monitor as 'being friendly' and 'taking an interest in the children she crosses over the road' in hailing Liz, she nonetheless interpellates Liz into a particular mode of talking about family. The embedded heteronormative supposition of 'your sister' occasions a response necessitating a claim to the category of 'wife' in order to correct the heteronormative presumption. While, since March 2014 in England and Wales, the term 'wife' is, of course, legally and socially accurate, it is not an uncontested term (Peel 2015b). Specifically, the possessive 'my' brings into play the language of ownership, of which many have been critical with regard to the institution of marriage (Pateman 1984).

Further in regard to this story, we see a range of same gender intimate human relationships misperceived as either sibling ('is it your sister?', 'is that your brother?') or filial relationships ('mistaken for [wife's name] mother'; 'is that your mother?'), with the latter positioned as a more problematic indicator of heteronormativity because of the added ageist dimension. It is interesting to us that what constitutes a family proper and ageism intersect in this story, which speaks to the 'order of things' by highlighting where the boundaries of the 'order' lie. There is resonance here with the data that we discussed in Chapter 7 with respect to motherhood and dementia, wherein slippage between categories produces something akin to a horror arising when a person falls from the category mother, or a son falls into the category of boyfriend or husband to his mother. This horror, we would suggest, highlights the ways in which kinship relations that do not conform to a particular norm threaten the sanctity of Western human kinship practices, premised as they are on what are presumed to be immutable categories based on the injunction to exogamy.

Similarly, there is an implied disgust that a sister or a mother could be read as a partner, and that this would be much worse than a partner being read as a sister or a mother, exemplified in the comment 'can you imagine a scenario that it was your sister and the lollipop lady said "is that your wife that sometimes collects" especially as the probability is the least likely in the wider world'. The mundane heterosexism (Peel 2001) in the original interaction and some of the subsequent commentary becomes more clearly evident in these sorts of claims of exceptionalism and lack of probability. It is interesting to us how this persists despite the response about heterosexual fathers being presumed to be brothers. There is no uptake from the friend on the substance of this point, namely asking her to reflect on her own heterosexual privilege, which is, of course, an implicit manifestation of that very privilege. Rather, what we witness is that some of the commenters still try to insist that the lollipop woman was doing her best and meant no harm. We are enjoined to 'gain comfort' from their heteronormative commentary on the story, coupled with claims of 'what does it matter?' and 'I don't think it really matters to folk'. The affective ambivalence displayed here is especially interesting given that, in demonstrating their liberal humanistic defense of the lollipop woman's 'being friendly' or 'taking an interest', there is an implicit accusation directed to Liz of being over sensitive. Ironically, that the taken for granted order of things does, indeed, matter is revealed through claims that this disruption to a heteronormative representation of family does *not* matter.

Human exceptionalism is also at work in this story, most particularly through the analogous scenario with 'the dog'. The casual depersonification of a non-human animal here is a form of mundane human exceptionalism on par with the mundane heterosexism experienced by Liz. The use of 'the dog' in the above story would be hard to interpret as ironic, and if we compare directly to referring to human children as 'the girl' or 'the boy' or 'the child' in a similar scenario it would be unusual and, likely if children were referred to in such a way, it would be done in an ironic way. Without wanting to make too much of a comment or set of exchanges that were not centrally about non-human animals, we would nonetheless emphasize the mundane, everyday ways in which the language of kinship and the recognition of who constitutes kin can be seen in the particular turns of phrase employed. Our claim is not that the speaker may not consider an animal companion to be kin, but rather that commonly used expressions (such as 'the dog') again draw boundaries between who is considered a person, which has implications for who is offered a place within the realm of kinship.

The coda to this particular story comes in the form of an additional comment the next day. This comment builds on part of the second extended comment from Lesbian Friend 2 that posits '[m]aybe the true test is how friendly she is tomorrow', while directly inviting a second opinion or verification from a heterosexual friend who was physically co-present:

Liz [2 October]: I can report that lollipop woman was very friendly today, do you concur [Name Heterosexual Female Friend 9]?!
Heterosexual Female Friend 9: Yes extremely friendly, with oversize sweets for the kids! I am sure she doesn't dish out blue 'tongue dye' sweets to everyone! ☺
Liz: We're 'honoured' ☺

Although, as highlighted in the comment from Lesbian Friend 4, there is delicacy in managing a response to being corrected on a heterosexist kinship presumption and a risk of being heard as 'over-compensating', here the reported 'very friendly' (upgraded to 'extremely friendly') subsequent behaviour of the lollipop woman takes a different turn. At a basic level, this coda comment serves both to reposition the bad news story as a good news story via a positive outcome, and to model the benefits of challenging rather than colluding with heteronormative assumptions around family. (And as the original status conveys, it was a direct rather than an oblique or hedged initial challenge.) But in so doing the putative discord between heterosexual and non-heterosexual in the original post and the commenters in tone and emphasis is now realigned as a 'united front'. A united front whose common parental 'enemy' is now constituted as sugar (NHS Choices 2014), rather than heteronormativity (or 'rude[ness]', 'awkward[ness]', 'friend[liness]' or 'uneducated[ness]').

Taken both as a whole and as a series of exchanges, this final story exemplifies our point about 'kinship as technology', as we can see that this complex set of interchanges produces certain kinds of kinship as taken for granted facts (i.e. a husband never being misread as a brother or father), even though this experience shows that the categories under examination are interactionally flexible. To be clear, we are not suggesting that, at least in this case, a wife is a sister. Rather, our suggestion is that the descriptive categories available are flexible and not fixed. Not because of a lack of a claim to an external reality, but rather because kinship as a technology *produces* its categories as much as those categories then require constant work and reiteration. Yet we have also suggested that flexibility with regard to kinship categories is most often made salient when it pertains to families who are located outside the norm. The fact that the question from Liz as to whether a husband could be mistaken as a brother is not taken up suggests that within the broader framework of Western human kinship practices only certain categories are treated as logically flexible even if, as we have suggested throughout this book, all such categories are inherently flexible.

Final Thoughts on Norms, Criticality, and Personhood

In our view, the 'real life' story explored above is a useful way to close a book on the critical study of kinship, given the fact that both in it and through it kinship norms are simultaneously produced and challenged. Thus as Celia Kitzinger (2005) suggests in her analysis of the reproduction of heteronormativity in out-of-hours medical calls:

> It may be particularly important to target for analysis precisely those everyday interactions which seem unremarkable, where nothing special appears to be happening, because what is always happening on such occasions is the reproduction of the normal, taken-for-granted world, invisible because it is too familiar. […] In unravelling the social fabric of ordinary, everyday life, LGBT activists and researchers can make visible and challenge the mundane ways in which people—without deliberate intent—reproduce a world that socially excludes or marginalizes non-heterosexuals (p. 496).

While Kitzinger emphasizes the utility of focusing on the quotidian for 'LGBT activists and researchers', in this book we have emphasized the same utility with respect to those who seek to critically consider the operations of Western human kinship practices.

This point about our focus within this book, however, cannot go without comment. While we have been clear and careful in acknowledging that the critical kinship studies approach we have argued for focuses solely on Western notions of family form and kinship norms, it is important to consider what slips from view in this focus. The question of focus is an implicit problem for posthumanism more generally, as Julie Livingston and Jasbir Puar (2011) note:

> Much of posthumanist thought as well as animal studies suffers from an often unmarked Euro-American focus and through that, ironically, a philosophical resuscitation of the status of 'the human' as a transparent category (p. 5).

Without wishing to deny our complicity with the largely eurocentric focus of posthumanism, our intent in writing this book has been to challenge the assumed norm of the Western human subject by explicitly writing about this subject. As we noted in the first chapter, it would be problematic for us to claim to write about a posthumanist critical kinship studies from a place outside of our location as humans. Similarly, it would be problematic for us to claim to speak from a place outside our location within Westernized countries, and specifically as two white middle-class people. At the same time, however, our locations should not be taken as warranting eurocentrism. Instead, our focus on Western human kinship practices has sought to point out how such practices are rendered invisible precisely by mapping their contours, following the lead set by Marilyn Strathern (1992b) in her founding work on English kinship practices. This, however, is but a starting place. While others such as Carsten (2004) have already begun the work of mapping out a critical approach to kinship studies outside of the West, more of this work is required in order to realize fully a posthumanist approach to kinship.

By the same token, it is also important to consider what it means to append the word 'critical' to the study of kinship. Just as it is important for us to question the focus on Western human kinship practices, it is also important for us to question what precisely constitutes 'critical' scholarship, and what, by definition or by default, is positioned as the 'mainstream', 'normative', or 'traditional' framing that the 'critical' sits against? Sara Ahmed's (2004) critique of critical race and whiteness studies can be usefully considered in this regard. As Ahmed (2004) reminds us:

> I am myself very attached to being critical, which is after all what all forms of transformative politics will be doing, if they are to be transformative. […] But the word 'critical' does not mean the elimination of risk, and nor should it become just a description of what we are doing over here, as opposed to them, over there. […] The 'critical' in 'critical whiteness studies' cannot guarantee that it will have effects that are critical, in the sense of challenging relations of power that remain concealed as institutional norms or givens. Indeed, if the critical was used to describe the field, then we would become complicit with the transformation of education into an audit culture, into a culture that measures value through performance. […] the term 'critical' functions within the academy to differentiate between the good and the bad, the progressive and the conservative, where 'we' always line up with the former. The term 'critical' might even suggest the production of 'good knowledge' (para 8, para 10, para 39).

Therefore, as proponents of 'critical kinship studies', it is incumbent upon us to scrutinize our attachment to the term *critical* and to consider what effects, as well as ambitions, critical studies of kinship may have. We may be wary, too, of when 'critical' becomes (ironically and uncritically) synonymous with 'good', and so becomes an exclusionary umbrella that ultimately could function to discourage us from challenging our own thinking about Western human kinship practices. We would suggest, then, that any form of critical kinship studies must continue to push for ongoing reflectivity in both what kinship is and does, and also what critical is and means.

Building on our points above about the potential for eurocentrism, and having in this book focused on Western human kinship practices from the vantage point of two authors located within the West, it is important that in the future we turn to explore how kinship practices from outside the West can offer a critical lens through which to view the often unmarked Western subject (as does Carsten 2004, in her work), rather than simply resting on the idea that all we can do as people living in the West is look at ourselves. We are not the only people looking at us: others return the omnipotent eurocentric gaze. While it may be a useful starting place to look at the kinship practices with which we are most familiar and with which we are often complicit, there is the risk that this can become an act of solipsism. As Ahmed (2004) has clearly stated with regard to critical race and whiteness studies, turning towards oneself as a white person must involve simultaneously turning towards others. Such a reorientation of vantage points, then, when applied to the arguments we have outlined in this book, requires a posthumanist kinship studies to take into account how the (Western human) subject who sees is also an object who is seen: by other people, and by other animals.

Of course any practice of reorientation never has just one pivot point. Throughout this book we have emphasized multiple locations where Western human kinship practices as technologies stake a claim to indexing human personhood proper. By contrast, posthumanism, a central tenet of the form of kinship studies we have propounded throughout this book, looks at how and why claims to personhood are made, and through what comparisons and/or exclusions such claims to personhood are made. Kinship itself is one of those modes of exclusion, in terms of which humans and non-human animals 'count' as kin in Western cultural contexts generally and more local contexts specifically.

Importantly, however, our posthumanist claims about personhood are not simply aimed at extending the boundaries of inclusion (e.g. animals are family, friends can be family). Rather, posthumanist critical kinship studies entail interrogating *how* claims to kinship as claims to humanity are used as structuring logics that are inherently marginalizing. They are inherently marginalizing in that they require some form of acceptance of membership to categories premised on exclusion and bound by a very specific, increasingly neoliberal, mode of recognition of personhood. If we take neurotypicality as a case in point—which we discussed especially with respect to children with an autism diagnosis in Chapter 6 and motherhood and dementia in Chapter 7—it becomes clear how humanness is premised on neurotypicality (amongst other things). This suggests to us that any reorientation of vantage points cannot simply be one that considers how those outside the west view those of us located within the west. A critical reorientation must also involve how those marginalized *within* the West return the gaze enacted by normative claims to Western personhood.

Such an internal reorientation, of course, is not limited to the views of humans located within the West (or indeed outside of it). A posthumanist critical kinship studies must also involve consideration of the gaze of non-human animals. While drawing attention in Chapters 1 and 4 to the problematic ways in which non-human animals are both denied personhood and anthropomorphized, we have acknowledged the genuine loving kinship that many humans experience with other species. It is important to reiterate, then, that we are not discounting the meaning that can come from kinship with other animals from both sides of the fence. When we talk of 'Western human kinship practices' we need to make explicit that this does not mean that all we can explore are distinctly human experiences. Instead, it is about acknowledging that how we as humans 'know' non-human animals is always through a human lens, so how we understand animal kinship practices is always, inescapably, framed in that way. This does not mean, however, that we cannot learn from how we as humans are viewed by other animals, and it certainly does not mean that we cannot reflect upon how our gaze as human serves to marginalize other animals.

And, by the same token, we can push this thinking further by equally applying notions of sameness and difference to humans. The distinction between human animals and non-human animals is something of a fallacy, in that it makes it appear as though there is something inherently kinning about being part of the same species. By contrast, we would suggest that the illusion of sameness masks the very fact of difference. So, if we return to the first story that we discussed in this book, in *King & King & Family* notions of strangeness only arise when King Bertie and King Lee leave their home. That King Bertie and King Lee, and the stowaway Crown Kitty, explore the 'foreign land' obfuscates the fact that, rather than polarized notions of sameness and difference, ultimately all we have to work with is difference. In other words, just as King Bertie and King Lee claim to experience another country as 'foreign', so too are they 'foreign' to one another. While discourses of 'true love' make it appear as though two become one within a couple relationship, such discourses paper over the ways in which we are alienated from one another, even at the same time as our subjectivities are formed through a potentially shared discursive fold.

In a similar vein, we would emphasize the ways in which loss is a foundational aspect of kinship, as we introduced in Chapter 6. Kinship is implicitly and explicitly produced through and by different (typically often privileged and rather narrow) forms of connection—through presence rather than absence. By contrast, we would emphasize that loss and absence are fundamental to notions of what a critical kinship studies is and does. While we explored the subject of loss in Chapter 6 with respect to pregnancy and animal companion loss, parenting transgender children and autistic neuroatypicality and their impacts on a loss of idealized normative future, loss is also more foundational than this. In other words, as human beings we are all strangers, different and unknowable, and as such absence is as fundamental as presence.

To put the point above in a different way: loss is foundational to kinship because kinship is a fantasy—an illusion. Kinship is always premised on what it is not, and thus always at risk of becoming what it is not. If we take another example that we have discussed elsewhere (Riggs 2015), notions of finding our 'other half' neatly synthesizes both the notion of difference and ideas around loss and absence. The idea of needing an 'other half' to complete us is a prevailing discourse in Western societies, one through which many of us come to understand what it means to be intelligible, and through which our decisions about who we count as kin, who we view as romantic partners, and the importance we place upon romantic partners, are determined. And within this discourse there are binary notions of complementary differences combining to produce a 'same' whole, and also notions that a single human or a human with a diversity of human and non-human kin is, to an extent, lacking or suffering a loss. These are all matters that deserve ongoing consideration within the critical study of kinship.

To conclude, we return to the classic work of Schneider (1984), who draws our attention, again, to the inherently cultural nature of kinship:

> It is said that by smashing the atom we break it into its component parts and thus learn what those parts are and what they are made of. This may hold for atoms. But a smashed culture does not break up into its original parts. A culture which is chopped up with a Z-shaped instrument yields Z-shaped parts: a culture which is chopped up with tools called kinship, economics, politics, and religion yields those parts (p. 198).

Throughout this book we have sought to draw attention to some of the particular shaped instruments through which Western human kinship categories are 'chopped up'. In so doing, of course, we, too, have participated in particular modes of 'chopping', and as we have highlighted in this final chapter, there are many other modes that we have not attended to within this book. As an introduction to the field broadly encompassed by the descriptor 'critical kinship studies', however, we hope that the framework we have provided in this book offers a set of ideas and concepts from which additional instruments for examining kinship-as-culture may be developed.

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