

School of Social Sciences

**“It was another skin”:
The kitchen in 1950s Western Australia**

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Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university.

To the best of my knowledge and belief this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgement has been made.

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Abstract

This thesis examines the meanings of the kitchen to women who were wives, mothers, housewives and homemakers in the 1950s in Western Australia. It uses qualitative data collected from oral history interviews with migrant and Australian born women. Importantly, this thesis provides insight to women's everyday lives and analyses practices, such as cooking, ironing, budgeting, shopping, dishwashing and decorating which provide the women of my study with power. Central themes of this thesis include, examining the meaning of home and kitchen design, including discourses of efficiency and scientific management, decoration and consumption of appliances; analysing how practices of the kitchen inform women's multiple subjectivities; and the articulation and exercise of power throughout these practices.

This research examines dualistic knowledge which has devalued women's position in the kitchen. Such dualistic knowledge is the basis of Western philosophy and informs not only patriarchal discourses of domesticity, femininity and efficiency, but also dominant architectural and design theory. Feminist poststructuralist theory, standpoint theory and feminist architectural theory provide a means of exploring women's knowledge and space of the kitchen. Such theories break down binaries and emphasise differences in/between women and explicate their practices (including the use of space) which encourage multiple identities. The kitchen is explored to show how dominant discourses reinforce gendered notions of women's work in the kitchen; also how women actively engage with architecture and design shaping it to suit their social relations and work processes within the kitchen; and the architecture and design of the kitchen is analysed as a means of examining women's input to design and decoration. Importantly, the thesis examines points of resistance - where women perform their practices, design their kitchens and decorate them in ways that perhaps were not intended by the dominant discourses.

Thus, the thesis argues that women actively re/negotiate their embodied practices - they disrupt, subvert and conform to patriarchal discourses of the kitchen in order to articulate a valued position within the kitchen.

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Figure 1.0 Lina's 1950s kitchen
(Courtesy: Lina)

Chapter One

Introduction

Understanding our most intimate environments as texts or stories into which social and personal meaning are interwoven might simply be an interesting voyage. On the other hand, it might lead to new ways of ordering and designing domestic space (Rubbo 1981:41).

The sense of oneself as a distinct and valuable individual is tied not only to the sense of how one is perceived, but also to what one knows, especially to what one knows how to do (Bartky 1988:77).

The 1950s are often characterised as a static and monocultural period of unprecedented economic prosperity (Crowley 1960; Lees & Senyard 1987; Murphy & Smart 1997; Murphy 2000), as such a quiescent view of Australia as culturally backward, conservative and boring has been perpetuated by contemporary comedians such as Barry Humphries (Britain 1997).¹ Such images belie the less benign undercurrents that had a profound effect on political and social policy. Harvey (1993), writing about the United States in the 1950s, contends that “the engine that drove the rules was fear” (Harvey 1993:xii). This can also be said of Australia where there was fear of another Depression: the late 1940s and early 1950s were characterised by recession and particularly high inflation; fear of war - in 1950 Australian men were sent to the Korean War and many Australians believed this was the signal for a Third World War; and fear of the Cold War and the threat of communism (Lake 1994; Murphy 2000). Experiences in America in the same period encouraged a desire for a “self-contained domesticity, which held out ‘the promise of security in an insecure world’” (May 1988; Murphy 2000:21). It was a form of domesticity and security that relied on notions of the nuclear family and women’s central place, as wife, mother, housewife and homemaker.

[T]he notion that citizens' identity was located in the home meshed with the social trends of material life in the 1950s. It gave political value and dignity to the commitments and investments which ordinary citizens made during the period. In marriage rates, family formation, home-ownership rates and hire purchase commitments, Australians were making substantial investments – both material and emotional – in the suburban, home-owning, nuclear family which Menzies was articulating as the site of identity and of meaning (Murphy 1995a:230).

The importance of women to post-war life in Australia cannot be underestimated. By the middle years of the Second World War, women were being encouraged by magazines such as *The Australian Women's Weekly* to plan their lives after the war. This included advertisements for building materials bought with invested war bonds: "Soon we should be within sight of peace. The dreams you have had ... the plans you have made ... will be that much closer to reality. So *now* is the time to save and be ready when victory brings peace to build the home you've dreamed about" (Saunders & Evans 1992:190). During the war, stereotypical gender identities were disrupted, and women enlisted in the military or worked in traditionally male jobs in factories. Post-war planners however, feared that women with their newly acquired freedom - work and money - would not want to return to the home. In order for gender identities to be reinstated, that is, women as homemakers, men as breadwinners when the war was over, women were "forced" to leave their paid jobs (Lake 1994:275). For example, through an intense advertising campaign as witnessed in *The Australian Women's Weekly* (1944), women were encouraged to resume their pre-war familial duty. Women were enjoined by newspapers, *The West Australian*, magazines, such as *New Idea*, and the political ideologies of the Menzies government, to return to the home from the workplace, where it was believed women would be more truly fulfilled than as paid workers in the public sphere (Lake 1994; Sheridan 2002).

Hence, a woman's identities of wife-mother-housewife-homemaker which she was encouraged to resume in the post-World War II period were integral to the process of reconstruction. Many women in my study express the desire to become wives and mothers, believing it was their duty to care for husbands and children. However, the way women performed their identities was different to how they had practiced prior

¹ Humphries primarily uses the character Dame Edna Everage, a 1950s suburban housewife, to

to the war (Lake 1990). Specifically, the war had provided a schism in which it was possible for women to re/negotiate their identities in a way which had not previously been experienced or imagined (Lake 1990, 1994; see Chapters 4-7).

Migrant women's experiences are integral to understanding the 1950s kitchen in Western Australia. The post-war immigration policy of the Chifley Labor Government chiefly orchestrated by Arthur Calwell, Minister for Immigration, aimed to populate Australia. From the years 1948 to 1966 the Western Australian population rose from 566,000 to 862,685. This growth rate far exceeded other Australian states, with the increase in population in Western Australia due partly to the State and Federal Government's immigration programs. Economists and demographers had advised the Government that mass immigration was the only way Australia could subvert the declining birth rate and initiate economic growth and prosperity (Lack & Templeton 1995). In Western Australia migration accounted for an increase in population of approximately 70,000 people mostly assisted by the Federal Government (Crowley 1960; Crowley & de Garis 1969:93). Those who migrated were from continental Europe and Great Britain (the numbers being approximately half for each group).

This thesis is about gender and domestic space, in particular, the kitchen in the 1950s. For many women the kitchen is regarded as a place of work, but as Rubbo (1981:41) suggests it can also be regarded as an "intimate environment" which tells many stories not only about the personal lives of the people who use it, but also the larger societal picture of the construction and maintenance of social life. Set in Western Australia,² this research examines the meanings of the kitchen to women, and articulates the ways in which the kitchen has maintained and reinforced specific discourses about women's identities in the home and society. The research builds on my earlier textual analysis (Supski 1996) which examined the kitchen as a gendered space throughout the 20th century, in Great Britain, The United States and Australia, and argued that the design of the kitchen enforces and reinforces women's perceived position in the home and society. In this thesis I examine women's marginalisation in Western architecture. Specifically, women and women's bodies have traditionally

articulate a satirical view of society in 1950s Australia.

² Mainly the suburban areas of its capital city, Perth, although rural experiences are also addressed.

been marginalised within architecture and design, however the women of my study articulate the ways in which they actively re/negotiated dominant discourses of architecture and design to which they were subjected in the 1950s (Agrest 1991; Agrest, Conway & Weisman 1996; Colomina 1992; Grosz 1994, 1995; McLeod 1996; Partington 1989, 1993; Weisman 1992; see Chapters 2 and 4).

The apparent conservatism of the 1950s created by political stability and economic prosperity is reflected in the attitudes towards women and their identity within the family and society (Lees & Senyard 1987). The 1950s witnessed a post-war marriage boom, where simultaneously the proportion of women getting married had increased whilst, the average age of women marrying for the first time, had dropped. As such this demographic trend accounts for the so-called 'baby boom' (Murphy 1995a:230). Significantly, there was a dramatic rise in home ownership: in 1947, 53% of Australians had their own home and by 1961 this number had increased to 70%. Further, Murphy (1995a) contends that "by the end of the 1950s, home ownership had been extended deep into the working class" (Murphy 1995a:231). This is an important point, many Australians (whether they were working class or middle class) believed in the 'middle class' ideal of owning their own home and the political rhetoric of the time further entrenched this ideal (Murphy 2000:6; see Chapter 4). In particular, the policies of Menzies and the Liberal government, such as Child Endowment (paid directly to mothers) and tax concessions to breadwinners, appealed to both classes and women (Lees & Senyard 1987; Murphy 2000). Thus, Murphy (1995a) suggests that Menzies addressed the middle class (and I contend the upwardly social mobile working class) because they had 'a stake in the country' through their homes and therefore this:

connected public discourse and liberal ideology with people's lived experience, in ways that particularly appealed to women, or at least to those women who had responded to the post-war process enjoining them to see themselves as wives and mothers in the private sphere, rather than as workers or citizens in the public sphere (Murphy 1995a:229).

Specifically, Menzies' rhetoric was centred on identifying the family and the private sphere as separate to the impersonal and rational public sphere that he feared was becoming increasingly influenced by trade unions and communism. Brett (1992)

links Menzies policies with the traditional role of women and the family as the central 'antidote' to this. She states: "In elaborating the virtues of the home as the centre of non-labour ideology, Menzies was elaborating the virtues of women's traditional social space" (Brett 1992:56). Hence, aspects of femininity, such as marriage and motherhood, and domesticity were the social and cultural markers that informed women's identities. The public/private split of men as breadwinners and women as homemakers was informed by a gendered division of labour that was inherent to women's identities as wife, mother, housewife and homemaker which the women in my study embraced (see Chapter 2). But significantly, their daily performativity in which these identities were negotiated and renegotiated is central to this thesis (see Chapters 4-7).

In this thesis the kitchen in the 1950s is the site of 'action'. I examine how women re/negotiated their identities of wife, mother, housewife and homemaker in the space of the kitchen. It examines cross-culturally the lives of women, addressing their class, race, ethnicity and age differences. This research focuses on the similarities in the cross-cultural differences between women socialised into the 'feminised' identities which they learn to perform from a young age (Bottomley 1994; Kalantzis 1990; Nicholson 1994). Identity in the kitchen is re/constructed through work practice - women conform, disrupt and resist dominant discourses which seek to define their identities (see Chapters 2, 4-7). I argue the kitchen is a place of productive power for women (Foucault 1978). Further, women's pivotal position in the family and society is central to an understanding of the impact of gender on architecture and design in the 1950s kitchen (Wright 1987; see Chapter 4).

This study acknowledges that women's lives are performed within patriarchal culture in which the kitchen is a place of oppression and subordination for women. Many feminist theorists and sociologists (Baxter 1993; Dempsey 1997; Friedan 1963; Game & Pringle 1983; Matthews 1984; Oakley 1985) have argued that the home/kitchen places women in a subordinate position within society, for example, because their work is not regarded as work because it is unpaid. Moreover, feminist architectural theorists argue that the public/private distinction in which women are aligned with the domestic sphere and men aligned with the work/public sphere are built into housing design (Bowlby 1990; Boys 1990; Craik 1989; Hunt 1989;

Madigan & Munro 1991; Saegert 1980). But it is the aim of this thesis to examine the practices of women in the kitchen that disturb such binarised knowledge and afford women power. Following Bartky (1988) it is my intention to examine, analyse and revalue women's skills, practices and knowledge of the kitchen.

The experiences of migrant women are central to this research. Immigration was not a neutral term in 1950s Australia and those that were desired by the Australian government had to be able to easily assimilate into the 'Australian way of life' (Castles, Kalantzis, Cope & Morrissey 1992). The Australian government regarded the migrants³ who arrived in the post-World War II influx as an amorphous group who were primarily to assimilate into the Australian 'way of life' (Castles et.al. 1992; Crowley 1960: 371; White 1981). Castles et.al. (1992) argue that immigration has always been circumscribed by racism - in particular, the 1901 Immigration Restriction Act known as the White Australia policy.⁴ The policy of assimilation and its inherent racist discourse features strongly in the women's stories of arrival and home-making (see Chapters 4-5). Assimilation to 'Australian' culture necessarily implied an 'othering' of migrants' cultures - that is, 'Australian' culture was regarded as superior to all other cultures. Castles et.al. (1992) contend that the "doctrine of assimilation, so vigorously espoused by the government of the period, did much to reinforce both the sense of homogeneity and the sense of superiority of the anglophone population" (Castles et.al. 1992:45). Assimilationist discourse present in the 1950s encouraged the denial of traditions and language from migrants country of origin (Castles et.al. 1986; Johnston 1979:39; Peters 2001; see Chapters 4 and 6).

Lange (2000) argues that the immigration policy post-World War II maintained the dualistic divide between men as breadwinners and women as homemakers among migrant women in Western Australia:

Since 1946, most non-English speaking background women have come to Australia as dependents of men and they have been expected to be the emotional anchor for their husbands and children. However, this does not

³ It is not my intention within this thesis to also regard migrants as an amorphous group, specificity of language, country of origin and culture will be maintained, however in some instances for brevity the use of 'migrants' or 'migrant women' will be used.

⁴ This Act primarily prevented non-European immigrants from settling in Australia - the desired group were white men of British origin. I use 'men' intentionally, see following discussion.

always reflect the role women played in their home country nor the role they subsequently play in Australia (Lange 2000:5).

The migrant women of my study, like Australian-born, also have the opportunity to renegotiate their identities. As Lange (2000:6) suggests, and the women in my study verify, opportunities such as paid labour outside the home were presented to them which may not have necessarily occurred in their home countries. Many women in my study who were displaced persons had the opportunity to establish their own homes for the first time (see Chapter 4).

The experiences of women and their kitchens have effectively been neglected in Western Australian history. Garrick (1980) shows the general invisibility of women in Western Australian history, and feminist historians, Dixson (1985) and Grimshaw, Lake, McGrath & Quartly (1994) also discuss the omission of women from Australian historical accounts. Dixson (1984) argues, “(u)nhappily the concept of woman has to be virtually uncovered, disinterred, inferred, teased out, from the received versions of our national identity” (Dixson 1984:57). Hence, the Australian ‘way of life’ which migrant women were expected to assimilate to, and Australian born women were supposedly represented by, was one in which women were invisible. It was characterised by a masculine ideal embodied in cliches such as “the muscular sunburnt bushman ... the Digger, who proved himself at Gallipoli, the Bondi lifesaver” - women were not included in any of the imagery of Australian identity - “(b)eing Australian has always been defined in sexist terms” (Castles et.al 1992:7). In the 1950s this masculinist ‘Australian way of life’ was defined in terms of the suburban dream with a house, a Holden and a hobby - again White (1981) argues women did not feature in this picture (Castles et.al 1992; Lees & Senyard 1987; Peters 2001; White 1981). Lake (1994) contends that “the 1950s seemed to be a man’s decade ... [and that] femininity was by default, cast as unauthentic and un-Australian” (Lake 1994:274-75). Further, Castles et.al (1992) suggest that the image of the Australian was portrayed as a working class man: “He was a ‘battler’ ... It was a populist image that fitted into the concept of Australia as a ‘workers’ paradise’ where there were no aristocrats, where there was no entrenched privilege, where everyone had a chance of success” (Castles et.al 1992:8). Even though the ‘battler’ image is based on inequalities of sex and race, for the women in my study it is an

image that is portrayed and reworked in their stories, as they ‘battled’ to provide for their families.⁵ Moreover, as the women in my study articulate, the ‘suburban dream’ is only possible through their primarily unpaid labour in the home as wives, mothers, housewives and homemakers. Hence, this study addresses women’s invisibility in Western Australian history and Australian history in general. The foregrounding of women’s experiences in the 1950s kitchen brings women’s lives from the margins to the centre. In doing so, it provides a textured account of the 1950s in which women’s daily lives are explored and discussed in their minutiae.

Hence, homes and kitchens are important to the women in my study. By the 1950s the avant-garde ideas of the early years of modernism⁶ were beginning to be accepted into everyday life and into Western Australian domestic housing (Boyd 1952; Brine 1995; London 1997; London & Richards 1997; Molyneux 1979). Modernism in architecture was regarded as a style with guiding principles of simple, streamlined features; no reference to previous architectural periods; lack of ornamentation and repetitive architectural features (Archer 1996:198). Before the Second World War, modern architecture had its theoretical base in a discourse of ‘form follows function’. This discourse had the greatest impact on women in my study, effecting a streamlining of the kitchen into a one-worker space (see Chapters 4-5). The influence of the ideas of modernism are discernible within Western Australia architecture for the women in my study who were owner-builders or renovated

⁵ Australia has a rich history of ‘strong’ women (now unearthed by feminist historians, sociologists, etc) who consistently fought for their beliefs. For example, Enid Lyons in 1949 pressured Menzies for the introduction of Child Endowment for the first born child. When Lyons entered Federal Parliament in 1943 she was 46 years old, a widow and the mother of 12 children. Importantly, in her first address to the House of Representatives she argued, “that the perspective on public affairs offered by a location in the home and family was just as important and valid as that afforded by masculine domains” (Lake 1994:263). Also elected in the same year was Dorothy Tangney, a West Australian woman.

⁶ In Western Australia, modernist housing reflected a more practical approach to the ideas of architecture than the avant-garde ideas of the early years of modernism found in Europe (London 1997). Modernist architecture that developed in Perth in the 1950s “... became technically inventive, responsive to the climate and the site, economy-based, and construction-oriented” (London 1997:7). This was particularly important as climatic considerations had previously not been fully considered. Large expanses of glass and flat roofs were used extensively in modernist housing; if the house was incorrectly sited the house in summer would be oppressively hot and in winter expensive to heat. The architects designing modern houses in Perth however were far more responsive to the Western Australian climate and designed houses accordingly (London & Richards 1997). It should be noted that architect designed and built houses were an anomaly in this study. Most houses were constructed by the women and their families as owner-builders or by contract builders.

existing houses,⁷ but the ideas are more often exercised through other avenues such as colour, materials, furniture and interior design than through housing architecture (see Chapter 4).

This thesis is also about a personal journey for me as a feminist researcher and a mother. The kitchen represents the centre of home, socially and spatially. It is the place where I am most likely to find my own mother and could always find both of my grandmothers; it is not, however, the place where my own daughter is likely to find me. Yet like Marcus (1995) the idea of home and what constitutes home are often formed in childhood and hence my childhood memories spent with my grandmothers have brought me to this place. They were always preparing and cooking food, cleaning, socialising, stoking the fire with wood, ironing in the kitchen, washing the dishes, and just 'being there' for their families.

The stories of the women's lives in the kitchen in the 1950s as told in this thesis are significant because they enhance the picture of women's lives in Australian society. The knowledge that women possess has long been devalued, and it is only through the following examination of the minutiae of daily life that an understanding and revaluation of women's lives and knowledge can be gained.

Chapter 2 outlines the theoretical framework that underpins this thesis, examining three narratives that are central to the exploration of the women's lives in the 1950s kitchen. Chapter 3 examines the methodology that frames this research. Oral history interviews, material culture such as newspapers, magazines and photographs allow a picture of the meanings of the kitchen to emerge.

The following four chapters examine the meanings of the kitchen to women and present a textured view of life in the 1950s kitchen. Chapter 4 explores the building, making and design of home, especially the kitchen, for migrant and Australian born women. It discusses the women's migration odyssey, including experiences of

⁷ Some writers (Pickett 1993) suggest that modernist architecture present in 1950s housing is made more complex by the convergence of the minimalism of modernist architecture with the housing and materials shortage (see Chapter 4).

migrating, their arrival and first impressions of Western Australia while living in migrant camps. It examines the 'building of home' for migrant and Australian born women despite the housing and materials shortage, and the myriad of ways that the women began to 'make' home in a foreign place. The relationship between architectural form (decoration) and function (design) and their gendered implications within the kitchen is also examined. Through the physical building of home an emotional making of home becomes apparent.

Chapter 5 examines the kitchen practices of ironing, dishwashing and shopping which provide the women of my study with power. The practices of ironing and dishwashing analyse, in particular, the multiple subjectivities women embody and the complexity of the gendered division of labour. Through shopping women socialise, acquire English language, and search for ingredients for traditional foods as they continue their journey of 'making home'. The knowledge, skill and expertise that is required to fulfil these practices and gain a proficient skill level are highly valued by women in my study. These work practices (and those below) infused with skill and knowledge, provide a basis for the revaluation of women's knowledge.

In Chapter 6 I analyse the importance of budgeting. It is in this area that women exercise power most visibly: their financial decision-making in the home is explicit. All women control their weekly housekeeping budget and in many cases, they control their family's finances. Moreover they have significant input into the decisions about household purchases such as washing machines, refrigerators and other appliances.

Foodmaking as a thoughtful practice is examined in Chapter 7. Following Heldke (1992a) I argue that the dualistic split between theory and practice is most obviously diminished in the practice of cooking. The women's early socialisation and learning to cook after marriage shows a professed 'natural' embodiment of cooking. A layering of knowledge becomes apparent however in the women's stories when their embodiment of cooking disrupts the dualism between theory/mind and practice/body. Hence I argue that there is philosophical significance in foodmaking.

In Chapter 8 I explore the conclusions to the thesis. I now turn to discussion of the theoretical framework.



Woman designed

***This kitchen is
FUN to work in.***

Kitchen planning in the modern house, has two main objectives: function and decoration. The first, when used throughout eliminates unnecessary steps; the second can make the room one of the most colourful in the house.

Intelligently planned, the kitchen illustrated confines its work area to a space where appliances and work surfaces are arranged in a sensible sequence. Strategically situated, it is accessible from the dining room via the built-in buffet, which acts as room divider, self-server and sideboard.

A stainless steel topped bench extends along the window wall, eliminating unnecessary cleaning. Storage units and appliances are ranged right along here, allowing easy accessibility and greater floor space. The suspended shelf acts as a barrier between the two rooms, but at the same time makes allowances for light and airiness.

Figure 2.0 Woman designed kitchen incorporates function and decoration
(*Australian House and Garden*, October 1954)

Chapter Two

Theoretical Framework

... theories, like recipes, are most usefully regarded as tools we use to do things (Heldke 1992b:256).

Introduction

The theoretical framework for this thesis comprises of standpoint theory, feminist poststructuralist theory⁸ and feminist architectural/design theory and following Heldke (1992b) I use these theories to explicate women's lives in the 1950s kitchen (Agrest 1991; Attfield 1989, 1995; Gibson-Graham 2000; McNay 1992; Partington 1989; Sawicki 1991; Smith 1999; Weedon 1987; Weisman 1992). Interwoven throughout it are three narratives - identity, power and gendered space - which structure the discussion of women's lives in the kitchen. Specifically, the women's stories tell the 'story' of identity, power and gendered space in the 1950s kitchen. This chapter and the following one on methodologies show the links between the feminist theories and epistemologies used as an overarching framework in this thesis.

Sociologically, the 1950s have been characterised as functionalist (Parsons & Bales 1956) with highly dualistic stereotypical roles outlined for women and men (homemaker/breadwinner). Functionalism is the ideological support on which patriarchal⁹ power, regarded as foundational to the maintenance of the family, is substantiated (Bessant & Watts 1999). Specific discourses reliant on patriarchal

⁸ Like Weedon (1987) I use the term feminist poststructuralism "to articulate ... a particular position and method which [is] ... useful for feminist practice. In this context, a theory is useful if it is able to address the questions of how social power is exercised and how social relations of gender, class and race might be transformed. This implies a concern with history" (Weedon 1987:20). Explained in further detail below.

⁹ Patriarchy in this thesis "refers to power relations in which women's interests are subordinated to the interests of men. These power relations take many forms, from the sexual division of labour and the social organization of procreation to the internalized norms of femininity by which we live. Patriarchal power rests on the social meanings given to biological sexual difference. In patriarchal

understandings of femininity,¹⁰ domesticity and efficiency impacted on women in the 1950s. Femininity, domesticity and efficiency are all discourses of modernism. Femininity is defined as:

The process of becoming a woman. [It] is the ... attempt to live up to the various standards of her society, the struggle to behave like and be a good woman according to her own and her society's standards. Because femininity is an idealised and illusory quality, and because it is composed of inconsistent and contradictory parts, its pursuit is doomed to failure (Matthews 1984:8).

The discourses of femininity, domesticity¹¹ and efficiency legitimated sexual differences, societal positionings and social structures, such as the gendered division of labour (Parsons & Bales 1956). For example, Sparke (1995) suggests: "The idea of the sexual division of labour which justified feminine domesticity in the 1950s was rooted in a fundamental belief, still informed by Darwinian ideas, in the difference between men and women" (Sparke 1995:169; cf Duruz 1994c). Specifically, the separation of home and economy, and women's idealised position in the home as nurturer, decorator and household manager, were renewed in the 1950s (Wright 1987). Moreover, Sparke (1995) argues:

The images of domesticity and femininity were deeply intertwined in the [1950s] in much the same way as they had been in the nineteenth century. The same need for social stability underpinned their alliance, and once again, the home was seen as refuge from the moral anarchy of the marketplace. The family as a site for human values was becoming increasingly central [and women were essential in maintaining them] (Sparke 1995:166).

Discourses of domesticity, femininity and efficiency were aimed at women, and infused societal expectations of women as the maintainers and carers of the family (Druz 1994c). Such a gendered division of labour is evident in the stories that the

discourse the nature and social role of women are defined in relation to a norm which is male" (Weedon 1987:2).

¹⁰ Following Matthews (1984) femininity is understood within this thesis as a socially constructed term. I use femininity as an explanatory tool to infer the imaginary attributes that women in the 1950s were expected to attain.

¹¹ Domesticity within this research refers to 19th century ideals of home and women's centrality in making it a 'haven' from the harsh demands of the emerging industrialised market economy. Sparke (1995) states that a 'Cult of Domesticity' existed in Britain and America which defined women as

women in my study tell about 1950s Western Australia. Being a 'good woman' and creating a 'good home' reinforces the ideal of femininity and domesticity: "(i)n our (sic) culture a "nice" home reflects a good homemaker, a good wife, a good mother and so, a good woman" (Loyd 1975:12). Moreover, that women are theorised as synonymous with the kitchen further entrenches ideals of women's place in the home (see below; Coward 1984; Weisman 1992).

Concomitant to femininity and domesticity women were supposed to care for their families and homes efficiently. The discourse of efficiency¹² also had its basis in 19th century ideals, espoused primarily by Catharine Beecher (1800-1878) who is best known as a domestic economist. Beecher produced a plethora of ideas and texts about the design and location of the kitchen (including her own significant contribution to kitchen layout) indicating how women could improve their domestic efficiency. Beecher (1841) used the metaphors of women as 'minister', referring to women's self-sacrifice that they make on behalf of the family; and 'skilled professional', their skill and knowledge used to maintain and manage the home, to assert women's authority in the kitchen (Weisman 1992:87). Christine Frederick (1913) further elaborated an argument for efficiency and women's pivotal role in the management of the home in the early 20th century. Frederick's ideas are particularly relevant because she concentrated on designing the kitchen as a one-worker space and it was these ideas that were incorporated into the modernist kitchen of the 1950s (see below; Strasser 1982).

In this chapter I provide a framework for analysing female subjectivity circumscribed by identities of wife, mother, housewife and homemaker and simultaneously actively shaped by the women of my study. These multiple subjectivities necessarily adhere to dominant patriarchal discourses such as femininity, domesticity and efficiency (discussed above). I argue however, that the women of my study exercise an understanding of these discourses which does not *always* comply with the dominant understanding. Women find ways of subverting and resisting the discourses which

"the personification of beauty in the home, and the chief beautifier of the domestic environment" (Sparke 1995:16-18). Explained in further detail below.

¹² Efficiency is defined within this thesis as a discourse with specific emphasis on scientific management of the kitchen (Hayden 1981; Rock, Torre & Wright 1980; Sparke 1995; Wajzman 1991). Explained in further detail below.

were meant to define who they were in the world. They show clearly that even though identities were prescribed in the 1950s kitchen, they performed these identities in ways that suited their own lives. Even though women's practices were consciously informed by discourses of femininity, domesticity and efficiency (see Chapters 4-7) there was not a rigid compliance with or subjugation to the discourses; the women of my study reinterpret and reappropriate them to reflect their lives. In this way, women's lives in the 1950s are testament to their own creativity, rather than to society's devaluation of their skills and knowledge.

One of my main theoretical aims in this thesis is to present feminist critiques and analyses of the discourses which circumscribed women's practices and emphasise their unique relationship to/with them. Specifically, within their performance, women show resistance in a reciprocal shaping of subjectivities. Women's identities are neither passively inscribed on their bodies; nor shaped wholly by their work practices in the kitchen. Rather women substantially shape the life of the kitchen and its practices. Through their lived experience of work in the kitchen they produce knowledge and practices which foster a different, rather than inferior, view of reality - one that is often at odds with the universal patriarchal view (cf Monk 1992). Importantly, such knowledges and practices that are produced and constructed at a particular site, such as the kitchen are regarded by Haraway (1988) as "situated knowledges". Following Braidotti (1994) and Haraway (1988) I argue situated knowledges produce 'situated subjectivities'. Braidotti (1994) suggests: "embodiment, that is, the situated nature of subjectivity, allows feminists to elaborate strategies of subversion of cultural codes" (Braidotti 1994:238). Women's location in the kitchen can challenge and produce subversion of patriarchal understandings of work and architecture/design, and in doing so, identity and power can be exercised.

Identity

Valuing women's bodies

Women's standpoint theory (Hartsock 1983, 1990; Smith 1999) acknowledges the dailiness of women's actual lives (Aptheker 1989). Hartsock (1983:285) uses Marx's argument in which "persons are active [and] that reality itself consists of

‘sensuous human activity, practice’” (see Marx’s *Theses on Feuerbach*, 1970:121) to argue for a feminist epistemological standpoint. Her emphasis on practical activity provides a way to structure material life (Hartsock 1983:288). Smith (1999) extends standpoint by showing how women engage in everyday practices and through such practice a reciprocal relationship is formed between theory and practice. The links between standpoint and feminist poststructuralism can be focused on an epistemological turn which uses women’s knowledge based on everyday practices to elaborate a discursive understanding of women’s lives in the kitchen. Hence, what I am suggesting is that standpoint provides an epistemological foundation to feminist poststructuralism, that is, standpoint is used as a means of grounding the discursive fluidity of feminist poststructuralism.

Through foregrounding women’s everyday lives and kitchen practices, the exercise of women’s power can be acknowledged. Standpoint and feminist poststructuralism emphasise the body as the terrain in which to begin to rethink women’s lives in ways that do not already regard them as inferior in a dualistic relational schema (see below). Standpoint and feminist poststructuralism (including feminist architectural/design theory) provides an ‘actual body’ in which the everyday practices of women are lived: “Women’s standpoint [is] a place to begin an inquiry into the social [as it] locates the knower in her body and as active in her work in relation to particular others” (Smith 1999:4). Further, feminist poststructuralism grounds women’s multiple subjectivities in her body. As such, feminist poststructuralism situates each body within an historical and cultural specificity, so that the categories of ‘woman’ and ‘feminine’ are replaced by plural and complex identities of women.

The Cartesian dualism of mind and body is powerful because it produces a relational dependence that favours the mind more highly than the body (Butler 1999). Standpoint theory, feminist poststructuralism and feminist architectural/design theories recognise the inherent flaws in the Cartesian dualism of mind/body that have placed women in a subordinate and oppressive relation (Agrest 1991; Grosz 1994,1995; Spain 1992; Weisman 1992).¹³ The dualism aligns the mind with ‘man’

¹³ Grosz (1994) states that, “Descartes, in short, succeeded in linking the mind/body opposition to the foundations of knowledge itself, a link which places the mind in a position of hierarchical superiority

and as such, 'man' is promoted as superior, rational, included and powerful, and located in the public sphere. Woman is aligned with the body and is regarded as inferior, emotional, excluded and powerless in the private sphere of the home (Grosz 1994).

Hence, dualistic thinking legitimates certain knowledges and the people who embody them, whilst excluding or marginalising others. An effect of the Cartesian dualism on women's lives, for example, is that the gendered division of labour necessarily marginalises women's practices, skills and knowledge because they are performed by women in the private sphere. The assigned practices of women such as maintaining the family, specifically, cooking, laundering, decorating, undertaking childcare and consumption are devalued (see below; Ehrenreich & English 1979; Lury 1996; Matthews 1984). By contrast, men's place of work being in the public sphere is recognised, legitimated and remunerated in society (Matthews 1984). The ideological import of the gendered division of labour, informed by the Cartesian dualism, supports discourses of femininity, domesticity and efficiency which pervade women's perceived identities within the family (Matthews 1984).

Historically, modernity and "its cultural ambassador, modernism" effected significant changes in the way women and men experienced the world. In modernism, women were defined in terms of their relation to men, as 'other' - their knowledge, skills and aesthetics were devalued (Huysen 1986; Sparke 1995). Importantly, Sparke (1995) argues that the 1950s were significant in terms of the effects of modernism, most notably in the gendered division between home and work, homemaker and breadwinner:

The 'separation of the spheres' relegated women to the world of domesticity, and all that went with life in that emotionally charged environment, dominated by morality, social aspiration, the exercise of taste and display, and kept men in the much more 'rational' world of work, progress, technology and utility (Sparke 1995:4).

over and above nature, including the nature of the body ... Dualism is the assumption that there are two distinct, mutually exclusive and mutually exhaustive substances, mind and body, each of which inhabits its own self-contained sphere" (Grosz 1994:6).

Feminist architectural/design theorists (Agrest 1991; Attfield 1989, 1995, 1997; Colomina 1992; Grosz 1994, 1995; Spain 1992; Weisman 1992) also link architecture, the body and the Cartesian dualism to show how women's experience and their bodies have been marginalised within traditional Western thought and architecture. Agrest (1991) examines the maleness of Western architectural thought also underpinned by the Cartesian dualism, and argues that women's bodies have been suppressed and replaced within architectural discourse (as in traditional Western philosophy). This is seen clearly in the analogy of the male body and building design (Agrest 1991:173); the male body was considered to be the perfect template for building:

[I]f a man be placed flat on his back, with his hands and feet extended, and a pair of compasses centered at his navel, the fingers and toes of his two hands and feet will touch the circumference of a circle ... so too a square figure may be found from it. For if we measure the distance from the soles of the feet to the top of the head, and then apply measure to the outstretched arms the breadth will be found to be the same as the height ... which are perfectly square (Vitruvius BC/1960:73; see Figure 2.1).

Agrest (1991) contends that women and women's bodies have been excluded from architectural discourse: "It is through her body ... that woman has been repressed in architecture, and in dealing with body and architecture the obvious question - what body? - is the key to the unveiling of many mysterious ideological fabrications" (Agrest 1991:173-174). Further, Weisman (1992:13) suggests that the cardinal points of the body (as used in the Vitruvian man) "structure social, [and] built space" - top, front and right signify male and superior; the bottom, back and left signify female and inferior. There is also a bias to the right hand side of the body, signifying male, which is controlled by the left hemisphere of the brain and considered to be "linear, logical, assertive and rational", traits most often associated with men (Weisman 1992:13). The left side of the body, controlled by the right hemisphere of the brain, signifying female is indicated by: "intuitive, holistic, perceptive and affective" traits and considered inferior in Western culture (Weisman 1992:13).

Dominant discourse aligns women's bodies with the private, domestic sphere: "The language of home-improvement in fact encourages an identification between

women's bodies and their homes; houses like women are, after all, called stylish, elegant and beautiful" (Coward 1984:63). Weisman (1992) also contends that architectural discourse inextricably connects women and their bodies through metaphors and similes to domestic architecture, for example, as "‘birthplace’, ‘cosynest’, ‘sheltering womb’, [and] ‘vessel for the soul’" (Weisman 1992:18; cf Ravetz 1984:8).

Attfield (1989) argues that men/machine/masculine is associated with the 'hard', functional areas of design, such as building/architecture and women/body/feminine is associated with the 'soft' areas of design, such as decoration (Attfield 1989). She analytically separates the dualisms of machine/body, masculine/feminine, function/form to show contradictions and ambiguities which have excluded and marginalised women from architecture/design. Such dualisms presuppose that women's place is in the kitchen:

The dominant conception prioritizes the machine (masculine) over the body (feminine). It assigns men to the determining, functional areas of design – science, technology, industrial production – and women to the private, domestic realm and to the 'soft', decorative fields of design. It places form in the feminine realm where its role is to reflect the imperatives of the 'real'. According to this kind of aesthetic theory then, form (female) follows function (male) (Attfield 1989:201).

Hence, the Cartesian dualism of mind/body and its extrapolation in the gendered division of labour extend into the decoration/design dualism. Sparke (1995) argues that 'taste'/decoration is aligned with women, and design with men and this has seen a trivialisation of women's design aesthetic.

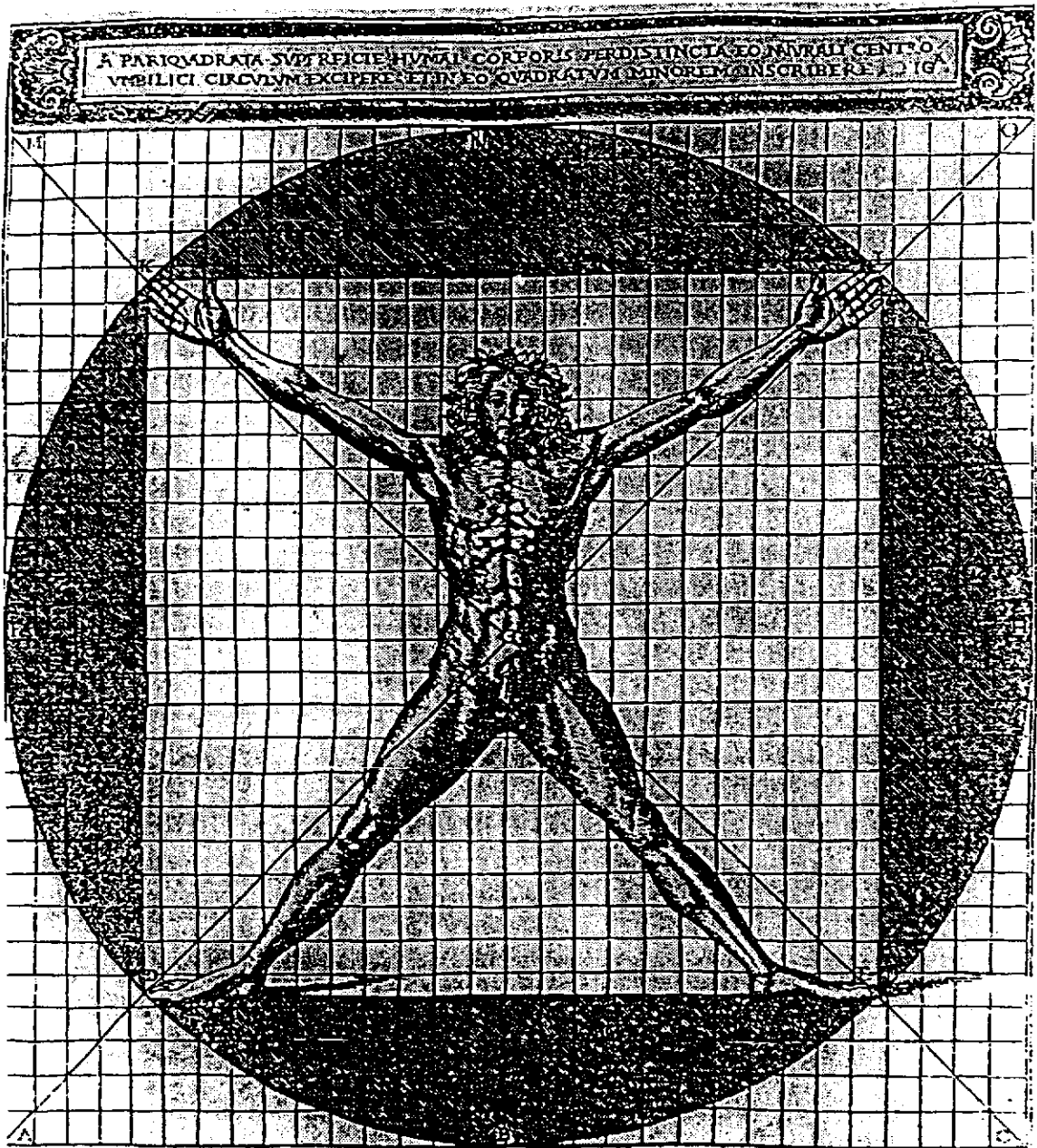


Figure 2.1 Vitruvian man - illustration by Cesariano (1611)
(Agrest 1991)

According to the humanist tradition, the individual in dualistic thinking is unified and their identity fixed and biologically determined (Weedon 1987:21). By contrast, feminist poststructuralist theory, standpoint theory and feminist architectural theory result in a social production of subjectivity and provide a means to reflect on women's lives and their lived reality. Feminist poststructuralism eschews biologically based and essentialist definitions of women which relegate women to reproduction and domesticity, and allows for identities/subjectivities of women that are multiple and dynamic (Braidotti 1994; Weedon 1987). Feminist poststructuralism offers an alternative to the humanist tradition of the 'individual' through an understanding of dynamic and multiple subjectivity. Weedon (1987) defines such subjectivity as "the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, her sense of herself and her way of understanding her relation to the world" (Weedon 1987:32). Subjectivity becomes central to an understanding of a feminist poststructuralism because it allows for, as Pulvirenti suggests (1997:34) following Weedon (1987), a "subject, created and recreated 'each time we think and speak'" (Weedon 1987:33).

As such feminist poststructuralism (including feminist architectural/design theory) links with standpoint because both acknowledge the specificity of the subject within/across discourses and locates women within the actualities of their everyday lives. Thus, Smith (1999:4) contends women's standpoint begins:

before the Cartesian shift that forgets the body. The body isn't forgotten; hence the actual local site of the body isn't forgotten. Inquiry starts with the knower who is actually located; she is active; she is at work; she is connected up with particular other people in various ways; she thinks, eats, sleeps, laughs, desires, sorrows, sings, curses, loves, just here; she reads here; she watches television ... Activities, feelings, and experiences hook her into extended social relations, linking her activities to others and in ways beyond her knowing ... *the standpoint of women never leaves the actual* (Smith 1999:4-5, my emphasis).

In Smith's (1999) powerful understanding of the body women are always already represented. Such an understanding is insightful for the following analysis of women's lives (see Chapter 3).

As with Smith's (1999) standpoint theory, feminist poststructuralist thought discounts the foundational dualism of mind/body and revalues the body - its materiality, actuality and importantly the theoretical insight the body provides. Such deconstruction of the mind/body dualism has been central to the feminist project in that it:

unpack[s] the concept of the stable and unified subject by demonstrating how the ideas of rationality and self-reflection, which underlie it, are based on the exclusion and repression of the bodily realm and all that which, by analogy, it is held to represent - desire, materiality, emotion, needs, and so on (McNay 1992:13).

The body becomes not only a revalued *theoretical* construct, but 'actual'. Smith (1999) suggests then that "women's standpoint as a place to begin locates the knower in her body, in a lived world in which both theory and practice go on, in which theory is itself a practice" (Smith 1999:7; see Chapter 7). In such an understanding, women's body/knowledge becomes revalued and women's everyday lived experience forms the basis for theory/knowledge. In particular, Grosz (1994) suggests that a "reconfiguration" of the body can produce a different view of subjectivity:

If subjectivity is no longer conceived in binarized or dualist terms, either as the combination of mental or conceptual with material or physical elements or as the harmonious, unified cohesion of mind and body, then perhaps other ways of understanding ... may be developed and explored which enable us to conceive of subjectivity in different terms than those provided by traditional philosophical and feminist understandings (Grosz 1994:vii).

Further, McNay (1992:28) contends that such a theory of the body places the body within a material and concrete notion of the discourses of femininity, domesticity and efficiency. The body is foregrounded as a means to understand "certain strategies of oppression" (McNay 1992:21). In effect, the body provides access to the lived experience of women and allows for what Adrienne Rich (1987) calls a "'politics of location' [which] means ... the thinking, the theoretical process, is not abstract, universalized, objective and detached, but rather that it is situated in the contingency of one's experience, and as such it is a necessarily *partial* exercise" (Braidotti 1994:237).

However, foregrounding the body does not suggest a reversal of the mind/body dualism (Gibson-Graham 2000; Grosz 1994; Smith 1999). As Gibson-Graham (2000) argue:

(O)ne of the problems of reversal is that it leaves the binary structure intact, with the hierarchy of valuation simply switched around. Another and more potent deconstructive strategy is to blur the boundaries between the terms, highlighting similarities on both sides of the divide, undermining the solidity and fixity of identity/presence, showing how the excluded 'other' is so embedded within the primary Identity that its distinctiveness is ultimately unsustainable (Gibson-Graham 2000:99).

The body then is not an "essentialistic notion, it is the site of intersection between the biological, the social, and the linguistic ... the body [is] an interface, a threshold, a field of intersecting forces where multiple codes are inscribed" (Braidotti 1994:238).

Hence, following Smith (1999), Grosz (1994; 1995) and Attfield (1989), I "take a dynamic view of [the kitchen], that is, one which holds that the meanings of objects, [the body, architecture and design] can change over time, then by the same token, 'woman' need not always signify 'oppressed subject'" (Attfield 1989:219; cf Bachelard 1969).

This thesis is not about a sentimentalised account of women's practices within the home. It acknowledges that women's work in the home is also a site of exploitation and oppression for women and as such their work has traditionally been devalued. But importantly, by examining the micro-level of women's practices and the use of space and decoration within the kitchen, it locates specific sites of knowledge and hence power there. Furthermore, whilst I argue in this thesis that architecture and design have traditionally followed the dualistic division between male/breadwinner/designer and female/homemaker/decorator, I provide examples of women in the 1950s kitchen who were also active in the design of the kitchen. The decoration however, does provide women with more opportunities to express their aesthetic taste. Further, I argue in both aspects - design and decoration - women may exercise power and resistance. In particular, the kitchen and its objects offer power (see Chapters 3-4 and 6):

A feminist perspective reveals just how relevant it is to consider how objects *form* subjectivity ... Therefore, it is vital to relate objects to subjects by placing the 'things' into the world of people, i.e. the context which gives them meaning. A distinction needs to be made, for the purposes of analysis, between the superimposed meaning - the image invented by the ad-man (sic) - and the way that people actually use objects to say things about themselves. The creation of images does not necessarily determine the meaning of their consumption by individual consumers (Attfield 1989:210).

Acknowledging the importance of women's bodies and knowledge gained through their daily practices and spatial relations forms a foundation to revaluing women's lives and experiences. Through a revaluation of the body and an emphasis on women's actuality and lived experiences this thesis focuses on understanding how women also gain a sense of power and achievement.

Power and Resistance

Understanding women's agency in this study relies on a feminist poststructuralist (McNay 1992; Weedon 1987) use of Foucault's (1978) pluralist definition of power. Reiger (1985) suggests that Foucault examines the operation of power and provides avenues for resistance to hegemonic power in relation to the modernisation of the Australian family (Reiger 1985:24). Feminist poststructuralists extend Foucault's argument to show that women like those in my study, as active agents, participate, shape and resist power in their daily, actual lives. As McNay (1992) suggests:

(T)he idea of a process of active self-fashioning, which lies at the heart of Foucault's theory of practices of the self, parallels, in certain respects, recent attempts ... to model the subjectivity of women in terms other than those of passive victims of patriarchy (McNay 1992:4).

The women in my research show differing levels of adherence and resistance to patriarchal power. Foucault's theory of power as productive, ubiquitous and operating at a micro-level (1978:94-5) has the possibility of explaining women's power. However, feminists also acknowledge limits to Foucault's work in relation to

power and resistance. For example, McNay (1992) argues that Foucault's early work (1977) on the body and subjectivity is monolithic:

[Foucault's] notion of the body is ... conceived essentially as a passive entity, upon which power stamps its own images. Such a conception of the body results in a problematic one-dimensional account of identity ... In terms of identity in general, the reduction of individuals to passive bodies permits no explanation of how individuals may act in an autonomous and creative fashion despite overarching social constraints (McNay 1992:12).

Such an understanding of power and the body is limiting because it does not allow for the dynamic quality of power (and identity) evident in the women's everyday lives.

Notwithstanding the above objections, feminist poststructuralists (Gibson-Graham 2000; McNay 1992; Sawicki 1991) have appropriated Foucauldian elements that are useful to promoting a feminist epistemology.

I ... valued his [Foucault's] analytic of power because it supported feminists' insights about the need to analyze the politics of personal relations and everyday life ... Foucault described how power grips us at the point where our desires and our very sense of the possibilities for self-definition are constituted (Sawicki 1991:10).

Hence, feminist poststructural theorists (McNay 1992; Sawicki 1991; Weedon 1987) understanding of the self and subjectivity highlights an important aspect of Foucault's notion of power. The productive notion of 'self-fashioning' acknowledges that women continually re/negotiate their subjectivity within the kitchen, in a never-ending active process. McNay (1992) suggests Foucault's later understanding of the self (1978) is informed by an interpretation of the agency/structure debate which he names 'the rule of double conditioning'. As such:

individual behaviour does not reflect, in a straightforward fashion, overarching ideologies and systems of belief ... Foucault suggests a more dynamic relationship between social structures and individuals ... The activities of social agents are necessarily situated and constrained, although the determinants of activity are multiple and contradictory and cannot be subsumed under the logic of a single monolithic system. At the same time, however, social structures are constituted by human agency, and also are the very medium of this constitution. The relationship between structure and

agency must be grasped as dynamic, not static; existing structures are reproduced by human agents who modify and change these structures to differing degrees as they are shaped by them (McNay 1992:59-60).

Women's lives consist of an actuality that is always active in the daily process of defining their subjectivities, even though women's lives operate within the constraints of patriarchal discourse (Smith 1999). But importantly, because women are active in negotiating their identities, they are not fixed, but fluid. As such, Sawicki (1991:8) believes that a "radically pluralist feminism" can be developed which allows for fluid, but contextualised subjectivities to emerge. Such a feminism:

operates with a relational and dynamic model of identity as constantly in formation in a hierarchical context of power relations at the microlevel of society. It recognizes plurality both within and between subjects ... It ... recognizes domination, but also represents the social field as a dynamic, multidimensional set of relationships containing possibilities for liberation as well as domination (Sawicki 1991:8-9).

Foucault (1978:100) argues that power and knowledge relations embedded in discourse, have a reciprocal nature: "power and knowledge directly imply one another ... there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations" (Foucault 1977: 27; McHoul & Grace 1993:59). It is because of this power/knowledge relationship that, I argue, women exercise power in the kitchen. Specifically, discourses of domesticity, femininity and efficiency which informed women's lives in the 1950s are not overdetermining, they become "an instrument and an effect of power" in the women's daily lives (Foucault 1978:101). The women in my study find ways of disrupting and exercising power within and beyond the limits of these discourses primarily through their practices in the kitchen. Their knowledge of kitchen practices even though constructed through the discourses of femininity, domesticity and efficiency, are performed in ways which are plural, dynamic and unique to the women who perform them.

Therefore, such a 'performance' of knowledge/power/identity also necessarily includes resistance, and as such femininity, domesticity and efficiency discourses become "a hindrance, a stumbling-block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy" (Foucault 1978:101).

Thus, importantly for this thesis, resistance is integral to women's practice of power. At the points which are "most rigid and intense", resistance becomes possible:

The category of resistance is closely linked, therefore, to the idea of power as productive, for Foucault, repression and resistance are not ontologically distinct, rather repression produces its own resistance: 'there are no relations of power without resistances; the latter are all the more real and effective because they are formed right at the point where relations of power are exercised' (McNay 1992:39; Foucault 1980:142).

In a twist that returns to itself, even though women are implicated and theorised in a repressive patriarchal discourse, it is at this very point that they resist and see themselves as having power. Within their specific practices of everyday life in the kitchen women resist, conform and disrupt discourses of domesticity, femininity and efficiency (see Chapters 4-7). Moreover, McNay (1992) argues:

within the oppressive constraints that operate around ideas of femininity, there are contradictions and instabilities which, at times, have provided women with a base from which to undermine the very system which constricts them (McNay 1992:42).

Hence, standpoint, feminist poststructuralism and feminist architecture/design theorists attempt to place women's everyday lives and experiences in the foreground of theory to show how women's actual and situated lives are powerful tools to develop theory. At this point standpoint and feminist poststructuralist theory become important in elaborating women's lives in a valued way. The women of my study see themselves as wives, mothers, housewives and homemakers and as such standpoint begins at this place where the women 'are'. The use of standpoint and feminist poststructuralism provides a concrete, actual subject.

Hence, in this research I use elements of Foucault, feminist poststructuralist theory and standpoint theory to articulate women's lives within the kitchen. Foucault's productive notion of power and resistance enables an elaboration of women's exercise of power in the kitchen. Architectural feminist theorists use and critique elements of Foucault's understanding of power and the body to show the limits of traditional male architectural theories (Agrest 1991; Grosz 1995; McLeod 1996).

Gendered Space

The discourses of domesticity, femininity and efficiency are interconnected in the architecture/design of the 1950s kitchen.¹⁴ Like feminist poststructuralist and standpoint theorists, architectural and design feminists (Acrest 1991; Attfield 1989; Attfield & Kirkham 1995; Boys 1984, 1990; Partington 1989; Spain 1992; Sparke 1995; Weisman 1992) analyse the ways in which women's bodies have been spatially excluded and marginalised and have also 'claimed' places of their own. These theorists' insights to women's position within architecture and design provide a multi-layered view of women's experience of the 1950s kitchen in which they exercise power. Below I discuss aspects of efficiency including scientific management, the influx of labour-saving devices to the home and the professionalisation of housework; and kitchen consumption. Efficiency and kitchen consumption show how women's identities in the kitchen in regards to design have been shaped, but I also show points of power and resistance (see Chapters 4-7).

Efficiency in the kitchen enhances the discourse of domesticity, and is integral to the gendered division of labour which facilitates women's development into better mothers, professional housewives, more sexually attractive wives and designer/decorators; implicit in these identities is that they could be achieved through 'correct' consumption (Blackburn 1992; Game & Pringle 1983; Lury 1996; Parsons & Bales 1956; Reiger 1985; Sparke 1995; Sheridan 2002). In the 1950s, the discourse of efficiency in the kitchen espoused by 'expert professionals', domestic science educators and household reformers, regarded women as pivotal to the maintenance of the home and family (Reiger 1985, 1987; Sparke 1995). The more efficient women could be in their work, by the use of labour-saving devices or scientific management principles applied to workflow patterns, the better they would be able to fulfill the discourses of femininity and domesticity and undertake their identities of wife, mother, housewife and homemaker.

¹⁴ Within this thesis architecture/design is theorised within a modernist understanding. The ideas of modernist architecture had been circulating in the world since, at least, the early 20th century (Jervis 1984:332-33), but did not significantly influence Western Australian architecture until post-World War Two, where the effects of the discourses of modernism, including efficiency and scientific management can be evidenced in kitchen design (London & Richards 1997; Molyneux 1979; see Chapter 1).

Scientific management of the kitchen which predates the 1950s can be traced to Catharine Beecher's writing (1841; 1869). Christine Frederick's (1913) studies however, in the early twentieth century were taken up by modernist architects and had a more significant impact on the home (Bogle 1994; Sparke 1995). Frederick (1913) applied the principles of Taylor & Emmerson's (1911) time management studies of factories, into the kitchen. Specifically, "(t)he model they [Taylor & Emmerson] aspired to was, in essence, a stereotypically masculine one rooted in professionalism, efficiency, order, science, technological progress and reason" (Sparke 1995:81). For example, Frederick (1913) calculated the number of steps a woman took in preparing a meal in an inefficient kitchen as opposed to the number of steps taken in a kitchen which applied the ideas of scientific management (see Figure 2.2).

The reduction in time wasted supposedly meant that women had more time to concentrate on other family responsibilities, such as, childcare and decoration. However, as Brine (1995), Reiger (1985) and Sparke (1995) argue, efficiency in and of the kitchen can be directly related to the decline of domestic servants. In Australia in the early twentieth century, the need for efficiency was desired by the middle-class housewife, because she now had to do the manual labour of the house and hence she had more work to do (Reiger 1985:52). However, the effects of efficiency were contradictory as women spent more time doing housework and had greater access to labour-saving appliances, but such appliances did not save labour or time (Cockburn 1992; 1997; Cowan 1983; Game & Pringle 1983; Wajcman 1991; Wajcman & Mackenzie 1985).

Christine Frederick's Efficient Kitchen

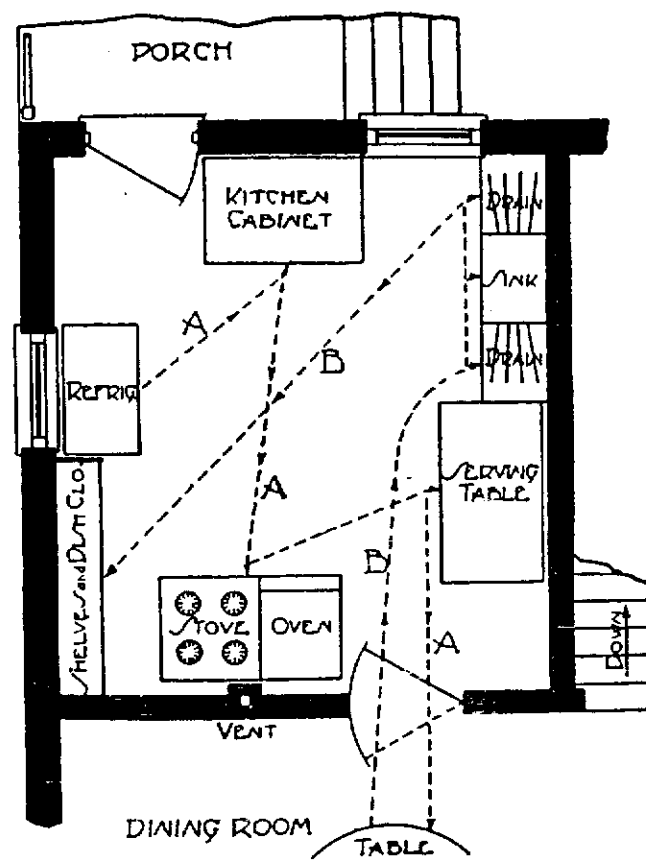
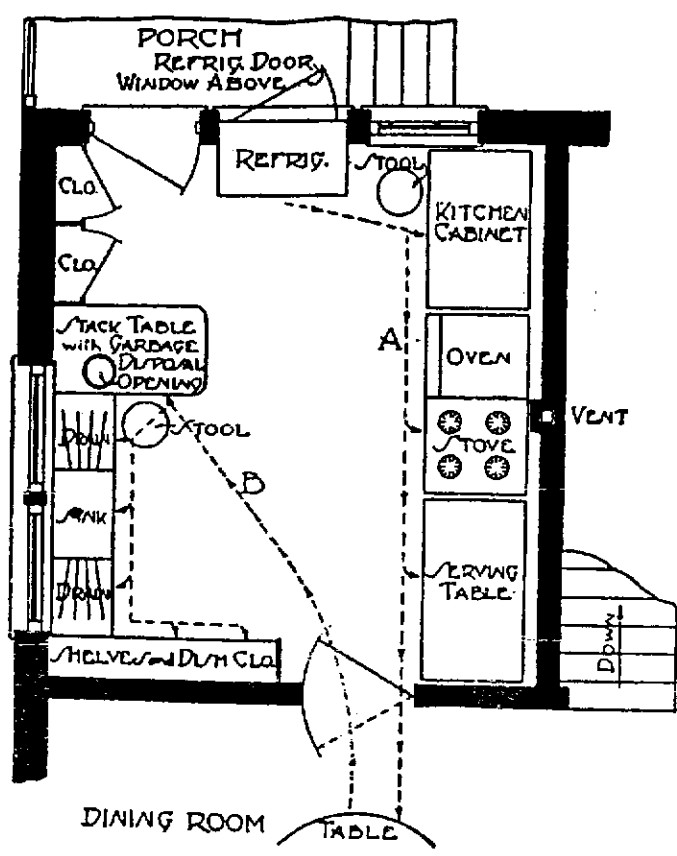


Figure 2.2 Christine Frederick's inefficient and efficient kitchen - *Household Engineering* (1920) (Strasser 1982:215)

The impact of such scientific management principles caused architectural changes in the kitchen in order to make it more 'efficient'. The kitchen's actual floor size was reduced and furniture could be designed and arranged differently. For example, in Australia the average 1950s kitchen size (namely, 7.5 square metres) was considerably smaller than kitchens pre-World War II (Cuffley 1993:76).¹⁵ By the 1950s the design of the kitchen had changed fundamentally - the idea of a streamlined, continuous kitchen was firmly entrenched in kitchen design (see Figure 2.3). Lupton & Miller (1992) point out that "(t)he verb *to streamline*, dating from 1913, means to design or construct with a streamline: to modernize, to organize, to make more efficient and simple" (Lupton & Miller 1992:65). Streamlining and the work triangle, that is, the arrangement of stove, sink and workbench in a triangular pattern, inherent principles of scientific management based on Frederick's and Taylor & Emerson's studies were already in place in 1950s Western Australia (see Figure 2.4).

It is this underlying principle which irrevocably changed the design of the kitchen and affected women's working lives there. Women's work in the kitchen was reduced to following a 'streamlined' work pattern. In particular, the reduction in the size of the kitchen in an attempt to make women more efficient, effectively withdrew the socialising aspect of the large pre-World War II kitchens, which were subsequently "stripped of all romance" (Archer 1996:178). However women in my study indicate points of disruption and resistance to streamlined work patterns (see Chapter 4).

¹⁵ There may also be other reasons, most significantly a shortage of building materials in the early 1950s may have contributed to the reduction in size. However, with the ideas of modernist architecture gaining credibility it can also be argued that there was some recognition of the ideals of functionality and austerity which were inherent in modernist design being incorporated into Australian domestic housing (Brine 1995; Pickett 1993).

By E. M. Bernard

Streamline

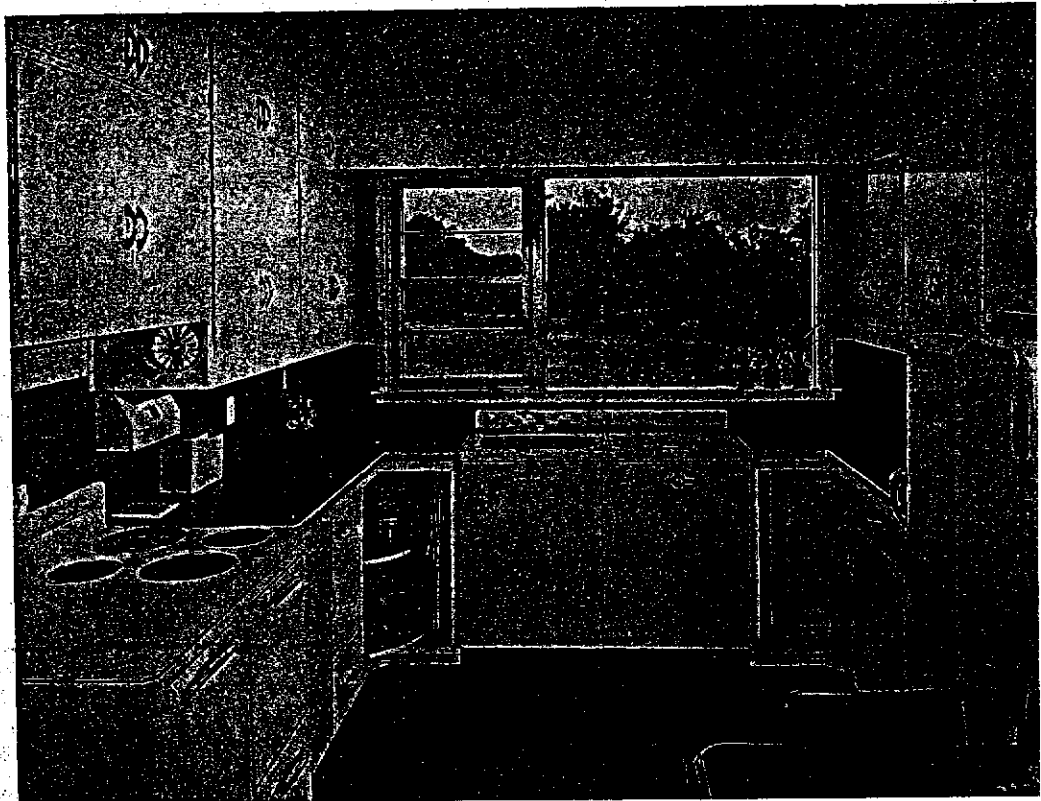
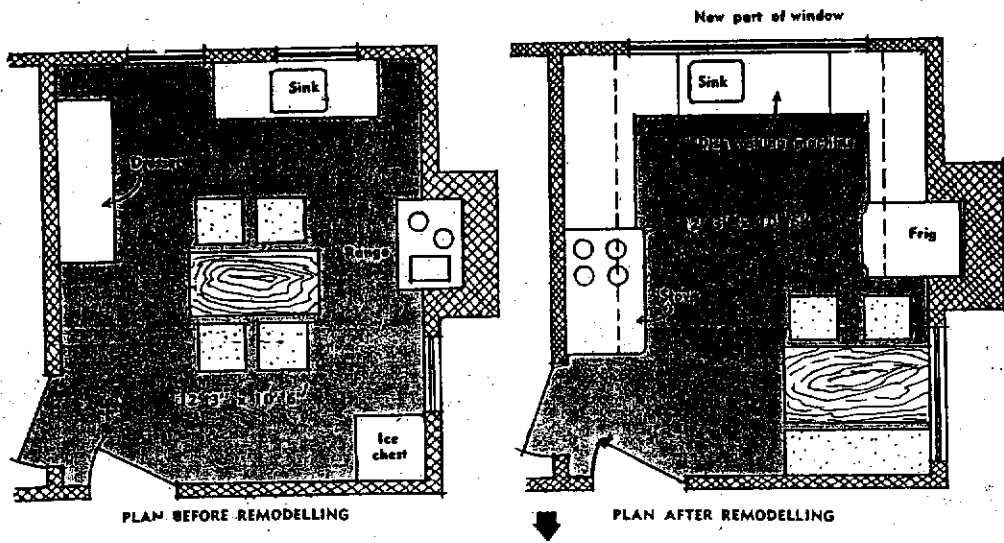


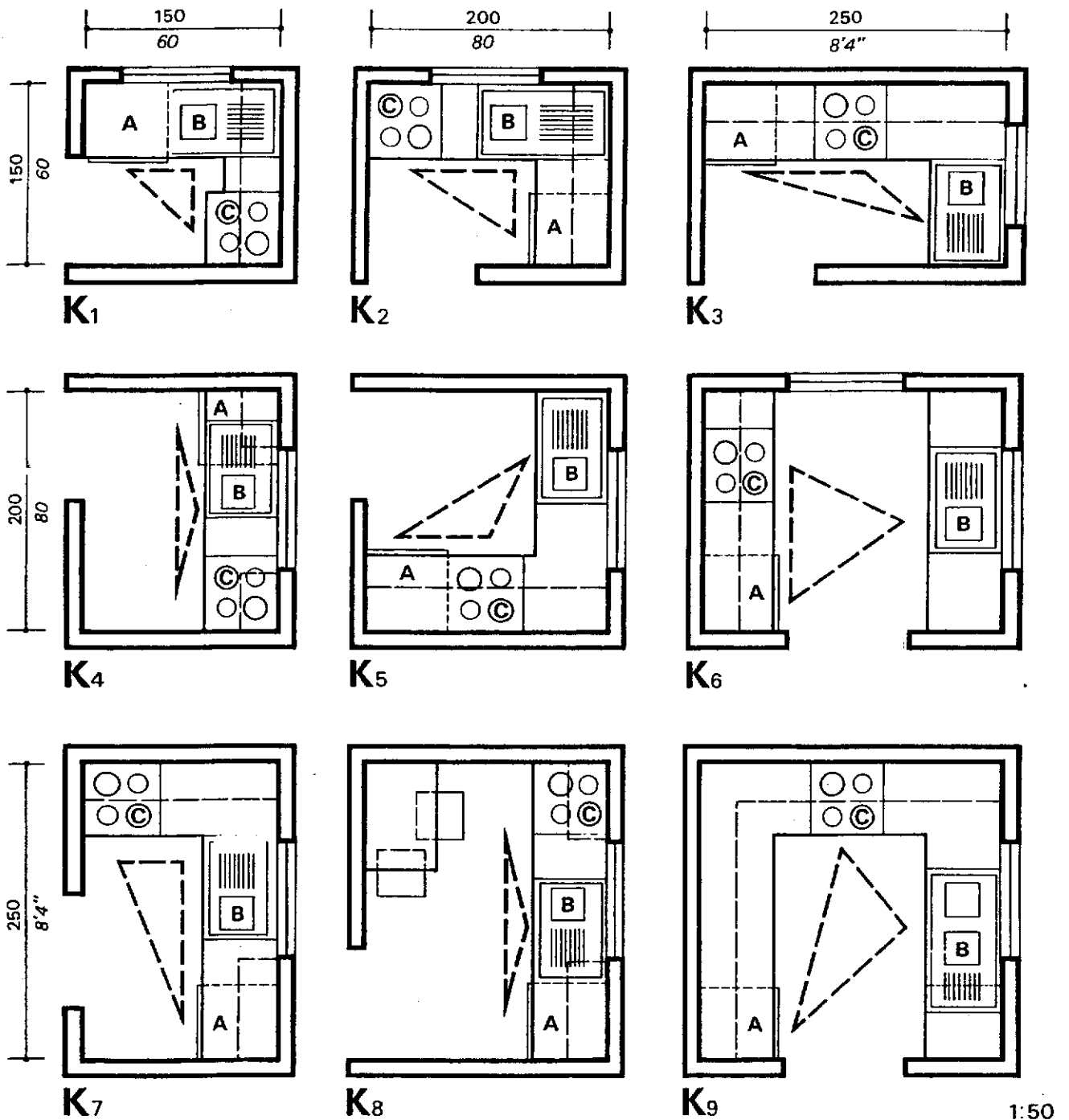
Figure 2.3 Streamlined kitchen - the central table is displaced (see Chapter 4)
(*Australian House and Garden*, October 1954)

Sparke (1995:81) argues that scientific management and efficiency were an attempt to masculinise the kitchen.¹⁶ The streamlining of the kitchen in terms of work-flow patterns, the alteration of floorplans, for example, the work triangle and continuous cupboards, pursued a 'form follows function' ideology, which as mentioned above, is based on masculinised principles (Attfield 1989). Moreover, streamlining to make the kitchen functional and efficient was associated with ideas of beauty, simplicity and architectural purity all of which were inherent to modernist architectural ideology (Jervis 1984).

Modernist desire for functionality was to be partly achieved through linking it with beauty, hygiene and cleanliness. Related to the desire for hygiene and cleanliness is the drive to remove from the kitchen all that is unhygienic, wasteful and inefficient. Lupton & Miller (1992) present an argument dealing with the obsessive need of modernists to eliminate all types of waste, particularly dirt, dust and time (cf Hoy 1995). Using an essay by Jones (1918) entitled 'Anal-Erotic Character Traits', in which he outlines a negative and positive reaction to human waste, Lupton & Miller (1992) relates cleanliness and hygiene to the modernist desire for architectural functionalism and efficiency:

[The negative] reaction to dirt is expressed in modern design's imperative for cleanliness and enclosure, as evidenced, for example, in continuous kitchen cabinets ... [and] seamless food packages. The modern obsession with dirt *affirms* filth even as it seeks to eradicate it: the attention to dust, ... cooking odors, and the innumerable germs hiding in the cracks and crevices of the home was a process of *objectification* as well as elimination (Lupton & Miller 1992:68, their emphasis; see Figure 2.5).

¹⁶ The ideas of scientific management and efficiency were based on principles traditionally associated with men, for example, technical rationality and science (Sparke 1995).



- The layouts shown are samples based on studies of furniture, appliances, storage and clearances for average residential kitchens.
 - Sizes vary from $2.25\text{m}^2/21\text{ft.}^2$ (e.g. studio, 1 person) to $12.25\text{m}^2/122\text{ft.}^2$ (4 bedroom house, 6–8 persons).
- Note: Long light dashes indicate high-level units over. Heavy long dashes indicate work flow.

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| A | Refrigerator. |
| B | Sink. |
| C | Stove. |
| K1, K2 | "L" shaped for 1–2 persons (minimum dimensions). |
| K3 | "L"-shaped for 1–2 persons. |
| K4 | Single wall for 1–2 persons (minimum dimensions). |
| K5 | "L"-shaped for 1–2 persons. |
| K6 | Parallel wall for 2–3 persons. |
| K7 | "L"-shaped for 1–2 persons. |
| K8 | Single wall for 1–2 persons. |
| K9 | "U"-shaped for 2–3 persons. |

Figure 2.4 Work triangles in different shaped kitchens
(Dixon 1990)

Domestic economy 'experts' in the public sphere were at every point intervening in the running of the home, primarily through insisting that women 'learn' to be efficient and functional, including how to be housewives, in the very space that was regarded as their 'natural' place (Reiger 1985; and see Chapters 4, 5 and 7). Hence, women's central position in achieving a clean and functional kitchen is in a contradictory position with the assumed separation of public and private spheres.

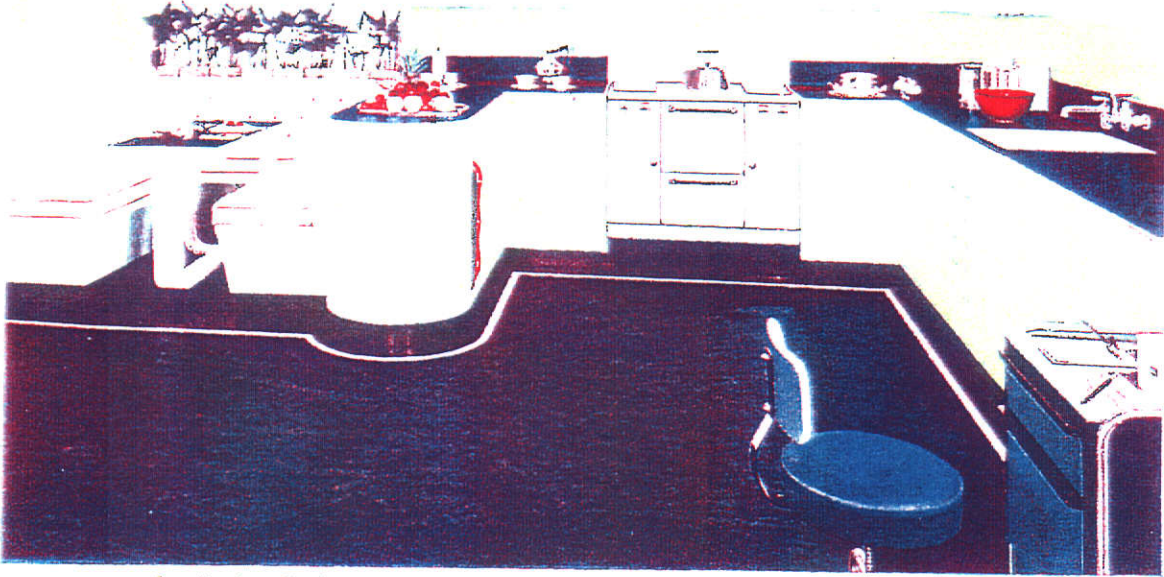
Scientific management and efficiency of the kitchen was supposedly assured through the influx of labour-saving devices, for example, gas and electric stoves, washing machines, floor polishers, vacuum cleaners, mixmasters and refrigerators. As indicated above, by the 1950s women's housework was intimately linked to their identities as wives, mothers, housewives and homemakers (Matthews 1984; Sparke 1995). Specifically, the discourses of femininity, domesticity and efficiency became entrenched primarily through popular culture and the government's desire for women to return to the home post-World War II (see Chapter 1). As Forty (1977) suggests, "the role of housewife is so closely identified with success as a woman in our society, that to show dissatisfaction with housework would, for most women, be a denial of their own femininity" (Forty 1977:286). Hence, there is an emotionalisation of women's housework - a labour of love - which changes the meaning of housework from being a job to a measurement of love for the family in the 1950s (Balbo 1987; Duruz 1994c; Game & Pringle 1983). Labour-saving devices were seen as a way of reducing women's household labour and releasing them from the seemingly endless drudgery of housework. If women did not consume the new household appliances and food technologies, such as processed foods, 'properly' they were perceived as neglecting their families; if the right products were not chosen the health or hygiene of the family could be at risk.

Therefore, the impact of labour-saving appliances and the inculcation of scientific management ideas into the kitchen induced a self-disciplining (Foucault 1980) effect on women: women were expected to incorporate these ideas and consume according to pressure placed upon them by their families and the government (Game & Pringle 1983; Lees & Senyard 1987; Partington 1989; see Chapter 5).



THE ARCHITECT SAID . . .—“and for the kitchen floor I have specified the new Adhesive Sealex Linoleum. It has a perfectly smooth surface with no cracks and crevices to catch dirt—exceptionally sanitary and easy to clean. And the factory-applied adhesive on the back gives a stronger, extra long-wearing installation.”

The modern, inlaid flooring
ADHESIVE
SEALEX LINOLEUM
beautiful . . . perfectly smooth and sanitary
. . . extra long-wearing



Everything that makes this modern kitchen beautiful makes it superlatively easy to clean, too. Built-in equipment, without legs to clean around. Washable walls of Sealex Wall.

Covering No. 1124. Above all, the new floor and counter tops of Adhesive Sealex Linoleum—smooth and sanitary, like a china plate! The pattern is New No. 47333.

Built for beauty and extra long life is this modern, inlaid floor—Adhesive Sealex Linoleum!

The perfect smoothness—which makes this linoleum so sanitary and easy to clean—also makes it specially wear-resisting.

Still more important, Adhesive Sealex Linoleum insures you a stronger, more durable installation. Why? It is the only inlaid linoleum with adhesive on the back! This protects you, automatically, from the use of inferior cements, which often permit linoleum to pull loose in a short time. And this special adhesive is unusually strong. It is applied at two factory-imposed pressures with absolute

evenness. So, every square inch of the linoleum grips your floor like a vise.

Then, too, Adhesive Sealex Linoleum is laid on any smooth, dry floor without felt lining. Naturally, this saves time. A floor is ready for use in 2 to 3 hours!—Saves money, too—up to 20% of the cost of a finished job.

See this patented⁸⁸ inlaid linoleum—with no adhesive back and beautiful, smooth patterns at your dealer's. Choose from the many smart designs. Not only new texture effects but gay tiles and richly marbledized velvones. (See today!)

Write for a sample and literature, Kenans, N. C., for our special new design. Or ordering book, “Building a Case for the Modern Floor.” 20 illustrations in full color show you many effects that may be achieved with Sealex Linoleum Floors. Many of these rooms also feature the modern treatment of wall treatment—Sealex Wall covering.



The modern Inlaid Linoleum made by Long-Term-Varn is the world's largest manufacturer of smooth surface floor-covering

Figure 2.5 Streamlined kitchen with beautiful, “sanitary” linoleum (Australian Home Beautiful, May 1951)

Appliances and furniture that women were encouraged to purchase, embodied the concepts of hygiene, efficiency and functionalism through combining ideas of colour (predominantly white) and streamlined design (Forty 1977; see Chapters 4-6). For example, Attfield (1989) argues that gender is inherent in design discourse including the design of certain kitchen appliances:

The role of design in forming our ideas about gender power relations often remains invisible, while at the same time it makes them concrete in the everyday world of material goods. 'Whitegoods' such as washing machines and electric cookers may reduce the heavy manual labour women perform and those designed by women may satisfy their needs better than those designed by men, but such goods are still manufactured with women in mind - the implicit assumption is that it is they who will be doing the bulk of the washing and cooking, not men - hence the division of labour by gender remains unaffected by product innovation and improvement (Attfield 1989:203).

Women use the space of the kitchen however, in a way that best suits their daily lives. The kitchen and its objects may be architecturally designed according to functionalist principles but women use the space of the kitchen efficiently for their actual lives (Bachelard 1969; Duruz 1994c). In this way they engage in resistance and disruption of efficiency and scientific management discourses. Parr (1999) provides the example of a 1950s Canadian domestic appliance designer who had little knowledge or desire to understand women's work routines in the kitchen:

(He) found women users too mercurial, or disingenuous, or hedged in by their relationships to the men in their lives, to provide reliable information about what they really wanted. An infrequent user of household appliances himself, he dismissed as retrograde instincts the labour patterns women had developed to manage their work in the kitchen (Parr 1999:210-211).

Further, Parr (1999) discussing stoves in post-war Canada presents the response of Dr JB Brodie, head of household science at the University of Toronto, to the desire to streamline the kitchen in accordance with scientific management principles: "She [Dr Brodie] made common cause with the housewives, arguing that plans to 'streamline' everything and have a working space around the kitchen at one level ... are evolved by those who do not work in a kitchen and we know that they are not efficient" (Parr 1999:213). In this example, it is the appearance of the stove, in terms

of streamlining, that is regarded as inappropriate - women wanted cooktops and ovens at waist level, for functionality and ease of use. In effect, a raised oven is functional for women because they do not have to bend down to use it, but in terms of design, a raised oven interferes with the streamlined aesthetic (see Chapter 7).

Women did not unquestioningly or passively accept the ideas of efficiency or of scientific management. Women contested, conformed and resisted the discourses of femininity, efficiency and domesticity (see Chapters 5-7). The complex and contradictory ways in which women in my study accepted and resisted the discourses were invested with power. For example, within the discourse of efficiency there are ambiguities. It is questionable who would participate in the increased leisure time that was supposedly created through an efficiently designed kitchen, because as sociologists of work (Burns 1994; Game & Pringle 1983) have shown, the saved time is used to undertake more work. The functional kitchen allowed women to work in a more efficient, logical and orderly manner, but also necessarily demanded that they work longer.

One of the most significant effects of efficiency on women's lives in the 1950s kitchen was the professionalisation of housework in which women were encouraged to adopt a more scientific approach to what they were supposed to be able to do 'naturally' (Reiger 1985). Promoting women's work to a professional status became "an argument for equality within the difference of strict gender roles" (Murphy 2000:43). One of the main reasons for the elevation of women's work in the home to the status of 'professional' was to lift it into the more valued 'productive' work of the public sphere. Furthermore, the domestic science movement in constructing this 'professional' role for women contributed to housework being "socially constructed as a job for women" (Baxter 1993:35). Such professionalisation was to be achieved not only by the acquisition of labour-saving devices, but importantly by the use of other new technologies, for example, in food preparation. Housework was now (in the 1950s) regarded as a job and as such women were expected to acquire labour-saving devices and use new technologies within their homes, for example, mass-produced foods. Mass production and the use of new products and technologies was profound in the 1950s, partly because of war reparation and also because it was the first time in two decades that such an abundance of goods and services were

available (Lees & Senyard 1987; Partington 1989). Women were identified as consumers and targeted by manufacturers and advertisers as responsible for family consumption.

Lees & Senyard (1987) link gender and consumption of domestic goods and services with the deskilling of housework. Furthermore, women were expected to make informed 'scientific' choices:

Women's patterns of buying had to be manipulated to make the switch to machine-made goods. New ... ovens appeared but mass production undermined the value of self-sufficiency: machine-made rather than hand-made became the hallmark of status in the decade [1950s]. For women, cooking up broth for baby or making preserves were a bad second to the standards of health advertisements for Heinz Baby Food or Edgell's Frozen Vegetables (Lees & Senyard 1987:76).

As food preparation became increasingly important, specifically through access to new nutrition information, appliances and gadgets, women's traditional knowledge was being lost. Effectively, women were faced with a contradiction about their identities: they were positioned as managers and professionals and were simultaneously being deskilled through using the latest technologies for food production and the latest appliances, rather than their traditional knowledge (Reiger 1985). Reiger (1985) suggests:

the importance of using the right equipment and utensils was impressed upon the housewife at a time when she was losing much of her traditional knowledge concerning their effective use ... furthermore, increased knowledge of nutrition was being demanded of housewives just when control over many of the ingredients of their pantries ... was being replaced by outside forces of production (Reiger 1985:74).

Women, however, embodied and resisted these discourses by changing their work patterns (if need be) to be more efficient and invested different meanings to the goods they consumed than had been intended by the designers and manufacturers (Attfield 1989; Bachelard 1969; Duruz 1994c:107; Parr 1999; Partington 1989). For example, women used chairs and tables not only for their functionality, but importantly, by "discriminating between colours, shapes and textures and by demonstrating the consumer skills acquired in a variety of contexts and situations"

they used them to “represent [their] relations with friends, with husbands and children, with inlaws and with [themselves]” (Partington 1989:210; see Chapter 4).

The kitchen in the 1950s in Australia became a major site of consumption and women’s central positioning by the government, manufacturers, designers and advertisers was integral to its success (see Chapters 5-6). The discourse of consumption following the gendered division of labour (Lury 1996) emphasised women’s role in the kitchen as a consumer of labour-saving devices, new food technologies, efficiency and functional design. But women were not only passive consumers of goods, services and the ideas of efficiency, they were empowered by their ability to consume, to guide and influence the family’s eating habits, and to design the layout and decoration of the kitchen (de Grazia 1996; Partington 1989; see Chapters 4-6).

Blackburn (1992) suggests that manufacturers and advertisers in the post-war period (1950-1965) in Australia increased and encouraged mass consumption by undertaking enormous marketing programs in terms of money spent and exposure (see Chapters 4 and 6). He states:

To persuade the young family to consume more, a new ideology of consumption was propagated with considerable vigour and backed with the resources of industry. The manufacturers, from the early 1950s until well into the 1960s, spent ever increasing amounts of money so that advertising could promote an ideology of consumption ... In 1949-50 advertising expenditure was £30 million. During the financial year 1954-5, advertising expenditure had increased dramatically to £100 million (Blackburn 1992:63&65).

Hence, gendered notions of labour and consumption partly ensured the success of the post-World War II economy. This can be explained in two ways: first, women were urged to return to the home after the war to resume their identities as mothers and wives (see Chapter 1). Second, consumption processes were clearly articulated in the gendered division of labour - men produce in the public sphere, women consume for the private sphere. Accordingly, for the growth and maintenance of capitalist society, mass production was regarded as men’s responsibility, and mass consumption was regarded as women’s responsibility (Blackburn 1992; Game &

Pringle 1983; Lury 1996; Parsons & Bales 1956; Sheridan 2002). Thus, Dowling (1993:295) argues for a feminisation of consumption whereby women were targeted by manufacturers and advertisers as consumers. Consumption was added therefore to their expanding list of duties within the home (Matthews 1984). Specifically, within the kitchen:

Consumption, defined as activities surrounding the purchase and use of commodities, is central to the lives of women and the constitution of femininity. The role of consumer is constructed as a feminine one, images of femininity reconstituted by advertising are important in maintaining an objectified femininity and commodities are central in shaping the contours of domestic labour (Dowling 1993:295).

Further, Pringle (1983) examines the links that Galbraith (1973) makes between gender, consumption and class. Pringle (1983) states that although Galbraith does not pay strict attention to class differences between women “he does draw attention to the importance of housework in *all* classes under monopoly capitalism” (Pringle 1983:91). Moreover, Pringle (1983) asserts that consumption has become a practice that is common to women’s daily lived experience: “Women of *all* classes are substantially occupied with consumption activities centred around their own homes, and the associated relational skills have become a defining characteristic of femininity” (Pringle 1983:91). As discussed in Chapter 1, Menzies government rhetoric in the 1950s reinforced women’s central position in homemaking and the importance of their careful shopping and budgeting decisions (see Chapters 5 and 6).

Goss (1992) clearly links consumption of the kitchen with the stereotypical identities outlined for women and men, reinforcing a gendered division of labour:

In the suburban home the male wage-earner and female domestic manager were surrounded by consumer durables that tamed any vestiges of nature intruding into their idyll and at the same time defined their relative success as breadwinner and homemaker. The modern consumer-couple pursued an acquisitive lifestyle where ‘he’ was constrained into a lifetime of waged labour to pay for it and ‘she’ into a lifetime of unpaid domestic labour necessary to maintain it (Goss 1992:165).

Hence, the methods and standards of women’s work - for example, cooking, cleaning and caring for the family - became increasingly linked to the consumption

of goods. By this it can be implied it was not only the consumption of labour-saving devices and food technologies, (such as refrigerators and foodstuffs), but importantly, consumption of ideas, for example, about decoration, efficient arrangement of kitchen furniture and functional kitchen design.

But, women's positioning in consumption was precarious. Women were targeted as the 'new consumers' but, as Goss (1992) suggests, it was men who were to provide the economic means and cultural permission by which women were to consume (indicating that men are also constrained by patriarchal discourses):

women were mobilized in the cause of consumer culture without being allocated the resources with which to become active agents in its development: they were continually positioned as lacking certain key knowledges and capacities, and in Bourdieu's terms, denied direct access to existing cultural capital and the power to set their own standards to create alternative forms of cultural capital, let alone convert cultural capital into economic capital (Lury 1996:132).

Through the Cartesian dualism (discussed above) women's knowledge is perceived as inferior because it is centred in the private sphere, specifically in the kitchen. Women needed the 'better guidance' of experts, the government and advertisers to aid them in making informed consumer choices to better care for their families (Reiger 1987). However, Partington (1989) argues that women also resisted dominant consumer discourses and created their own cultural capital:

The female consumer of the 1950s, then, was not the 'happy housewife heroine' of feminist mythology, passively and blissfully acquiring mass-produced goods and oblivious to her material conditions of existence. Even if designed objects did represent patriarchal ideologies for designers and manufacturers, they were invested with other meanings and values by female consumers (Partington 1989:211).

Furthermore, women's pivotal role in consumption in the kitchen raises questions of power. Women also engage in a productive power which sees them as entering this 'new' consumer society on their own terms (see Chapter 6). Thus, women use their skills and knowledge (hence power) to enhance family life - their considerable skill in budgeting and shopping becomes a source of power within the family and consumer society (see Chapters 5-6).

Conclusion

In this chapter I have explicated the theoretical framework used in this thesis. Feminist poststructuralist, standpoint theory and feminist architectural theory seek to revalue the body and in particular, women's bodies. A means of achieving this revaluation is to acknowledge the influence of the Cartesian dualism and its concomitant dualisms which have ordered Western knowledges. Theorists, such as Agrest (1991), Braidotti (1994), Gibson-Graham (2000), Grosz (1994; 1995), and Smith (1999), challenge these dualisms by showing the falsity of binarized knowledge; they indicate that knowledge is fluid and diverse, and women's subjectivity, multiple. Through attention to women's actual daily lived experience it is possible to identify women's power and resistance to the discourses of domesticity, femininity and efficiency which inform their lives.

Furthermore, the relationship between gender, efficiency, scientific management and consumption is made explicit above, if women consume the right goods then they implicitly become more efficient as housewives and mothers in an architecturally functional kitchen (de Grazia 1996; Gilding 1991). However, women resist, disrupt and conform to their ascribed positionings in the kitchen. Hence, the interrelationship between the discourses of domesticity, efficiency and femininity is more complex than a simple subjugation to them - they are contested at the site of the kitchen and in kitchen design.

The next chapter examines the methodologies and epistemologies by which the women's stories were collected and analysed.



Figure 3.0 1950s kitchen - laminex/chrome central table, built-in cupboards and decorative canisters.
(Oliver 1999)

Chapter Three

Feminist Epistemologies and Methodologies

By the dailiness of women's lives I mean the patterns women create and the meaning women invent each day and over time as a result of their labors and in the context of their subordinated status to men. The point is not to describe every aspect of daily life or to represent a schedule of priorities in which some activities are more important or accorded more status than others. The point is to suggest a way of knowing from the meanings women give to their labors. (Aptheker 1989:39).

Introduction

As a means of exploring women's knowledge, power and multiple identities, this research examines the minutiae of women's daily lives in the kitchen. By examining such "patterns" and "meanings" it is possible to articulate and revalue women's knowledge and practices in the kitchen and society (Aptheker 1989:39). This chapter analyses the methodology used in the production of knowledge for this research. First, I discuss the location of the population and the process of the interviews with the women whose stories provide the basis of my research. The theoretical framework of feminist poststructuralism (see Chapter 2) supported by feminist epistemology¹⁷ informs the feminist oral history methodology used in this study which seeks to foreground the plurality of women's lives. One of the aims is to elaborate a practice and a theory of oral history underpinned by feminist poststructuralism, which privileges language, to produce a feminist poststructuralist oral history method that facilitates women's story telling. Feminist poststructuralist oral history in this thesis seeks to foreground women's voices enabling storytelling that represents multiple subjectivity. In effect, women in the kitchen are "authoritative and *acting* domestic subject[s]" (Cameron 2000:157, her emphasis). As such a feminist poststructuralist oral history can avoid an 'add and stir' approach

¹⁷Feminist epistemology is defined as the theory of knowledge that reflects women's lived experience (Stanley & Wise 1990).

to feminist theory (see below; Harding 1987). The fluidity of memory and nostalgia discussed below, validates the women's stories. 'Other Data Collected' (see below) extends the women's oral history stories through cross-referencing their details with newspapers, magazines, photographs and kitchen plans drawn by the women. The importance of using historical material culture to embellish the women's oral histories is to place the dailiness of their lives within a broader context which further verifies and validates the women's stories (Gibson-Graham 2000). The 'Data Analysis and Writing Up' section focuses on analysis of the women's stories through developing theory grounded in the women's situated knowledges (see Chapter 2) of the kitchen.

Population

From February to December 1998 I developed a "network" sample and undertook 48 interviews with women who were housewives and mothers in Western Australia in the decade 1950-1960. Almost two-thirds were migrants who had arrived in the late 1940s and 1950s (see Chapter 1) and the remaining women were Australian born. Such a sample is defined as "locat(ing) suitable informants by using [my] network of friends, relatives and work colleagues, who may know someone who is suitable" (Harvey & MacDonald 1993:202).

However, locating the women proved to be considerably difficult because of their age group (60+).¹⁸ I used two approaches - formal and informal - to develop my network sample. A formal method of sending letters to migrant organisations which had been set up by the migrants themselves, such as cultural clubs and information centres (for example, The Polish Club, Scottish Information Service) was used initially (Harvey and MacDonald 1993). I also wrote to Lawn Bowls Clubs, one of the predominant sports played by women in this age group, because I hoped it would provide me with access to a class cross-section as bowls clubs are located in different socio-economic areas within Perth. Also bowls clubs would provide access to

¹⁸ On contacting one migrant community I was informed by the Secretary of the Club (male) that if I wished to find women who had arrived in Western Australia in the 1950s I should go to Karrakatta; Perth's largest cemetery.

migrant women who might not participate in their cultural communities. Although the formal method provided only limited response, a researcher from another university - a member of the Dutch community - provided me with names of possible interviewees and my network sample started to develop.

Due to the lack of success of finding women through formal means I used an informal approach and asked family, friends and work colleagues if they had a friend, mother, aunt, grandmother who was a mother and/or housewife in the 1950s (Harvey & MacDonald 1993:202). For example, having a family contact within the lawn bowls community I was assured (subject to the women's acceptance) of obtaining at least five or six Australian born women to interview. This informal method of contact proved invaluable because I was known to the women either through a friend or family member. In most cases interviewees were comfortable with me coming into their homes and the initial 'distrust' that one might feel for a stranger appeared largely overcome, because I had already been 'vouched' for.

The average age of participants was 70. All had completed primary school and most had secondary schooling to age 14. Several women had trained as nurses and teachers and some had technical college education for dressmaking and secretarial work. Before marriage all women had worked in paid employment, except for farmers' daughters, who remained farming until they were married. The average age of women when they married was 23½ years. All, except for three, had children with the number of children ranging from one to six, the average being three.

The interview process lasted between 45 minutes to five hours with an average time of two hours for each woman. First the women completed an interview consent form, which ensured confidentiality and voluntary withdrawal from the project at any stage, and a profile form, for demographic information. On a number of occasions I was requested to complete either the entire profile form or parts of it, because of English as a second language difficulties, and on one occasion I read the form to a partially blind respondent. On another occasion, the profile form caused great alarm. The participant had agreed to the interview because it was about the kitchen and family life, but when asked to complete the profile form she became suspicious of the need for demographic details. The participant, prefacing her refusal with

references to Pauline Hanson and the One Nation Party,¹⁹ believed that by telling me certain things, such as where she was born, she might endanger her children or grandchildren should the Government have cause at some stage to ask her children to leave Australia. After reassuring her that all information would be confidential, I suggested that she discuss the pending interview with her family. After this discussion I returned and she agreed to start the interview.

I also undertook interviews with a prominent Western Australian architect Geoffrey Summerhayes who had worked in the 1950s, and Harry Nisbet, a builder of private and public housing in the 1950s. The purpose of these interviews was to gain technical information and contextualise the women's experiences, particularly about housing and material shortages. Summerhayes also provided valuable insight to the uptake of Modernist housing ideas in Western Australia in the 1950s as he had received a scholarship to Princeton University and studied with Marcel Breuer a proponent of the Modernist movement (London & Richards 1997). I was therefore interested in his professional opinion on architecture and design in Western Australia and in particular how ideas of Modernist architecture impacted women building their houses.

Telling Stories

The oral history approach undertaken in this thesis to examine women's lives in the kitchen, avoids an 'add and stir' method which 'adjusts' women's lives to fit into existing masculinist frameworks of knowledge. Such frameworks of knowledge are based on dichotomous thinking reliant on the Cartesian dualism which, as discussed above, favours mind over body and concomitantly men's experiences over women's. Moreover, such binarised thinking maintains the status quo and neither acknowledges women's daily lives nor produces alternative feminist theories

¹⁹ Pauline Hanson at the time of the interview (1998) was the Leader of the One Nation Party - a recently formed Australian political party whose rhetoric has been labelled as racist. One Nation has argued for a halt to immigration emphasising that Australia should be populated only by Australian born, Australians. It is telling that the vehemence of the rhetoric has caused unease in a person who has been in Australia for nearly 50 years.

(Aptheker 1989; Gross 1986; Grosz 1994; Harding 1987; Stanley & Wise 1990:40; see Chapter 2).

Further, Harding (1987) argues that the experiences of women's daily lives may be made invisible because patriarchal discourses, such as femininity²⁰ and domesticity,²¹ in which they are embedded do not take into account the specificity of women's experience. The 'add and stir' approach merely adds women to the analysis of dominant patriarchal discourses, without challenging their fundamental structural and theoretical bases, and in so doing reinforces them. For example, the 1950s were a time of rigid social identities for men and women, that is, men were breadwinners and women homemakers, in a gendered division of labour (Lees & Senyard 1987; Matthews 1984; Parsons & Bales 1956). Similarly, Cameron (2000) argues that: "the usual feminist representation of domesticated wives and mothers as dependent and subservient, exploited and oppressed can be seen as having the effect of producing women as victims, as domestic subjects who are *acted upon*" (Cameron 2000:56).

This thesis seeks to destabilise dualisms, such as, mind/body, breadwinner/homemaker, in order to provide a more textured understanding of women's identities (see Chapter 2). Hence, an oral history informed by feminist epistemology must move beyond the limits of dualistic thinking, because if:

feminist theory remains *simply* reactive, *merely* a critique, paradoxically it affirms the very paradigms it seeks to contest. It remains on the very grounds it wishes to question and transform. To criticise prevailing theoretical systems *without posing viable alternatives* is to affirm such theoretical systems as necessary (Gross 1986:195-196).

Gross (1986) in outlining 'What is feminist theory?' asserts: "Feminists do not seem so eager to slot women into pre-existing patriarchal categories and theoretical spaces; instead, it is women's lives and experiences, that provide criteria by which patriarchal texts can be judged" (Gross 1986:193). Hence, rather than understanding a woman's position in the kitchen as a 'victim' or oppressed, a feminist oral history informed by feminist poststructuralism contests patriarchal discourses and

²⁰ Defined in Chapter 2.

acknowledges the different layers of meaning in women's voices and stories. It is then possible to 'hear' women's multiple subject positions within the kitchen. Furthermore, women become the subjects not objects of knowledge and, with this shift in epistemology "feminists do not continue to produce knowledge as if they were men, as if knowledge were sexually indifferent. Women's femininity is asserted as a theoretical undertaking" (Gross 1986:194).

Grosz's (1995) interpretation of Derrida's notion of deconstruction as one in which patriarchal discourses, such as domesticity, femininity and efficiency are decentred is a useful tool in the feminist oral history method that I outline below. Deconstruction, as theorised by Derrida, seeks to show the instability of language, specifically the capricious relationship between signifier (word) and signified (meaning). Derrida demonstrates that the meaning of words is not fixed and can point to other meanings or understandings than those in which they are implicated (Sim 1999:71).

Derrida is not addressing an error that, by ingenuity or careful rethinking, could somehow be rectified, but a constitutive binding, the *always already* implication of feminism or any oppositional mode of political struggle in the law it undertakes to subvert or displace. He poses the necessary implication of feminism in phallogocentrism ...

This is *not* the claim that feminism is doomed from the start, that it cannot hope to accomplish its aim, but is rather the more limited claim that feminism can only hope to succeed insofar as it is implicated in and part - admittedly a recalcitrant - part of patriarchy itself (Grosz 1995:62).

Grosz (1995) contends that without patriarchy there would be no feminism. Hence, the very structures that guided and influenced decisions, power and the daily lives of women in my study are integral to the patriarchal discourses that were constituent of female embodiment in the 1950s. Further, Weedon (1987) suggests women are "always already constructed emotionally and psychically by gendered patriarchal discourses" (Weedon 1987:173).

However, even though women in this thesis are implicated in the practices of patriarchal discourses, the meanings of their experiences of everyday life are not necessarily congruent with those discourses. For example, there is an opportunity for unintended meaning making which produces resistance or alternative positionings.

²¹ Defined in Chapter 2.

Following Partington's (1989) idea of the 'happy housewife heroine' (see Chapter 2), women resist and invest meanings to their work in the kitchen that cannot be wholly or partially understood within the framework of patriarchal discourses. As such, women's knowledge can be regarded as resistant to patriarchal definition or categorisation: their knowledge, practices, skills and meanings, although defined by and within patriarchal discourses, such as domesticity and femininity, are simultaneously self-defining. The women in my study create their own definitions, meanings and knowledge, and in this way they resist, disrupt and conform to patriarchal discourses.

This implies that women in my study exercise power. In effect deconstruction points to a space where contestation of the structures that influenced women's lives can be made, that is, the daily lives of the women in my thesis are "implicated in the interstices of patriarchal functioning" (Grosz 1995:62). Hence, Derrida's notion of deconstruction interpreted by Grosz (1995) allows for a discussion of women's lives in the 1950s that accepts the operation of patriarchal discourses but concomitantly provides a space which allows for women's lives to be constructed in a way that shows their agency. Hence, in Grosz's interpretation of deconstruction, women are not victims of patriarchal oppression. Rather they exercise power in relation to their knowledge, practice and skills.

Thus, deconstruction as a tool of feminist poststructuralism is useful as it decentres patriarchal discourses. This method can result in a far stronger allegiance to feminist principles in a "mode of double affirmation":

In a feminist context this means that discourses influenced by or in some way involved with deconstruction are committed to *both* an affirmation, a saying-yes to patriarchy (the gesture of phallocentrism), *and* an affirmation of feminism, of the overcoming of patriarchy (Grosz 1995:61).

Thus, in effect 'double affirmation' shows that women work/live within the limits of patriarchy. However, by working from within the limits of patriarchal discourse, a space can be opened for showing how limiting such discourses (patriarchy, femininity, and domesticity) are for women. Through this process women become powerful (Neuhaus 1999). Such a conceptualisation of women's positioning within

patriarchy can be used in feminist oral history. Specifically, in the stories the women tell, they articulate multiple subject positions which indicate that adherence to patriarchal discourses is fractured and nuanced (see Chapters 5-7). Moreover, revaluing of women's knowledge is a primary aim for many feminist oral historians because it allows for a simultaneous picture of women's subjugation and empowerment to emerge which acknowledges and manifests women's multiple subjectivities (Anderson, Armitage, Jack & Wittner 1990; Anderson & Jack 1991; Minister 1991; see Chapter 2). The women's stories show how they manipulated and appropriated the patriarchal discourses of the kitchen, such as domesticity, efficiency and femininity to suit their own daily lives and spaces.

Furthermore, Weedon (1987) suggests, "women's subjectivity will always be open to the plurality of meaning and the possibilities contained within this plurality will have different political implications" (Weedon 1987:167). Hence analysis of women's practices and experiences, such as, cooking, ironing, shopping and household management, are a means of revaluing women's knowledge. The dominant discourses of the kitchen - domesticity, efficiency and femininity - which structure women's daily lives and subjectivities are shown to operate at a number of levels (see Chapters 4-7), and as indicated by Grosz (1995), women exhibit and adhere to differing levels of power, resistance and normalisation (cf below, Mohanty 1991; see Chapter 2). Through the stories the women tell of life in the 1950s kitchen it is possible to see the discourses in the practice of daily life, and begin to understand how their identities and lives were self-structured, resisted and challenged. Hence, a feminist poststructuralist epistemology and feminist oral history which incorporates plurality and emphasises language of the story told, opens spaces for women's stories to be analysed in ways that favour their understandings of their place in the kitchen and society.

The interviews

In this thesis I have used an oral history framework informed by a feminist poststructuralist epistemology to provide women with a means of expressing their experiences of the 1950s kitchen in Western Australia. I use the words, stories and storytelling purposely to show that all oral history "narratives necessarily involve

selective recall” (Geiger 1986:347). As such the fluidity of oral history narratives - what the women choose to tell me and what they leave out - is part of a larger narrative that changes over time, and I use ‘story’ as means of portraying this fluidity (see below). Importantly, such a framework seeks to show how ideas in feminist poststructuralism can enrich the stories that the women have to tell.

The storytelling process was based on a series of questions that would illuminate what life was like in the kitchen for women in the 1950s (see Appendix 3). In in-depth interviews women talked about their feelings, experiences and memories of working and ‘living’ in the 1950s kitchen; and in the semi-structured interviews I introduced the series of questions and topics I wished the women to discuss. It was my main intention however, that a conversation about the kitchen in the 1950s (and other aspects of social life) was developed (Holstein & Gubrium 1995; Jenkins 1982). Hence, some questions and topics were raised directly and other topics were indirectly addressed through the answers to already asked questions (Harvey & MacDonald 1993:200). This storytelling process represents oral history which is defined as:

a basic tool in our efforts to incorporate the previously overlooked lives, activities, and feelings of women into our understanding of the past and of the present. When women speak for themselves, they reveal hidden realities: new experiences and new perspectives emerge that challenge the “truths” of official accounts and cast doubt upon established theories. Interviews with women can explore private realms ... to tell us what women actually did instead of what experts thought they did or should have done. Interviews can also tell us how women felt about what they did and can interpret the personal meaning and value of particular activities (Anderson, Armitage, Jack and Wittner 1990:95).

Feminist oral history is linked to feminist poststructuralism because women’s multiple identities are situated in their actual daily practices which constitute their lives. As such feminist oral history allows women to discuss what they actually do in their kitchens, or how their kitchens are designed. But importantly oral history provides them with an opportunity to talk about how they *feel*, their construction of self in relation to the work they do, and what it *means* to them. For example, what it means to them for the kitchen to be designed in a way which allows them to participate in conversations with friends or family whilst also preparing meals

(Anderson, Armitage, Jack & Wittner 1990). Specifically, in the 'performance' of wife, mother, housewife and homemaker women show that each time a task is enacted it is different: there are slippages which "suggest ... that gender (or other identities) are always unfinished and open to subversion" (Gibson-Graham 2000:101; cf Butler 1999). The importance of storytelling to feminist poststructuralist oral history is that women tell the stories of their different daily practices, and indicate multiple subjectivities as they resist, conform and disrupt dominant discourses. In effect this links with Derridean deconstruction in that it shows that "meaning is always in process and incomplete" (Gibson-Graham 2000:99) again reinforcing a feminist poststructuralist oral history method. As Anderson et.al. (1990) and Geiger (1986) suggest, stories are always necessarily incomplete, but provide a picture of what life was like at that point in time. Hence, feminist poststructuralism and feminist oral history have at their foundation a need to engage with and attend to women's historical specificity.

The interview in traditional oral history is "conducted dispassionately so that 'objective' data can be collected"; thus rapport is one-sided, rather than interrelated (Harvey & MacDonald 1993:215). In beginning the storytelling process with the women of my study I was mindful of Oakley's (1981) assertion that the technique of interviewing outlined in social science textbooks, follows a masculine ideology of methodology and theory that adheres to ideas of "objectivity, detachment [and] hierarchy" (Oakley 1981:38). For example, there is control of questions asked and answered and one person speaks at a time so that information flows from interviewee to interviewer. In this respect a dialogue is not built up and the interview is monologic. Hence, while traditional oral history which is bounded by a male paradigm refutes or ignores the importance of women's experience, a feminist researcher values women's knowledges and experiences by valuing women's work in the private sphere. In a world where all aspects of the private sphere are regarded as less important than the public sphere, women's subjective experience cannot enter the realms of objective knowledge (Harvey & MacDonald 1993; Oakley 1981). A feminist oral history practice and theory underlined by feminist poststructuralist epistemologies means that women's stories are understood in a context that acknowledges women's lives as historically situated, multiple, fluid and diverse.

By contrast to traditional oral history embedded within patriarchal discourse, a feminist oral history recognises that women tell stories differently, that they have a specific linguistic culture (Jenkins 1982; Langellier & Hall 1989; Leydesdorff, Passerini & Thompson 1996; Minister 1991). For example, Jenkins (1982) suggests:

Women's way of talking has often been compared to men's and found lacking. Women's speech has been characterized as weak, tentative, indirect, hypercorrect, overly qualified, and questioning in tone. In contrast, men's speech is seen as strong, assertive, direct, authoritative, and declarative in tone (cf Lakoff 1975 in Jenkins 1982:2).

Though I suggest that women have a specific linguistic culture, I am mindful of essentialising notions of women's storytelling compared to men's, for example, the assertion that women gossip and men relate facts (Jenkins 1982; Minister 1991; Tebbutt 1995). I wish to move away from a dualistic division of production of knowledge that creates hierarchical and oppositional halves²² (see Chapter 2). To this end Mohanty's (1991) idea of *relationality* is instructive. She states that relationality:

suggests relations of power, which anchor 'common differences' between and among the feminist politics of different constituencies of women and men ... (I)t is possible to retain the idea of multiple, fluid structures of domination which intersect to locate women differently at particular historical conjunctures, while at the same time insisting on the dynamic oppositional agency of individuals and collectives and their engagement in 'daily life' (Mohanty 1991:13).

Hence, relationality within the storytelling process allows the women to indicate the differences in power they experience within the home and society. Importantly, an understanding of relationality provides a space for women to tell the story of their own embodied power using women's communication style, language and unique storytelling process. This can also be related to Grosz's (1995) and Weedon's (1987) positioning of women's experience and subjectivity as firmly within patriarchal discourses (discussed above), but with the disclaimer - "(t)his does not rule out the

²² This would reproduce the Cartesian dualism - mind/body - which has structured Western philosophical discussion (see Chapter 2). The concomitant terms such as, man/woman, breadwinner/homemaker, public/private, become ordered in an hierarchical manner so that those terms aligned with mind - man, breadwinner, public are necessarily more highly favoured. Further, the

specificity of women's experiences and their differences from those of men" (Weedon 1987:167). As such, women in this study are authors who actively produced the stories of their lives (in the 1950s and during the interview process), and in this way exercise power. A feminist poststructuralist oral history recognises women's authorship (Oakley 1981).

Therefore, my feminist poststructuralist oral history process which is dialogic (see above) and recognises women as authors, also has three other precepts. First, as a commitment to feminist principles (Anderson, Armitage, Jack & Wittner 1990; Geiger 1986) I ensured the women in my study signed consent forms and were guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality of the information they provided. Pseudonyms have been used to provide anonymity. However, like some feminist theorists (Geiger 1986:350) who suggest that anonymity is not protected through pseudonyms, I have altered other features that may distinguish particular women such as, the town of birth or omitted husbands' names.

It was my practice to first contact the storytellers and arrange a time for me to conduct the interview. Often in this initial telephone conversation I established rapport (Harvey & MacDonald 1993:206). For example, the women would often ask me questions about my research, and in some cases they would begin immediately to tell me what life was like in the 1950s, sometimes with explicit details.²³ However, rapport building was further established, and a dialogic relationship strengthened, when I went to do the interviews and I answered additional questions about my motivation for doing the research. I explained my study to the storytellers, and on a number of occasions I was asked why I was interested in the kitchen - a space they regarded as so basic and central to their lives. I revealed my own performance of kitchen practices, which I hoped would help to lessen the hierarchy between interviewer/interviewee.

A further commitment to producing a feminist poststructuralist oral history was through the contextualisation of my position within the interview process (Anderson

terms are oppositional because they only make sense and have power whilst in relation to the other - body, woman, homemaker, private.

et.al. 1990; Minister 1991; Oakley 1981). In order to breakdown dualisms that favour an objective, detached, and hierarchical nature of the interview, I encouraged reciprocity between myself and the storyteller (Oakley 1981). I declared my position as a white, middle class, heterosexual, tertiary educated, Australian born woman with a generational age difference; and other aspects of my life such as being a wife and mother, a fourth-generation Australian born woman, and having a Polish migrant partner, were often brought into conversation. Unlike the traditional interview my interviews were not a one-sided process where I extracted as much information as possible (cf Oakley 1981). Rather the interview became multi-dimensional, where experiences and knowledge were exchanged providing a more textured and layered account of the women's lives in the kitchen. Migrant women were particularly interested in hearing about my life, as a mother and housewife, and my ethnic background. Thus, as the conversation developed between the storytellers and myself the interview became dialogic rather than simply monologic.

Far from being an inverse relationship whereby I as interviewer was in a more powerful position I believe there were varying relations of power at work (Foucault 1978). Through the process of contextualisation and reciprocity which I followed, the hierarchical power relations between interviewer and storyteller perhaps can be diminished. In a feminist poststructuralist oral history an understanding of power as relational may provide opportunities throughout the interview process for power to become interchangeable between the storyteller and myself. As Mohanty (1991:13) suggests, power is fluid. Relationality simultaneously provides women with power/agency to tell their stories, but also recognises that I, as researcher, ask questions from a privileged position. For example, even though at times I wished to find out more about specific women's experiences of the 1950s kitchen, it was at their discretion during interview that they related these experiences. Interviews are 'snapshots', and occasionally a woman would control the interview by limiting the amount of information she gave me and the number of stories she told (Harvey & MacDonald 1993:213). In this instance, the relation of power was in favour of the storyteller. However, in most instances power was more evenly dispersed where the

²³ For example, one storyteller told me about builders in the 1950s that used 'green' limestone and the consequent cracking of walls in these homes and the distress it caused the home owners.

universal experience of Woman was assumed between the storyteller and myself. Hence, in this way the interview becomes a story about women's collective lives.

Finally, in elaborating a feminist poststructuralist oral history which is dialogic and reciprocal, the interviews were transcribed verbatim and then checked by the women for accuracy of the interview content (Harvey & MacDonald 1993:208). I advised the women in a covering letter that I would 'call in a week's time' to discuss the interview with them further. The women read through the interview and made comments and changes. I either received their approval over the phone or in some instances I visited the women again to make changes. This strategy further dispersed the power relationship between researcher and storyteller. Despite my warning that their spoken voice would appear differently when in verbatim written form, many migrant women were not entirely happy with their interviews - because they believed that they did not appear articulate on paper. I had assured the women that their spoken word in the context of my thesis would be expressed in standard English. It was at this stage that some women, particularly migrants for whom English is a second language, wished to withdraw from the study, believing that my use of language had not accurately reflected their lives. I spent considerable time on the phone or visited them to explain exactly how I would use their stories and words in my work. This assuaged fears and all women continued in the project.

Memory & Nostalgia

Methodologically, feminist poststructuralist oral history needs to take into account the fluidity of memories that affect interpretation. As indicated above, the stories women told me necessarily only represent a 'snapshot' of their lives and certain events and occurrences were probably left out. For example, successes may be included, but not bad times (Gilding 1981; see below). Further, Anderson et.al. (1990) discuss the difficulties of interpretation of life stories collected and the continually reconstructed subjectivities of the women, that is, memory is interwoven with subsequent experience. However, despite the problems of memory in trying to elaborate a picture of women's lives in the kitchen in the 1950s and simultaneously bring women's experiences from the margins to the centre, the methodological gains

of a feminist poststructuralist oral history outweigh the negatives, such as the possible fluidity of memory: as Gilding (1981) suggests, oral history can breathe life into official records and other material culture (Waldijk 1995). Furthermore, as stated above, in a feminist poststructuralist oral history, stories attend to historical specificity: they are contextualised to the women's experience of the 1950s kitchen at the time of interview. Importantly, a feminist poststructuralist oral history allows women to tell their stories in their own voices and to express what is important to them (Anderson & Jack 1991:24-25; Cameron 2000; Geiger 1986; Gibson-Graham 2000).

Within this thesis memory and nostalgia are linked, but not all memory is nostalgic. Rubinstein (2001), examining the writings of authors Doris Lessing and Virginia Woolf, believes that memory is "elusive, fluid, and often unreliable ... [its] manifestations depend on the shifting relationship between any present moment and an always-receding past" (Rubinstein 2001:14). Further, Rubenstein (2001) defines nostalgia as "the expression of yearning for an earlier time or place ... in one's past history, the memory and significance of which ... contributes to the sense of the self in the present moment" (Rubenstein 2001:13). Women's memories show the ambiguous relationship most felt for the kitchen and home. Fluid memories of the kitchen and home that emerge in the women's stories in my research are emotional, and show the kitchen as a place both of oppression and creative liberation. The women often tell stories of their early disasters in cooking for example, and always follow with stories of triumphant success; they discuss the hardships of leaving their home countries and settling in Western Australia and also the 'good' aspects of migrating. Thus I gained insights into 'good' and 'bad' aspects of the women's lives.

Methodologically, I primarily had to trust the accuracy of the women's representations of life in the kitchen in the 1950s. Such trust must be assumed because the women who agreed to participate in the research were interested in telling their stories. This suggests that the women believe that their knowledge, practice and skills are publicly valuable. However, I have also cross-referenced their

memories with other historical material culture such as newspapers and magazines of the 1950s (see below).²⁴

Leydesdorff, Passerini & Thompson (1996) and Chamberlain (1995) argue that memory, like the oral history method of which it is a part, is gendered and infused with power:

The intertwining of power and memory is very subtle and it reflects both the particular areas of power which women and men hold in everyday life, and the various levels of public discourse. Memories supportive of the maintenance of existing power structures are usually assured wider social space and easier transmission. But memories of subordinate groups can show striking resilience, and they can be transmitted, as women's memories often must be, from the interstices of society, from the boundaries between the public and the private (Leydesdorff, Passerini & Thompson 1996:8).

Importantly, through feminist poststructuralist oral history, women's stories as memories of their daily lived experience can, as Leydesdorff et.al. (1996) suggest, move to the centre of theory, when defined and told on their own terms. Further, "the gendering of memory makes a strong impact on the shaping of social spaces" (Leydesdorff et.al. 1996:14). Specifically, memories of the kitchen in this thesis, are gendered, because they attend to a specificity of experience of what it was like to be a woman, wife, mother, housewife and homemaker in the 1950s.

Thelen (1990) comments: "people's memories provide security, authority, legitimacy and finally identity in the present" (Thelen 1990:xvi). Hence women's stories and memories of past events often explain the position of other women in the present. Perhaps women's stories of life in the 1950s kitchen provide to myself and others in the 21st century 'security, *authority*, legitimacy and identity' (cf Reinhartz 1992:127). Furthermore, "(m)emories link us to place, to time and to nation" - to Australia in the 1950s and the 21st century (Darian-Smith & Hamilton 1994:1; Peneff 1990:43; see Chapter 8). The women's memories in this study link us to the kitchen in the 1950s, in Western Australia and specifically to women's daily lives and experiences in that space. Further, Darian-Smith and Hamilton (1994) argue that memories, once

²⁴ I read memoirs and fiction to gain a better understanding of what their lives were like in 1950s Western Australia for example, Tim Winton (1996) *Cloudstreet* and Robert Drewe *Shark Net* (2000), Nora Seton *The Kitchen Congregation: A Memoir* (2000; US based).

shared, become part of social or collective memories and importantly become integral to society's understanding of itself, and the understanding of oneself within and of that society (Chamberlain 1995: 95-96; Tulloch 1999:113). Within this context, family memories are particularly relevant to this thesis:

[They] ... may be exchanged across generations over the kitchen table. As we share those memories that are perceived to be relevant to our own identity, we are also incorporating a memory of events which are outside our lived experiences but are deemed to be central to the identity of our society (Darian-Smith & Hamilton: 1994:1).

Further the memories provide a concreteness and actuality to the women's lives. As a researcher I was not *reading* about women's lives in the 1950s, I was hearing and recording their memories. The women's memories of the meanings of the kitchen provided a palpability to the research texts I was reading - their lived experience concedes a texture and layering that is only possible to glean by listening to their stories. In doing so their memories become central to the identity of Australia in the twenty-first century, specifically, women's identity. Therefore, Holmes (1994) suggests:

In placing the lives ... of women not previously considered important, at the centre of historical analysis, we will challenge traditional interpretations of the past and make women's subjectivity central to the account of historical change (Holmes 1994:47).

There is also an imaginary 'memory' of the 1950s in Australia, as indicated above, a period of unprecedented prosperity and social and political conservatism (Lees & Senyard 1987; Murphy 1995b; Murphy & Smart 1997). The stories that the women tell within this thesis exist within memories of a prosperous 1950s, but they also remember the difficulties of settling in a new country, buying a home, raising a family, cooking, ironing and budgeting. It is possible to see both a collective memory of life in Western Australia within each of the women's stories and also each woman's story is an individual memory of her life in 1950s Western Australia.

Hence, women's lives are the central feature of this thesis; their experiences are not displaced but rather 'put in place'. Further, Alexander (1994) sees the use of memory within history as a means of understanding women's subjectivity: "Life

histories, as they tell us something of what has been forgotten in cultural memory, always describe, or rehearse a history full of affective subjectivity. As with a poem, they may suggest the metonymic signs of femininity particular to a generation” (Alexander 1994:234 in Buckley 1999a:115). Thus, the memories of the women in my study serve to understand women’s subjectivity, including their femininity, in the 1950s kitchen.

The kitchen as ‘aide-mémoire’ - memory and the everyday

The kitchen is used as an ‘aide-mémoire’ in this thesis (Buckley 1999a&b; Kirkham & Attfield 1996). The aide-mémoire “highlight[s] the way designed objects act as signifiers for memory” (Buckley 1999b:56; Kirkham & Attfield (1996:3). Both theorists use the term as a trigger for their respective discussions of design, in particular to gendered objects. Like Kirkham & Attfield (1996), Blackman (1998) and Buckley (1999b) I use particular objects, tables and canisters and elements of decoration such as colour, as “snapshots and signposts” (Blackman 1998:ii) to illuminate life in the 1950s kitchen.

Barbara Blackman, wife of Australian painter Charles Blackman, wrote the book *Certain Chairs* (1968/1998) using household objects, for example, “The Red Kitchen chairs”, “The Monkey-Circus Table”, “One Woolworths Pudding Bowl” and “The Patchwork Knitted Quilt” to tell the story of the Blackman’s lives. Blackman (1998) states:

I sat out on the verandah of our lovely Queensland house and, while the children were at school, began to write a series of short biographies, the little lives of certain chairs, a table or two and other inanimates of our acquaintance, thinking in this way, by tangent and touchstone, to tell the story of our Blackman life from its beginning in 1951 until that mid-sixties point (Blackman 1998:i).

Following Blackman (1998) I use the the kitchen - its space, its cooking practices, its family and social relations and objects, such as tables, irons - as ‘props’ to give meaning to women’s stories of their daily activities and lives. The kitchen acts as a trigger for memory and as a space and a designed object it operates as an ‘aide-mémoire’ to women’s lives in 1950s Western Australia. Hence, I am using the

kitchen as a tool, much like a recipe, for examining the “‘density’ of life situations and contexts of action [that are] ... made vivid and palpable in the form of the miniature” (Ludtke 1995:19).

Other Data Collected

As indicated above, other data was collected to further illuminate the women’s lives in 1950s Western Australia and Australia. The daily newspaper, *The West Australian* and magazines such as *The Australian Women’s Weekly* (selected issues throughout the 1950s), *New Idea* (1950-1953 selected issues), *Woman’s World* (1949-1953 selected issues),²⁵ *Australian Home Beautiful* (1949-1953 selected issues) and *Australian House and Garden* (1954-1955 selected issues)²⁶ were used to source articles, pictures and advertisements about women’s daily lives in the kitchen and the societal expectations placed on women in the 1950s (Waaldijk 1995). I also examined cookbooks borrowed from the women that they used in this time period, instruction booklets that came with household appliances, such as mixers, and their accompanying recipe pamphlets to be used specifically with the new appliance (Endrijonas 2001; Neuhaus 1999, 2001). With the women’s permission I photocopied photographs of their houses, their kitchens and their cars (see Appendix 1). These examples of material culture cross-reference the women’s stories and provide legitimacy to the women’s lives in the 1950s kitchen (see below). The most significant other data collected were women’s thumbnail sketches of their kitchens/homes. These sketches were mostly roughly drawn by the women (except in one case, where the participant had experience in drawing plans, see Chapter 4). I used the sketches to gain an idea of kitchen design, including size of the kitchen, if the furniture was built-in or freestanding, the position of sink, stove and windows and the type of decoration used, that is, colour and design of curtains, paintwork and floorcoverings. The sketches are highly detailed with both the participants writing and my editing to clarify details (see Appendix 2). These drawings/plans are significant because they indicate the influence of modernist architecture such as,

²⁵ Grant Stone, Humanities Senior Librarian, Murdoch University gave me access to this collection.

²⁶ Dr John Stephens, School of Architecture, Curtin University allowed me to read and photocopy material from his personal collection of magazines.

streamlined, built-in cabinetry, kitchen size and overall layout of the women's kitchens. Further, women often described how big their kitchens were, their work process and material goods, having the dimensions of the kitchen and other details from the drawings allowed me to interpret their stories more clearly.

Magazines

Examining 1950s magazines gave insight to discourses of domesticity, femininity and efficiency that impacted on the women's lives, shaping expectations of them as 'good' wives, housewives, mothers and homemakers. Access to original magazines was possible and was important as colours used in the kitchen (an integral aspect to women's design input) could be clearly seen.

The *Women's Weekly* featured articles on women's various identities as mother, wife, housewife and homemaker, such as 'how to keep a husband', how to use appliances efficiently, cooking hints and recipes, sewing and knitting patterns for children's clothes; short stories and 'gossip' pages, particularly articles and photos of the Royal Family were favoured by the women in my study. The *New Idea* ran a series on the woman as home handyperson - 'Handy Woman'. In *Woman's World*, the handyperson 'Handy Anne' showed women 'how to use a hammer' and make 'Flywire screens for the summer'. Reading the magazines was also a source of leisure for the women in my study. Importantly, the magazines did not discuss traditional public sphere matters, such as politics, but Sheridan (2000a; 2002) argues convincingly of the importance and visibility of migration and migrants within the pages of *The Women's Weekly*. The women in my study often referred to the magazines telling how they had collected recipes, sewing and knitting patterns. Some migrant women also commented that the *Women's Weekly* helped them to learn English.

From the *Home Beautiful* and *Australian House and Garden* magazines I was able to examine kitchen trends, such as colours, the use of built-in furniture and the impact of modernist architecture on kitchen design: latest appliances, such as water heaters and sinks; latest finishes in laminex and Formica; and new building materials, such as fibro-asbestos. Such details are important for this research because women's

decoration and design input was effected by embodiment of popular discourse of the time. The magazines also verified the popularity of colour choices and finishes for floors and cabinets that the women in my study made in their own kitchens. Some women copied kitchen designs (as closely as possible) from the magazines for their own newly built or renovated kitchens.

Slicing the *The West Australian*

The idea for slicing Perth's daily newspaper, came from the Bicentennial History Project proposed by Ken Inglis for the 1988 Australian Bicentenary. The slicing method used by Inglis has as its methodological aim "to show 'what life was like': to ... recover the richness of everyday life" (Daniels 1988:131). The aim in the Bicentenary project was to slice history showing what life was like in one particular year at 50 year intervals - 1788, 1838, 1888, 1938, 1939-1988. Following this method, on a much smaller scale I examined *The West Australian* one month from each year of the decade (from December 1949 through to November 1960, for example, in 1952 the month examined was March; in 1955 it was June). The importance of *The West Australian* in the following chapters is that it provides background discursive knowledge to the women's stories of 1950s kitchens.

Gilbert & Inglis (General Editors of *Australians: A Historical Library*, 1987) suggest in the Preface that "[s]licing through a year we might hope to see and hear people living as we do. We might recognise people more easily as our own kind ..." (in Daniels 1988:131). There is considerable debate among historians (Daniels 1988; Kingston 1977) over the validity of the slice method, because some historians believe it does not adequately reflect history, it is "anti-historical - ... it is history without the dynamic aspect" (Kingston 1977:3). However, in this project the slicing method provided a means of examining a wealth of material in a manageable way. I was able to glean important aspects of the decade such as migration, women's role in the home (see Chapters 5-6), post-war reconstruction, particularly the housing shortage, that confirmed aspects of the women's stories.

Although the newspaper articles enhance the women's stories - for example, migrant women's experiences are confirmed through the newspaper articles, the depth of

feeling and emotion about their arrival in a new country and how they felt about their new 'home' is not conveyed. The newspaper stories provide a 'sanitised' version of the women's stories, leaving out for example, the racism that migrants experienced; moreover the articles do not contest the ethnocentricity of Western Australia in the 1950s (see Chapters 4 and 6). It is only through listening to the women's stories and their experiences of arriving in Western Australia that racialisation of migrants in Australia can be fully imagined or realised.

Data Analysis and Writing Up

The process of analysis was very much like the women in my study learning to cook - by 'trial and error'. Because this study is a qualitative examination of the women's lives I needed a method of analysis that would be both efficient and adhere to the meaning of what the women were 'saying'. Harvey & MacDonald (1993:178-179 & 210) suggest reading data vertically and then horizontally, according to themes to enable 'pile building'. They identify nine stages in this process which have been followed in the analysis of the women's interviews.

Stage one involves producing a copy of original interviews which may then be used to 'cut and paste'. In Stage two the data is read vertically, that is, all interviews are read as a group including any relevant field notes. Stages three and four were combined and required identifying key themes and ordering the data in a way that was easily accessible. Using my interview questions and the data they generated, I identified central themes covered in the interviews by searching for common keywords and ideas.

In Stage five I read the data 'horizontally', that is, by central themes, to enable 'pile-building'. The passages identified with keywords and ideas from Stage four were then 'cut and pasted' into separate 'piles', according to central themes identified in Stage four. These themes centred around the women's practices such as cooking, ironing, sewing; migrants first impressions of Western Australia such as food, camp life, housing; building a home, decoration, building materials; shopping and

budgeting.²⁷ In stage six an evaluation of the key themes and their relevance was assessed, including how the themes progressed or restricted the women's stories, how the themes interrelated, and the relative prevalence of the themes in all sections of the data. Some themes, such as sewing, did not seem as integral to the women's lives as first anticipated, and further the data to support them was not available, hence they were not included in the writing up.

Stages seven - nine were collapsed into the writing process because further refinement of key themes only became apparent in the writing up period. Hence, the writing up of the thesis includes those themes that were common to most women and which clearly articulated women's experience in the 1950s kitchen.

Importantly, the writing up stage manifested questions of power, specifically how to represent the women and their voices without diminishing their integrity, but also satisfying the demands of writing a doctoral thesis. Again this process was informed by feminist epistemology, that is, my thesis seeks to reflect women's lived experience and therefore foregrounds the importance of allowing women to speak for themselves and determine the nature of their stories. Materials such as photos, recipe books and appliance instructions were copied and returned to the women.

Finally, writing up the thesis follows the interviewing process in that I agree with Anderson & Jack (1991) that, "(t)he researcher must always remain attentive to the moral dimension of interviewing and [be] aware that she is there to follow the narrator's lead, to honor her integrity and privacy, not to intrude into areas that the narrator has chosen to hold back" (Anderson & Jack 1991:25).

Conclusion

The aim of this thesis is to foreground women's voices using a feminist oral history informed by feminist poststructuralist theory. Such a methodology ensures that the 'dailiness' of women's lives and the importance they place on their practices,

²⁷ I have not provided a comprehensive list of categories, only examples to give an idea of the type of

knowledge and skills of the kitchen is acknowledged and revalued. The women of my study experience the 1950s kitchen in a multiplicity of ways according to their class, age, race and ethnicity, and the identities that they negotiate and renegotiate through their work can be articulated using feminist poststructuralist oral history.

The next chapter examines the meaning and making of home for migrant and Australian born women.



Figure 4.0 Anna's house
(Courtesy: Anna)

Chapter Four

It's "like amen in church":²⁸ the making of home

but for us it was just like amen in church, you just had to have it. You could wait ... [and] you didn't mind if it takes a long time and it's hard ... I don't know why, but I think everybody I know of had to have - not to have - to have it, but to feel secure ... it's just you want your own roof over your head (Clara: Interview 1998).

You always hear about the Aussie dream of owning your own home. It was inculcated in people that whatever you did, you got your own home, then if something went wrong at least you had somewhere to live, or something to bargain with (Dorothy: Interview 1998).

Introduction

This chapter examines the acquisition and meaning of home for Australian born and migrant women and focuses on how women 'make' home, first through using the metaphor of food, and then through building and decorating the physical structure of home. Hage (1997:102) is instructive in outlining an argument for 'making' home. He asserts that home is affective, and one does not necessarily have to have a physical structure, but rather an affective feeling can create home. Hage's (1997) elements of making and building home can be distinguished in the stories of home and kitchen that the women in my study tell below. Writing about Lebanese migrants in Western Sydney, Hage (1997) suggests:

House building does not necessarily include the attempt to build a familial, comforting and 'homely' space, and home-building does not necessarily involve house construction. It is on such a basis that I would like to suggest a definition of home-building as *the building of the feeling of being 'at home'*. It is in this sense that I am considering the home as an affective construct: an affective edifice constructed out of affective building blocks (blocks of homely feeling). For it to come into being, to be successfully

²⁸ Clara: Interview 1998.

erected, this homely affective structure has to be built with affective blocks that provide either in themselves or in combination with others four key feelings: security, familiarity, community and a sense of possibility (Hage 1997:102).

The attributes of each of these blocks relate to feelings that the women in my study also expressed. *Security* of having their own homes is important for Australian born and migrant women (Hage 1997:102-104). It comes from a deep sense of being secure, but also where we feel the ability to remove those things that threaten our security, “home is a place governed by what we consider to be ‘our law’” (Hage 1997:102). Women create a sense of *familiarity* with their kitchens through food and use the space according to their own definitions of efficiency (see Chapter 2). Hage (1997) likens familiarity to Bourdieu’s notion of *habitus*, that is, having a ‘feel’ for the space - knowing what everything is used for and knowing the space intimately, where to go and how to get there. For migrant women home is a familiar place where they can speak their own languages without fear (of racist comments); and the kitchen is a shared space with friends who have often experienced the same hardships (see Chapter 5). *Community* then is integral to feeling at home, it involves “shared symbolic forms, shared morality, shared values and most importantly perhaps, shared language” (Hage 1997:103). Finally, a belief in *possibilities* often initiated the migration process for women in my study believing that their children would have better opportunities (in terms of education, employment, housing) in Australia. Hage (1997:103) contends “a home has to be a space open for opportunities” and this sense of possibility is often overlooked when theorising about home. The migrant women in my study often achieve this affective ‘making’ of home through food, language and maintenance of culture initially in the migrant camps. The making of home is a gradual process, not all women ‘feel’ at home in Western Australia when they first arrive, they build ways of feeling at home, most importantly through food, but also through negotiating culture and language, and creating (building, renting or renovating) a home of their own (cf Read 1996:107).

As indicated in Chapter 1, the ‘Australian dream’ of a home of your own became ubiquitous in the 1950s; “Yes, it was the Australian dream to build your own home. It still seems to be that way ... I think everyone had the idea of owning a home in those days” (Mabel: Interview 1998). Then and now it signifies stability, status and

ensures the reproduction of cultural and gendered identity. Home-‘making’ conveys some sense of place especially for the migrant women. It becomes a place for many women where the semblance of a “normal life” - after moving from refugee camp to refugee camp²⁹ - can be enacted (Jadzia: Interview 1998). For migrant women having a home of their own nurtured a “sense of belonging” (Jadzia: Interview 1998) in an unknown country and “stability for the family” (Louisa: Interview 1998). Hence, women’s ability to ‘make’ a home for themselves and their families is enacted through the emotional and practical work of being a mother, wife, housewife and homemaker within a physical structure often created by them.

Home is defined as “the place where one lives”, (Macquarie Dictionary 1981:399), however, it also “includes ... *how* we live and *who* we *are*” (Dovey 1993:9). There is an intimacy about ‘home’ that is often neglected and remains un conveyed by the actual term. A home is infused with memories, emotions, daily lives, identities and experiences - it is the place that stores the records of the minutiae of daily life, much in the way as a diary does. This is particularly true for the homes of women of my study: their lives are ‘written in/upon’ the bricks, timber and concrete that formed their houses. It is often argued that the home is integrally “bound up with our own identity”, hence by explaining the importance of home to women in the 1950s, their identities are revealed (Appleyard 1979:4; Marcus 1995).

The gendered notion of home, however, as many writers (Loyd 1981; Madigan & Munro 1991; Marcus 1995; Thompson 1994; see Chapter 2) assert, is produced through the interrelationship between social relations within the home, and the physical structure and design of the home. As Loyd (1981:191) contends, “the man shapes the architecture, the architecture shapes the woman’s role as caretaker”, yet the home is regarded as women’s place. This is particularly true for women in the 1950s; as discussed in Chapter 1 they were encouraged by the government, popular media and their husbands to return to the home (from the war workforce) following the end of the Second World War (Lake 1990; Lees & Senyard 1987; Murphy 1995a&b; Murphy & Smart 1997; Sheridan 2002).

²⁹ Many women (Jadzia, Gretel, Renata) lived in refugee/displaced persons’ camps in Europe (mostly Germany) following the war, while their applications for immigration were being processed (Interviews 1998).

Home and housing were central to the Menzies government rhetoric and policies (1949-1966) (see Chapter 1). Menzies, addressing the interests of the middle class³⁰ believed that they had responsibility for the material and human aspects of home. He encouraged Australians to build their own homes incorporating wise financial decisions (with a moral import of a philosophy of frugality and saving), guided by principles of domesticity (Brett 1993; Murphy 2000:136). Murphy (2000:136) argues that in Menzies' speeches in the early 1940s the middle classes were identified as "forgotten people"³¹ - "the backbone of this country" - who were central to the home-owning strategy pivotal to post-war reconstruction (Menzies 1942 in Brett 1993; see Chapters 1-2). Through owning a home Australians would 'have a stake in the country' (Murphy 2000). Menzies specifically used 'concrete' in reference to the materiality of home, but further the idea of 'frugality and saving' and a philosophy of making-do focussed on women's identity as household manager; he encouraged people to be "lifters not leaners", to be financially independent and not rely on government help (Menzies 1942 in Brett 1993:8; see Chapter 6).

Brett (1993:56) argues that much of the 'Forgotten People' speech was implicitly addressing women: "The real life of the nation is to be found in the homes of [women] who are nameless and unadvertised" (Menzies 1942 in Brett 1993:56). As Menzies regarded the home as women's space, it is not surprising that much of his rhetoric supports the gendered division of labour and women's centrality in making and creating home (see Chapter 5).

Hence, the home is a site wherein societal expectations of the women in my study are made most explicit, where discourses of domesticity, femininity and efficiency discussed in Chapter 2 are embodied, reinforcing a gendered division of labour and emphasising the dualistic split of the public and private realms. The women in my

³⁰ I suggest Menzies was also addressing the aspirations and interests of the upwardly mobile working class of which many of the women in my study can be categorised.

³¹ Menzies referred to the middle classes as 'forgotten people' because he believed that they were 'forgotten' between other classes, the "rich and powerful" and "the mass of unskilled people, almost invariably well-organized, and with the wages and conditions safeguarded by popular law". The middle class is defined as "the kind of people I myself represent in Parliament - salary-earners, shopkeepers, skilled artisans, professional men and women, farmers" (Menzies 1942 in Brett 1993:6).

study, however, conformed, but also resisted and disrupted, such discourses of femininity, domesticity and efficiency (see Chapters 5-7).

For the migrant women a home is central to 'feeling' at home in Western Australia. They inhabit an interstitial space which both belongs to Australia and their country of origin. Therefore, the building of home and the making of home is integral to existence in this interstitial space. Such belonging manifests an identity which is elusive - not yet Australian, but no longer for example, German, Italian, Dutch (cf Baldassar 1997:88-92). In this way the making of home is complex: for example, assimilation to Australian culture (see Chapter 1) required a denial of food, language and culture (see below), but, these elements are the very ingredients women use initially to negotiate their cultural identity and to 'make' home in Western Australia (see Chapter 7).

Further, aspects of privacy resonate in the women's stories. Women first experience a lack of privacy in the Displaced Persons' camps in Europe, then on migrant ships coming to Australia where they were often separated from their husbands, and is exacerbated in the migrant camps when they arrive in Western Australia. Some women were reunited with their husbands in the migrant camps, but slept in large rooms shared with 20 other people, whose beds were separated only by blankets hung as curtains (Gretel: Interview 1998; Helena: Interview 1998; Jadzia: Interview 1998; Clara: Interview 1998). Furthermore, when they leave the camps, some women need to share kitchens and other facilities due to the housing shortage. Many Australian born women also experience a lack of privacy because of the housing shortage, forcing them to live for long periods with other family members. Hence, for women in my study, these two aspects - food and privacy - are underlying elements in the women's desire to have and build a home of their own and are integral to 'making' home and 'feeling at home'.

“Mutton with potatoes and potatoes with mutton”:³² life in ‘the Camps’³³

There were primarily three ways in which migrant women came to live in Western Australia - as Displaced Persons (DPs), through sponsorship by employers and family, or through marriage. Those migrants who had been sponsored³⁴ by employers or family members already residing in Western Australia initially stayed with their families and then arranged their own accommodation. Some women joined husbands (or prospective husbands) who had been living and working in Western Australia for a number of years.

Women and their families who came to Western Australia as Displaced Persons agreed to work for two years for the Australian government, in exchange for their passage.³⁵ When migrant women³⁶ arrived in Western Australia many were transported to migrant reception centres and holding camps³⁷ - Graylands Immigration Centre (1947-54), Northam Reception and Training Centre (1949-51),³⁸ Holden Immigration Accommodation Centre (1949-57; 1962-63)³⁹ and Point Walter Migrant Hostel (1947-69). The camps, hostels and accommodation centres, which were designed to accommodate migrants until they could find work and housing,

³² Gretel: Interview 1998.

³³ For in-depth insight to life in the camps see Peters, N., (2001) *Milk and Honey - but no Gold*, UWA Press, Crawley, WA.

³⁴ The sponsors paid for passage, guaranteed accommodation on arrival and in many cases helped find employment for the new migrants (cf Peters 2001).

³⁵ This arrangement was between the International Refugee Organization (IRO) and the Australian Government. Peters (2001) states: “The IRO proposed that in return for a £10 contribution by Australia towards each individual refugee’s fare, it would provide shipping. For this meagre sum, Australia could also insist that refugees be of a particular race, of a certain standard of health and physical development, and prepared to be placed in jobs of the Commonwealth’s choice for two years ... These beneficial conditions led Calwell [Minister for Immigration] rapidly to conclude the preliminary arrangements. On 21 July 1947, he signed an agreement between Australia and the IRO for the dispatch to Australia of 12,000 DPs per year” (Peters 2001:17).

³⁶ And men; Displaced Persons and some sponsored migrants.

³⁷ The migrant camps discussed in this thesis were military or ex-military barracks or camps, they had varying capacities and were refurbished for use as immigrant centres and hostels (Peters 2001:301-03). The dates in brackets indicate the years they were in operation.

³⁸ Graylands and Northam operated as reception centres for displaced persons from Europe. Graylands also accepted European immigrants (Peters 2001:301-02). The migrants speak of the immigration centres and hostels as ‘camps’, therefore I have also adopted their terminology when discussing them.

³⁹ Holden Centre accommodated displaced women and children, such as the Polish women Jadzia and Helena who had spent several years in refugee camps in Tanganyika and Uganda respectively. European Agreement migrants, that is, those that had assisted passage or paid for their own passage

provided English language classes and introduced the migrants to the 'Australian way of life' (see Chapter 1). The camps were designed as temporary living spaces: migrant women in my study stayed in the camps for between one week and several months. Prospective employers of DPs visited the migrant camps almost daily, seeking workers, and when husbands became employed, women waited in the camps until suitable accommodation had been found.

The camps were the first 'homes' the women experience and for most of the migrant women in my study such camp life is confusing and confronting. 'Making' a home however began when migrant women arrived in Western Australia, not surprisingly with their consumption of food in the camps. The migrant women's relationship to food was contradictory and ambivalent as there was abundance, but the tastes were unfamiliar. Most migrants had never eaten mutton or pumpkin, for example, or salad without dressing, so they were immediately faced with a challenge (Peters 2001:142-148). However, the migrant women in my study found ways to resist or negotiate the unfamiliar tastes - food is integral to the negotiation of cultural identity and to home-making, and the women indicate that food provides comfort (Lupton 1996; Probyn 2000) a necessary element of 'feeling' at home (Hage 1997). In particular, many women found,

(t)he food when we came ... it was really shocking [laughter]. Well, there is not much to tell - it was nearly all the same, sheep - mutton with potatoes, and potatoes with mutton [lots of laughter]. And that was it - and sweets. We had jelly ... (Gretel: Interview 1998).

Nancy, and her family (husband and two sons) arrived in 1952 from Holland, recalls when they went to the dining room for their first breakfast after they arrived in Western Australia: "We didn't like the breakfast, but still we wanted to eat. The youngest one was screaming, you know, he doesn't want ... to have to eat [the food], because we weren't used to Cornflakes and all that stuff ... but we didn't [mind], we thought 'oh well, it's all strange'" (Nancy: Interview 1998).

were also accommodated at Holden. There were other immigration centres in metropolitan Perth and rural Western Australia, but the women in my study were sent only to the camps indicated.

The emotions attached to food produce a dynamic for the migrant women arriving in Western Australia that is complex and nuanced:

Thinking about food has much to reveal about how we understand our personal and collective identities. Seemingly simple acts of eating are flavoured with complicated and sometimes contradictory cultural meanings. Thinking about food can help reveal the rich and messy textures of our attempts at self-understanding, as well as our interesting and problematic understandings of our relationship to social Others (Narayan 1995:64).

Cultural identity is constructed through food and is reciprocal. A total lack of understanding of migrants' commensal needs can be inferred through the government's practice of assimilation in the camps, showing a problematic understanding of the 'Other'. One way of achieving assimilation was through food in the camps. Nancy states: "there was an old Army cook, he was drunk every day, he was never sober, he never asked what the people want, he never asked people [from] our own people to help cook" (Nancy: Interview 1998). Moreover, many migrant women's stories also intimate their own understanding of 'Australian food' as "strange". Ethnocentric beliefs on the part of the Australian government and many Australians in the 1950s reinforced Australian culture and way of life initially in the camps (see Chapter 1). Castles et.al (1992) argues that the migrants mostly from Europe, accepted by Australia, were thought to be able to quickly assimilate so that they would "become indistinguishable from other Australians" (Castles et.al 1992:9).

Assimilation informed popular discourse in Australia in the 1950s. As such many migrant women experienced ethnocentrism⁴⁰ as a 'feeling of not being at ease' with the staff working in the camps.⁴¹ Moreover, camp organisation was hierarchical: migrants and staff used different kitchens and staff had a higher quality and a wider variety of food (Peters 2001:142). Nancy discovered the differences in practices between Australians and migrants: "Well by this time, my husband ha[d] a job in the

⁴⁰ Ethnocentrism is defined in this thesis as attitudes and beliefs that assume superiority of one's own culture over another.

⁴¹ In particular the use of German and Russian language (for signs and by interpreters) for DPs from Eastern Europe (Poland, Ukraine) caused some women in my study extreme unease (Jadzia: Interview 1998; Helena: Interview 1998).

staff kitchen and ... he told me that he ate proper[ly] ... cooked [food], not [like] what we had” (Nancy: Interview 1998).

Most migrant women remembered clearly the strange taste of lamb, mutton and rabbit: “Well in [the Northam] camp the food was really miserable, very, very monoton[ous]. They had bread and butter and potatoes, and boiled mutton all the time, so that I can’t smell it anymore” (Gabrielle: Interview 1998). Some women believe that their aversion to cooking or eating mutton is due entirely to their initial months at Northam migrant camp. The smell, appearance and taste of mutton has produced a lifelong dislike:

I can’t smell mutton, it’s still in my nose. I’m not the only one. And maybe it is more difficult for people who [previously] didn’t have this in their own diet, we didn’t eat mutton at all in our country [Austria], but I know people from other countries, they didn’t mind. But it was very plain (Gabrielle: Interview 1998).

Some women also express ambiguous feelings: “Oh, the food ... they cooked for us”, Clara, a German woman, remembered, “It was mostly lamb. That was horrible, it was very fatty. We like fatty foods you know, but not lamb, but now we love it. But we weren’t that fussy [then]” (Clara: Interview 1998). Gretel reiterates: “Well, I wouldn’t eat mutton, I still [now] wouldn’t eat mutton ... but I like a leg of lamb” (Gretel: Interview 1998).

For some the food remained ‘foreign’, Jadzia⁴² a Polish woman, believed “the mutton must have been left out in all weathers, it was horrible. You know, to this day I cannot cook mutton ... [or] even lamb ... the smell, I still can’t stand it (Jadzia: Interview 1998).

Migrants approached mealtimes with ambiguity and ambivalence: there was a physical need to eat, but also the strangeness of the food:

The (Army cooks) wanted to cook and make a good meal, the material was good, the vegies w[ere] good and the meat ... *but the way they did it* ... Now you get lettuce, leaves like that [size of a hand], and they were thrown on

⁴² Jadzia was 17 when she arrived in Western Australia with her mother and brother and finished her high school education in Northam.

your plate, well “what is this lettuce out of the water, [without] any dressing on it, it’s tasteless”, and we were not used to it, we never ate lettuce in Holland like that, we eat it cooked with a sauce ... Nobody wanted to eat that you know, and then we [were given] pumpkin, carrots and green peas, now and then. Now pumpkin we had never seen in our whole life! ... That was so strange, we [were given] it every day, but [after] a while, “uuurrrhhh”, we can’t eat [it] anymore. We are used to gravy, and we never got any gravy. Oh well, that was something to get used to, but I stayed there eight months (Nancy: Interview 1998, her emphasis).

Therefore, to ameliorate such ‘strangeness’ women experimented and improvised with Australian ingredients to produce a ‘feeling’ of home in the migrant camps. Nancy cooked ‘Dutch’ food illegally in her cabin which, as in other camps (Beata: Interview 1998), was a fire risk due to the floors in the huts being made of wood.⁴³ A feeling of home is achieved by renegotiating and reinforcing cultural identity through food:

It was a very, very short [time] after [we arrived] ... there was a lot, a lot of trouble, the boys [Nancy’s sons] didn’t want to eat any more, well, I can’t swallow it [either]. Then we find out the thing to do, my elder son went for the bread, and I said “you take four slices of bread more for us”, and we had a little kerosene stove, but we [were] not very used to its use. It was really dangerous. It was all wood in the cabins, but we ... [cooked on the kerosene stove in the cabin], and then we went for a bit of butter and a bit of meat ... and [then] we cooked a reasonable meal, so this is only what we eat out of the kitchen. But we were supposed to go there and we pretended to go there and have our set meal (Nancy: Interview 1998).

Through cooking ‘the Dutch way’ Nancy exercises power and resists assimilation to Australian food (and culture) (Foucault 1978; McHoul & Grace 1993; see Chapter 2). She purchases a stove and uses the basic ingredients ‘supplied’ by the kitchen. The story highlights the desire to keep the family together - by cooking familiar foods Nancy is creating a sense of security and stability, but also the negotiation of two different cultures is mediated through food - the ingredients are Australian, lamb or rabbit, but the method is Dutch (cf Hage 1997:101). Hence, Australian and Dutch culture are re/negotiated.

⁴³ The huts that women lived in were called Nissen huts, they were semi-circular shaped made of curved, corrugated, galvanised iron .

Arriving in Australia was also seen as the beginning of a new opportunity (see Peters 2001:117-171). Women of my study also expressed this through food. To Renata⁴⁴ the food at the Northam camp in 1949,

was alright, maybe different, but simple ... It was good food because [compared to] ... the place we came from [a DP camp in Germany] - it was heaven! That's all we had. No complaints ... And one thing, lamb is the best meat, believe me or not, I don't care about steak or other things. [Lamb is] rich, I can't eat it now, but I love it! Roasted, cooked, baked, any way - I like it! [laughter] (Renata: Interview 1998).

Not all women, particularly those who came from European and African DP camps felt a need to resist or challenge. Helena and her mother had been forced out of Poland during the war and had spent several years being 'pushed' from one country to the next Russia, Persia [Iran], East Africa. She discusses the food:

Well, there was rabbit. Rabbit was rampant for dinner. I can't remember ever complaining, but I know a lot of people thought it was a 'pig swill', and my mother said it was cynical to talk like that, because having been through what she had, any food is gratefully accepted, we never ever complained. And it stayed with us to this day ... Anyway my mother brought me up that because of the [shortage of] food - we were so hungry in Russia - that if another slice of bread [is left], crumb it up and put it out for the birds. Never throw it in the bin. If a piece of bread falls on the floor, we always kiss it and say "thank you God" ... Something that stayed with us forever, to really appreciate food. [I] very rarely waste food, if something is not fresh and the cat can't eat it, I don't throw it in the bin, I give it to the birds, birds eat everything. They don't discriminate (Helena: Interview 1998).

Hence, some women use food as a metaphor to position themselves within this 'strange', new culture and to create a feeling of home. However, Jadzia felt (and still feels) that her connection to Australia is similar to the relationship between oil and water - the two will never mix completely (Jadzia: Interview 1998).

Through nostalgic remembrance for and reconstitution of the food of their home countries the women begin to 'make' home in the camps. The women use food as a means of re/negotiating their cultural identity as they find ways of traversing the culture they are expected to assimilate to. When they finally leave the migrant

⁴⁴ Renata is Ukrainian born.

camps they find ways of improvising and cook their traditional foods with the limited variety of ingredients available to them (see Chapters 5 and 7). However, as indicated above some women also acculturate and acquire a taste for lamb.

Most women left the camps within a few months of arriving in Western Australia. They had begun to negotiate Australian culture, most profoundly through food, but also through learning English, although this also had its own stories of acceptance and resistance (see below; see Chapter 5). The migrant women arrived to Western Australia at the height of the post-war housing shortage,⁴⁵ hence when they left the camps to find accommodation they once again experienced feelings of being ‘other’, resentment and overt racism from Australian-born Australians.

“Everyone was out to get their own place”⁴⁶

The women’s stories below about creating home portray ‘the sense of possibility’ that Hage (1997) alludes to:

a homely space has to be open enough so that one can perceive opportunities of ‘a better life’ ... This notion of possibility is crucial in understanding these homely feelings. This is because homely structures are more an aspiration, an ideal goal guiding practices of home-building, than an existing reality and what propels people into home-building is precisely the recognition of a future possibility of more security, familiarity, and so on ... Homes are homely because they provide *intimations*, hints of those feelings, and the possibility of more (Hage 1997:103-4).

However, the post-war housing and building materials shortage, exacerbated by an increasing population, impacted significantly on the ability of the women to physically ‘make’ home. In Australia such shortage was a result of almost 20 years of economic stagnation due to the Depression of the late 1920s and early 1930s and the Second World War. Archer (1996) argues:

⁴⁵ Exacerbated by migration, but also many migrants were accepted because they had building qualifications which aided in building more houses (Emily: Interview 1998; Grace: Interview 1998).

⁴⁶ Anna: Interview 1998.

By 1945 there was a shortfall of roughly 400 000 homes and no stockpile of materials with which to build them. The scarcity led to a dramatic increase in the cost of houses and building materials; rationing began and the size of houses was limited to 92 square metres in some cases, 111 square metres in others (Archer 1996:185).

In 1951 Australia was in economic recession which further reinforced the housing shortage and consequently the shortage of rental properties (Murphy 2000; Thomas 1993). Migrants' arrival in Western Australia and search for rental accommodation was intensified because many owners would not rent their properties to 'New Australians'. Further, some women lived with their parents or parents-in-law whilst their house was being built, also raising issues of privacy (discussed below).

'New Australian' migrant women arriving in the early 1950s who had children and/or could not speak English had more difficulty in finding suitable accommodation. According to Sally, "(i)f you had a dog, they would rent you a place, but if you had kids they wouldn't accept you, so it was a bit hard then" (Sally: Interview 1998). Thomas (1993) writing about housing in the 1950s in Western Australia provides an example of a property owners' advertisement for tenants:

'children welcome' (in the moral sense, these were dark days; in a sellers' market, many landlords forbade children, dogs and sometimes even cats). He received 320 replies praising his philanthropic outlook and had a hard time making a choice (Thomas 1993:95).

Many women experienced explicit racism when searching for suitable rental accommodation: "most people didn't want 'New Australians' ... They shut the door in your face! There were plenty of rooms advertised, but when you opened your mouth and couldn't speak properly, they shut the door in your face" (Gretel: Interview 1998).

Aline, a Dutch woman who arrived in 1951, moved several times due to her lack of English:

We lived with them [relatives] for a couple of nights, and then we went and had a look for accommodation because they were building their house and they only had a shed to live in, so you can imagine that it wasn't very [private]. And so we had a place in Claremont with an elderly lady, I

couldn't speak English, my husband could a bit, and we were there, and after a couple of weeks the old lady didn't like us anymore, she wasn't very happy, I didn't understand her, [so] we went away. We looked for more accommodation ... we had been running from one place to another really, because people were very happy that we came, elderly people thought that was nice, but they didn't know that I didn't speak English. After a while ... we had a room in Swanbourne with Mrs W. [she] is still my friend and we stayed there for a couple of years. We had one room plus a little bit of verandah where my daughter slept, with her boys a little further down on the verandah ... *[Do you remember how much you had to pay for that room?]* Yes two pounds. That was nothing. They were very nice people ... They had five kids themselves plus [an] uncle and they put the boys out of their room onto the verandah and we had the room. So very nice, very lovely people really. *[And they were Australian?]* Yes, they were Australian. And she was teaching me English ... she used to teach me words. You had to pick it up. And we are still friends - 47 years th[is] year (Aline: Interview 1998).

Many migrants shared rental properties or lived with relatives when they first arrived, but often found the lack of privacy, cramped conditions and the sharing of facilities unsuitable. Gretel explains:

... when you live with so many people [five couples] all the time, you can be the best of friends, but they [can] get on your nerves [laugh]. And you only want to have your own kitchen, your own things. For instance, I had been working all those hours, you know, and I came home and I thought, 'I'm going to do the washing', [but] somebody else was ... doing the washing, or I wanted to cook something and somebody else just needed the stove. I just had to wait until they ... had finished and it was my turn. It's not very pleasant (Gretel: Interview 1998).

Anna, who lived in the same boarding house as Gretel, reiterates: "[In] the kitchen, we shared one gas stove, five families and I was the only one who had a baby. Some people were complaining because [they believed] I used more gas than others" (Anna: Interview 1998).

Meg, an Australian born woman, who married in 1958 lived with her parents-in-law for two years to save money for their 'dream' house (see below). Living with her parents-in-law was a means to an end in order that they could have their own house:

We lived at G.'s Mum and Dad, that was the biggest mistake I ever made, and I should have just walked out, but I didn't. We lived there and saved money, I tried sweeping the 'joint' at the end of the day and [to] do the cleaning, but

anyway that's another story. So we lived there and saved every cent that we had, to get out and build the house (Meg: Interview 1998).

Hence, the desire for space, privacy and in some instances to accommodate an extra family member was important to the women of my study. The imminent birth of children often encouraged women of my study to find a home. Kathleen, an Australian born woman, remembers that when her husband had been transferred back to Perth from the country she was expecting her second child and they needed a house: "I was expecting S. at any drop of a hat. We bought a house in Dianella and that was ... open plan. You had the kitchen, dining and lounge room all in the L-shape" (Kathleen: Interview 1998; see Figure 4.1; see Figure 2.4, K5).

... it was a new home ... a spec home. We didn't really have a lot of choice, because a birth was imminent, I was very large and uncomfortable and I was staying at my parents' place and E. was staying with his parents and they weren't far apart, but it was a sort of difficult time for us ... On his salary we couldn't take on a huge [mortgage] ... and someone must have suggested to us about this new house, so we drove out to have a look at the house, we saw this place, a nice new house and it appealed to us, and we really felt we had to have somewhere to go, so we bought it (Kathleen: Interview 1998).

Some women felt restricted in their parenting and their families were suffering. Carmella desperately needed a house; she was living with relatives but felt her ability to be a good mother to her children was being impinged upon: her desires for security, familiarity and community were not being fulfilled (Hage 1997:102). She recalls:

we needed a house, we had three children at the time and we were living with relations which wasn't very convenient, we'd come down from M. and I was living with a cousin ... and she was sort of restricting me bathing the kids and I couldn't use this and couldn't use that ... I couldn't go to my mother because their house wasn't big enough. None of the family, well we all had 3 and 4 kiddies ourselves so we actually went into that house [that they built] and we put up wheat bags on the windows because we were waiting for the glass to come and we nailed wheat bags right around the windows so that we could just go into the house, just to get the children out ... They just couldn't do anything, we just had to sit through it [at her cousin's house] (Carmella: Interview 1998).

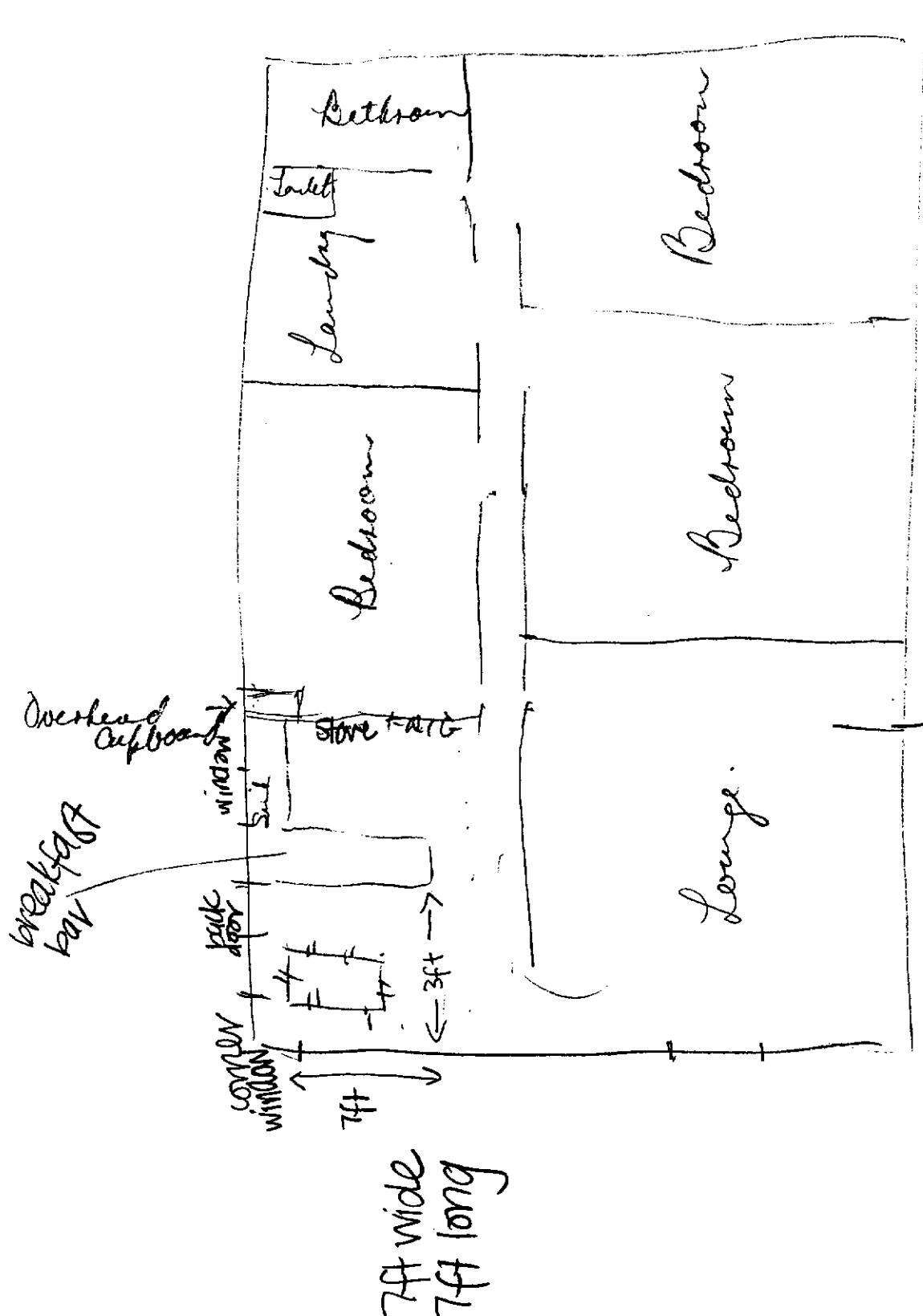


Figure 4.1 Kathleen's kitchen, L-shaped: sink, stove, fridge (Hand-drawn plan)

Other women needed space to care for elderly relatives. Harriet, an Australian born Macedonian woman, wanted to have a home of her own not only because her family was increasing but culturally she felt it was her responsibility to look after her father-in-law. She explains:

Well, my family was increasing, I was expecting my third child and also I had this feeling, obligation that we might have to take my father-in-law in, because he was living with his youngest son. He didn't come to live with us till much later, [only] for a little while, because he was used to the Perth area. But one of the main reasons was that I should ... take care of my father-in-law, we were trained that it was my place to [do so] (Harriet: Interview 1998).

For most of the women in my study it was extremely important to own, rather than rent their homes. For Beata, a Polish woman it was: "because none of us [migrants] had ever had anything. And this stabilised our life, we thought that having a house was very necessary" (Beata: Interview 1998). Further, the women believed renting was a waste of money which could be better used building their own home: "you didn't want to live on rent, we thought it was a lot of money to pay rent" (Clara: Interview 1998).

In comparison to wages, rent was very high in the early 1950s. Often a third of the family wage was used to pay for a room with the use of kitchen and bathroom, which in some instances was shared with five other families and lacked privacy. For example, in 1950 Gretel earned £3/15/- (\$7.50) per week and her husband earned £6 (\$12.00) and their weekly rent was £2 (\$4.00) with use of kitchen and bathroom. Most people had to pay £2/10/- (\$5.00) for a room with the use of a kitchen. In comparison, Louisa's⁴⁷ husband earned the basic wage of £7-£8 (\$14.00-\$16.00) and they paid £5 (\$10.00) a week (in 1951) plus gas and electricity expenses for one room in a house (shared by Louisa, her husband and son) because "[a]ccommodation was very hard to find in those days" (Louisa: Interview 1998).

After Beata arrived in Western Australia in 1950 and lived for two weeks in the Graylands Migrant Hostel, she moved to rented accommodation in Fremantle and

⁴⁷ Sri Lankan born.

then Hay Street, Perth. She and her husband had already bought a house but they could not move in for almost a year because of existing tenants.

In 1953 - the house I live in [now] is the very first house we bought ... We moved in, in 1954. We had to wait for the tenant to move out because of the 'Tenant Protection Law'.⁴⁸ We went to Court, but the judge was not favourable to 'New Australians' and he said to us, "You have somewhere to live already", so we had to wait 10 months before we could move in. We could not put up the rent [they paid two and a half pounds]. And we had to pay five guineas for our two rooms and use of the kitchen and bathroom in Hay Street. So we used to come here in the evening and just look at the house and the windows - I bought material for the curtains and made them, but I couldn't finish off the length because I didn't know the measurements of the windows. I don't think the judge understood that this was our first house/home (Beata: Interview 1998).⁴⁹

"People who had a house with tenants living in it couldn't get them out - the law protected the tenants because of the problem of profiteering. People could push tenants out and then push up the rent" (Dorothy: Interview 1998). After the repeal of the Increase of Rent (War Restrictions) Act (1951), however, land agents/lessors could increase rent without notice to the tenant and if the tenant was unable to pay they would lose their accommodation; this allowed land agents/lessors to find new tenants who would pay an increased rent. Such a practice was unlawful and distressing to tenants (and sometimes to landowners as Beata states above). It was later legislated against in the Land Agents Act Amendment (Dec 1953) and the Rents & Tenancies Emergency Provisions Act (1951) in order to protect the rights of tenants against unscrupulous land agents (Parliamentary Debates, Vol 136:2169-70).

Another form of excluding new property owners and tenants from their houses was through the payment of 'key money'. Key money was an extra payment by the buyer to the seller (and has been described as a bribe) and had to be paid before owners or tenants could take possession. For example, the Minister for Justice stated: "The payment of key money the Government considers to be a racket"

⁴⁸ Beata uses the term Tenant Protection Law but is referring to the Rents & Tenancies Emergency Provisions Act (1951) which was initiated after the repeal of the Increase of Rent (War Restrictions) Act (1939-1950).

⁴⁹ Beata paid \$5.50 for their rental accommodation and the tenants in her house only paid \$2.50, therefore there was a shortfall in income of \$3.00.

(Parliamentary Debates, Vol 136:2170). As in Sylvia's experience the vendor would not move out until 'key money' was paid.

My mum ... bought [the house], I think it was 2,500 pound and she had to pay the lady to leave ... My mother had to pay [her] key money, for her to give us the key, she wouldn't give us the key [or move out of the house] till she got so much money. It wasn't a lot, I think it was 30 pound or something like that (Sylvia: Interview 1998).

The payment of 'key money' was also outlawed in 1954 when the Land Agents' Act Amendment Bill was passed (Thomas 1993:93).

Importantly, most women in my study felt that 'having' a home whether it was owned or rented was essential. But, most women prioritised owning their own home.

Well you couldn't buy homes in any case because of the shortages in that post-war time and both my husband and I felt we should have a home of our own ... You didn't have landlords throwing you out into the street. You must have your own home, not rent. That was the philosophy of the day (Dorothy: Interview 1998).

Being a migrant, Emily explains, and not having the security of their family, "the next best security we could have, was our own home. Nobody could get us out of it, if it was ours" (Emily: Interview 1998). In Meg's circle of friends having a house was an achievement indicating middle class ideals (cf Menzies above, see Chapter 1). "We were very unusual, we didn't rent a house, we were one of the few couples that we knew that had a house" (Meg: Interview 1998).

There were several methods of building a home in the 1950s including, using architects and contract builders, but primarily homes were built by the women and their husbands: the 1950s were characterised by DIY - do-it-yourself owner/builders (Sheridan 2002:79). Plans for homes were not only obtained from War Service Homes, popular magazines, such as *Home Beautiful*, but also drawn by the women themselves. However, there was a basic supply and demand issue at the close of the war; many families needed housing, but materials such as cement, glass, tiles were in greater demand than the government or businesses were able to supply. One reason for this shortage is that Western Australia relied on some imported building

materials, such as glass and wall tiles. A lack of manufacturing industries in Western Australia also affected the rate at which houses could be built. Harry Nisbet, a Perth builder in the 1950s contends:

It's not so much the shortage of materials, but the attainability of them, there weren't enough people in the manufacturing industry ... not enough plasterboard manufacturers. So as the industry picked up of course, I would say by the end of the 1950s, materials became plentiful. Cement was one of the main things [in short supply]. Material was always there, it was a matter of just waiting (Harry Nisbet: Interview 1998).

Local brickworks - private and State owned - also could not keep up with demand, so the women waited for materials (Black 1981; LePage 1986:473; Pitt Morison & White 1981). Dorothy remembers in the early 1950s: "There was a 12 month wait for bricks and a six month wait for roof tiles" (Interview 1998), and Carmella waited several months for glass to be fitted to her windows (Interview 1998).

The progress of Amelia's⁵⁰ house-building was circumscribed by the number of bags of cement her husband could obtain per week to make the cement bricks for building the walls of their house – "yes, you were only allowed one bag" (Amelia: Interview 1998; Peters 2001:237). Amelia's husband started to make the cement bricks in the late 1940s (after his return from war) but did not begin to lay them until 1954, she explains:

My husband started before I met him. He came back from the war which, he wasn't traumatised, but it was 'settling down'. His father owned a block and his mother owned the old house next door to the block, so his father said to him, "if you would like to make some cement bricks" which a lot of the chaps were doing when they came back from the war, "I'll give you that block", and so that was the incentive. And when I met him there were quite a few blocks made, and then it went on from there (Amelia: Interview 1998).

⁵⁰ Australian born



Figure 4.2 Amelia's 1950s house
(Courtesy: Amelia)

The cement bricks⁵¹ were larger than normal bricks which meant that fewer were needed because of their size and because they were hollow inside it meant that they did not have to be fired, this also saved money. However when the bricklayers arrived to begin construction they did not want to lay the bricks, Amelia recalls:

Well, he [her husband] didn't intend on laying these bricks, but he made the bigger bricks that had the hollow inside so you virtually only needed one brick, you didn't have to have a double brick wall. When the building was starting to go ahead, when the brickies saw these big bricks, they said, "oh we've got to charge you penalty rates for these bricks", and my husband said, "I didn't work my guts out to pay someone else penalty rates, I'll lay them myself". And so with the help of neighbours, that was why he decided to build it himself. But it really did work out quite well. We had all the parquetry, and the inside was done by plastering, it was only the bricks that he laid (Amelia: Interview 1998; see Figure 4.2).

Many women, Australian born and migrant, discuss how the materials shortage and the size restrictions placed on domestic buildings affected the size of the house they could build. As a means of providing greater parity for all, restrictions applied to housing size, specifically the number of squares⁵² allowed: "I think you were only allowed so many squares, I can't remember. In the back of my mind I have only 13 squares" (Amelia: Interview 1998).⁵³ A discrepancy exists in the women's stories of how many squares they were allowed to build, but all estimate that it was somewhere between 9 squares and 11 squares. Regulations prescribed the number of rooms a house could have, the ability to close in verandahs and the necessity for sleepouts. Hence, homes were much smaller than the women would have liked:

We had three children. We could only build so many squares per house ... I can't remember how many squares our house was ... They just absolutely cut you to the limit. You weren't allowed any patios or things like that. It just had to be the bare squareage that you were allowed (Ivy: Interview 1998).

As indicated above, the overall house size was restricted which in turn affected the size of the kitchen. Ivy remembers, "I had a good size kitchen in the house. But

⁵¹ Cement bricks or 'blocks' measured 18 inches (l) x 7 or 8 inches (w) x 9 inches (h).

⁵² 1 square = 10 ft x 10 ft, approximately 3.3m x 3.3m.

⁵³ Most women I have interviewed remember that the house could not be more than 10 or 11 squares, so Amelia's estimation is greater. Archer (1996) states the size was restricted to "92 square metres in some cases, 111 square metres in others" (Archer 1996:185).

everything else was very small ... The kitchen was very well accommodated, there were built-in cupboards ... it was the first time I had a sink” (Ivy: Interview 1998). Ivy also considered her new gas stove important (see Chapter 7).

Most of the women of my study considered the kitchen an adequate space. Amelia thought her,

lounge/dining room was actually quite big. I had quite a big kitchen and the main bedroom was quite a big bedroom and the second bedroom was quite big too, so to have a two bedroom place, I don't know, more than likely in those days, we couldn't have got to the third bedroom because of restrictions (Amelia: Interview 1998).

However, building restrictions affected the number of kitchen cupboards:

We would have liked a small pantry because we had one in the house we rented for six years, but that idea went out quick smart too. However, our clever architect put in a very big double door cupboard which is over two metres tall and has six or seven different width shelves without any central partitions and that holds an enormous amount. Whereas in those days they were putting up more and more of those small overhead cupboards and as you know, if you've ever lived in a house with those, you put one biggish dish in and it will take up the whole of one shelf, they don't hold much at all. There were also big cupboards all along the wall that had the sink, so we managed very well compared with some people (Dorothy: Interview 1998).

Overall, Dorothy was pleased with the design and comfort of her kitchen and believes that the overall design suited her family. Specific aspects made the kitchen 'workable' for her:

The kitchen measured 12 ft x 12 ft, which was roomier than we were used to having, and there were two huge windows facing east, both of which pushed up in hot weather. I still love the fact that it faces east and is a cheerful room, bright in the early mornings ... We had five power points in the room - a lot for those days when rooms often had only one or two (Dorothy: Interview 1998).

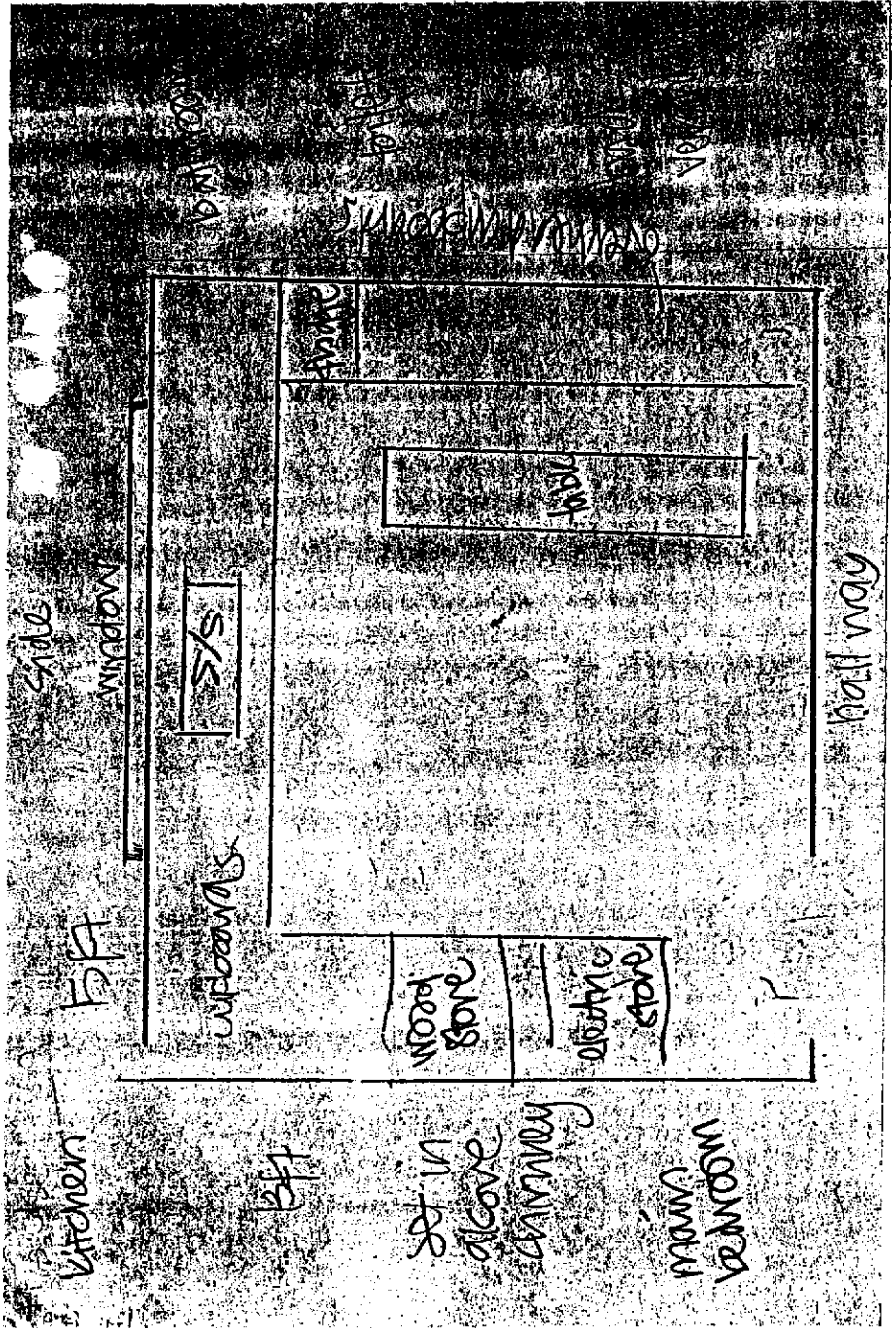


Figure 4.3 Anna's kitchen
(Hand-drawn plan)

Three friends, Anna, Clara and Gretel⁵⁴ all bought land in the same area and jointly built their houses around 1952-1953. Many migrants in my research could not afford to have a builder construct their homes. Anna, who was self-taught, drew all three house plans for which she charged £5 each, and the husbands decided which house they would help build each weekend (see Figure 4.3). While husbands worked on the houses during the week after work, Australian neighbours commented on their diligence:

[My neighbour told me] - "I admire your husband, he comes home from work" - we didn't have a car, he came by tram from the highway in North Fremantle up to Bicton and she said - "then he goes on his bricks and he's whistling away, he's so happy". I didn't understand what she meant, but today I do. They had money, they had their house built (Clara: Interview 1998; see Figure 4.4).

Often the houses were built 'piecemeal' (piece by piece and slowly) - because of the materials shortage and lack of money. Hence, for many women having their own homes often meant living on their block of land in caravans and wooden shacks, or building the garage first to live in, while the main house was built (see Figure 4.4). Renata and her husband initially lived in a "little cottage" on their block of land (which they purchased for £70). Renata explains how her husband constructed the 'cottage':

he got from Fremantle ... dock ... some big wooden boxes which were sometimes coming from Europe. I don't know, [containing] cars or something and he built from that ... Well we had 10 or 20 feet and he divided it into bedroom and kitchen because that was all we could afford (Renata: Interview 1998).

Thus, the 'making' of migrants' homes was very slow. "It was hard in the beginning. But somehow we didn't mind you know, we were so busy - we just d[id] our thing, we didn't whinge and complain because there was no time and no one to listen to you [laughing]" (Renata: Interview 1998). Clara, who lived initially in a caravan on their block of land while their house was being built, reiterates:

⁵⁴ Anna and Clara are German and Gretel is Austrian.



Figure 4.4 Clara's house construction in the 1950s - it is possible to see the caravan that Clara lived in for two and a half years while the house was being completed.
(Courtesy: Clara)



Figure 4.4 Clara's house
(Courtesy: Clara)

Before J. was born, we moved up to the block and we lived there in a caravan ... when he was a baby. I remember breastfeeding him in the caravan, it was hot! *But we took it all*. When he was about three, no, maybe two and a half ... we moved into the house (Clara's emphasis: Interview 1998).

Carmella⁵⁵ bought land (1¼ acres) in Bentley for £600 and had a builder draw plans and build their fibro-asbestos house with a corrugated iron roof (Interview 1998). In particular, she remembers how the floor was obtained despite the shortages:

Yes, for our floors we were [affected by material shortages], and what my husband d[id], he went down to the wharf, he bought a lot of crates that cars were arriving in and he'd put them altogether and [they] would deliver them for us because it wasn't possible to have cement floors. That's what the rule was in those days [cement restriction] and that's how we got our wooden floors, and I think somehow or another they sanded them all down and we didn't put carpet, we put lino on because we could only afford carpet in the lounge (Carmella: Interview 1998).

Many West Australians, especially returned soldiers, acquired government War Service housing loans in the 1950s (Creek 1996; Hill 1959). Although there were a number of plans to choose from, war service homes have an easily distinguishable style of architecture which is characterised in Western Australia by limestone footings, red brick walls, and tiled roofs; they were often also made of wood and fibro-asbestos (see Mabel's house, Figure 4.5; Creek 1996). Pickett (1997:93) writing about War Service Homes in Sydney states that "to qualify for a government loan, War Services Homes had to be built to an architect's design", which confirms the choice of plans available in Western Australia. In 1950 Ivy and her husband, an MP, had their house built in Como using a war service loan. They had a choice of two housing plans and were only allotted "¾ of the service loan" (Ivy: Interview 1998; Creek 1996). Several women in my study built war service homes, but not all used an already existing plan. Dorothy had an architect design her house:

⁵⁵ Carmella is an Australian born woman with migrant Italian parents.

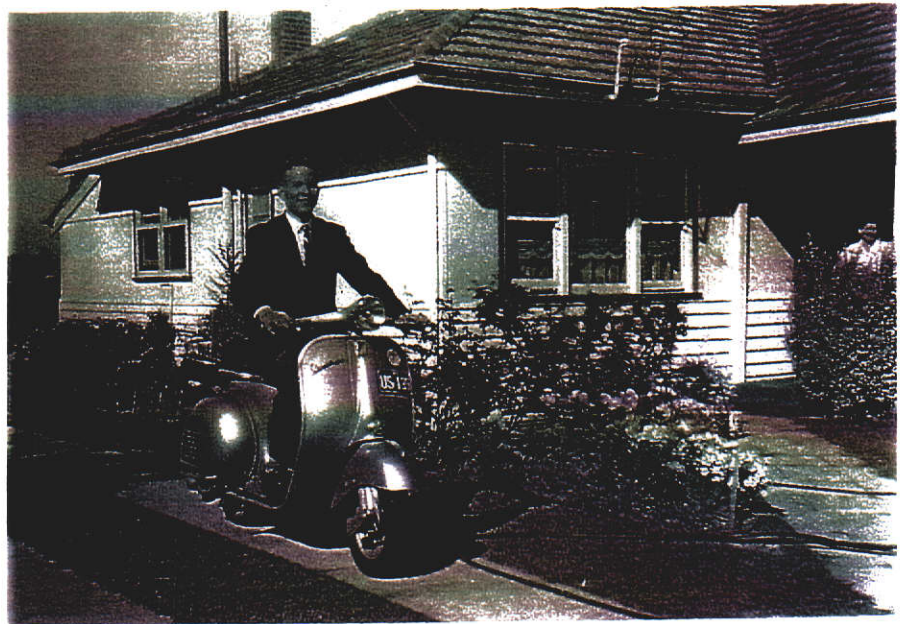


Figure 4.5 Mabel's War Service home, fibro-asbestos and weatherboard
(Courtesy: Mabel)

My husband was a returned soldier, he was in Tobruk and New Guinea, so he was able to get a War Service Loan, but you still had to have permission to build. For some reason, I'm not sure why, if you had an architect he would not only do the plans but also inspect the house. Otherwise someone from War Service Homes would have to inspect the house, because they were lending money on it. That must have been the reason, I never asked why. My husband asked a golfing friend of his who had just retired and he agreed to [draw the plans]. The builder was another golfing friend. We were lucky, he was a very thorough builder. You were only allowed to build 10 squares. We said "we wanted this and that" and of course when it was all priced it was much too expensive, "so this had to go and that had to go" (Dorothy: Interview 1998).

Like other homes, war service houses were also affected by materials shortages. Pickett (1993) suggests that the impact of materials shortages throughout Australia provided an opportunity for the minimalist ideas of modernist architecture to be incorporated. Specifically, the austerity of 1950s built homes reinforces a modernist aesthetic - streamlined contours, lack of ornamentation in building design and decoration: "According to Wunderlich, a building materials supplier, modernism in the 1950s represented 'the logical arrangement of living spaces [and] the creation of new and simple forms of design'" (Pickett 1993:80 in Creek 1996:253).

By late 1950s however modernist architecture began to assert an increasing influence over Western Australian architecture (London 1997; Molyneux 1979; Pickett 1993; see Chapter 1). There were a number of reasons for this. First, material shortages had eased, as had restrictions on the size of house that could be built so different modernist designs were more readily built than previously. Second, a number of Perth architects who travelled overseas to study in America, Britain and Europe, returned to Perth and began incorporating more avant-garde and innovative ideas into Perth housing (Summerhayes: Interview 1998; London 1997:23-25). In the late 1950s a possible link between modernism and austerity can be made, that is, modernist architecture initiated a new way of organising space to make it functional, facilitating a continuity of effective use of space. Specifically, the efficient use of space initiated in the early 1950s because of the restrictions in house size continued into the late 1950s (Hollander 1998:72; Pickett 1993). Third, by this time the economy had picked up and Western Australia was entering the beginning of its twenty year long boom. Thus, full employment and working overtime provided

many Australian born and migrant families with the opportunity to save for a deposit to buy land and build their own homes (Sheridan 2002:79).

However, austerity is not used to describe the houses that the women in my study built in the early 1950s; they state that their houses were simple and comfortable. For example, in terms of design, comfort and size the new house that Ivy built “was heaven after what I’d been living in. But the house did get too small. Passageways weren’t wide enough for children with long arms and long legs. That’s when we moved into the big old house with wide passageways” (Ivy: Interview 1998). The kitchen in the new house as Ivy recalled, “was marvellous, yes absolutely, the most modern kitchen I’d ever seen [laughter] ... Yes, it was a good size kitchen. That was it’s redeeming feature [laughter] (Ivy: Interview 1998).

Some women examine in their interviews their memories of the kitchens they built in the 1950s and compare them with kitchens in the 1990s. They stress that their kitchens were modern, particularly in relation to elements of the design of the kitchen, such as stoves and sinks:

(W)e had cupboards under the sink and we had terrazzo⁵⁶ on the top ... You’d have a big stove [recess] for the wood stove, and then there was another place for the gas stove if you wanted it, we had a small electric stove on a stand next to the wood stove (Mabel: Interview 1998).

Renata elaborates on other qualities that made her kitchen modern: “Today it may be not, but in that time it was modern, we had a stove, we had tiles, a sink, [built-in] cupboards, everything we needed” (Renata: Interview 1998). Dorothy still lives in the house that she built with her husband in 1950 (although they moved in, in 1952) and believes her kitchen is still modern (see Figure 4.6). She states:

⁵⁶ Terrazzo is generally a flooring material, but can be used as a benchtop, of marble chips, set in coloured concrete and ground down to a smooth surface (Watson-Sharp 1969:35).

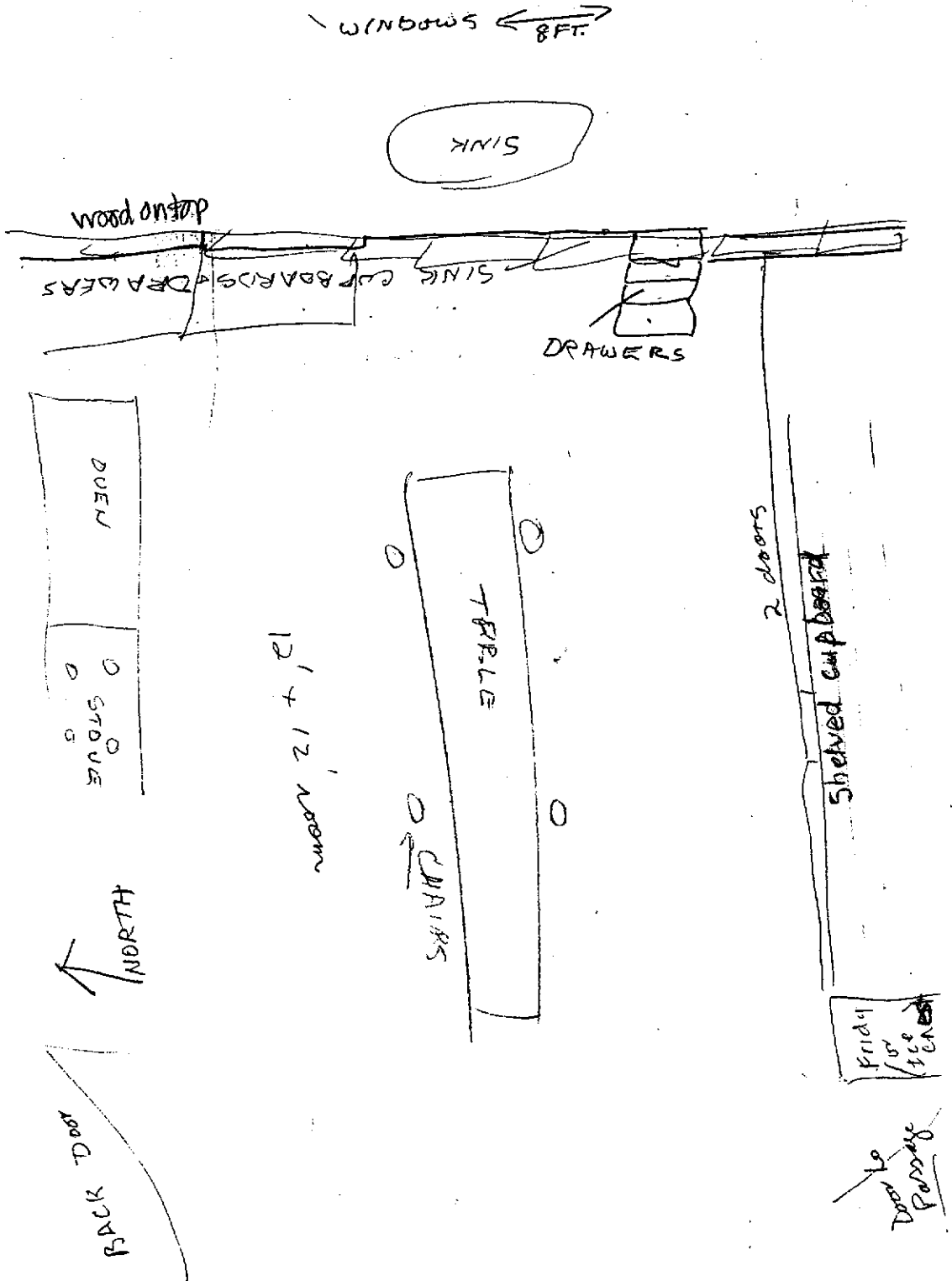


Figure 4.6 Dorothy's kitchen (Hand-drawn plan)

Yes, I suppose in a way it was modern for the time. I was quite happy with it. I still am happy with it and it hasn't changed much since the beginning. I look at some of today's kitchens - one of my daughters-in-law has a particularly modern one with some lovely things, drawers that slide in and out beautifully and superb cupboards, but I don't envy her at all, I'm happy with mine. I was then and have remained happy through the years (Dorothy: Interview 1998).

In Dorothy's memory, as Thomson (1997) argues, the past interplays with the present: "(w)e compose our memories to make sense of our past and present lives. From the moment we experience an event we use the meanings of our culture to make sense of it" (Thomson 1997:63). A possible explanation for such memories of "remain(ing) happy" with their kitchens is linked to the discourse of 'making do' - the women of my study grew up through the Depression and World War II and were instilled with the philosophy of 'making do' with a limited expenditure, and they continue to embody this philosophy into the 1990s (Dorothy: Interview 1998; see Chapters 6-7). But elements of a feeling of home, security, familiarity and community are intimated in some women's words.

A different picture of a 'modern' kitchen emerges from Clara's story. Clara had freestanding cupboards - a "kitchenette, everybody had a kitchenette. You had to have one" (Interview 1998) rather than streamlined built-in cupboards (see Figure 4.7). However, Clara's floor covering of green linoleum and painted white cupboards is indicative of a modern aesthetic (Jackson 1994). Her table had a Formica top, but as Clara states "(t)here was no laminex then. It was a kind of laminex then but not as good as [now]. It was like paper really, like a very thick paper that was stuck on" (Clara: Interview 1998).

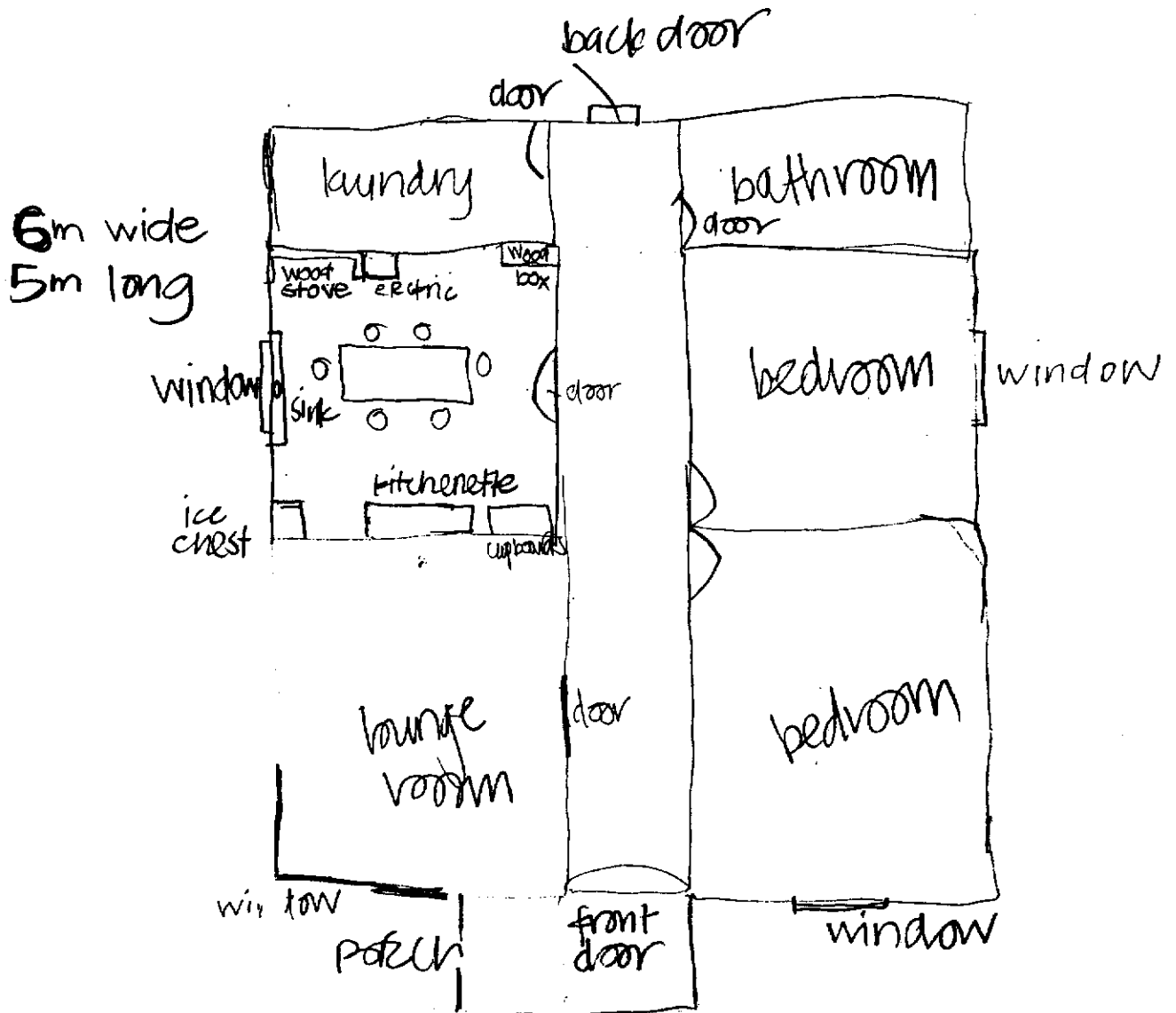


Figure 4.7 Clara's kitchen - central table, kitchenette, wood stove and electric stove
(Hand-drawn plan)

Some women however, incorporated ‘modern’ into their house design. Meg and her husband had seen an exhibition house - modernist in architecture and design - in Applecross in 1958 and reproduced a smaller scale of this house in every detail on their block of land. In 1959 Meg and her husband began building their “super, ultra modern” house. Meg recalls “I was very proud of that house ... I liked that house. We both did” (Interview 1998; see Figure 4.8). Meg not only *had* a house, she had a *modern* house - which carried even more status:

Nobody else had anything better, in fact I felt quite proud because you know the house was like a new pin, it was modern ... And I had vinyl on the floor, that you could see your face, you could eat off [it] and it had a red strip around the edge of it. Absolutely ‘la di da’ (Meg: Interview 1998).

In 1957, Emily, a British migrant, her husband and their 5 children borrowed £3000 and built their modern two storey house in Riverton which provided “security” for them, but not a “homely” atmosphere, as Meg’s did (Emily: Interview 1998). Although perhaps not immediately distinguishable as a ‘modern’ home from the outside as was Meg’s, Emily’s kitchen design and house plans drawn by an architect, were definitely informed by modernist principles. The streamlining of Emily’s kitchen through built-in cupboards and appliances meant that her kitchen was reorganised and became smaller and supposedly more functional (because she took fewer steps) and was reduced to a one-worker space (see Chapter 2).

Emily had quite a lot of input to the design of the kitchen, but significantly, she recalls “we made a lot of mistakes too, since it was the first house we built” (Emily: Interview 1998). Emily chose a modernist colour design for her kitchen of “bold colour contrasts” (Jackson 1994:114; see discussion on colour below):

I had black lino on the floor, that was the fashion then and little speckles on it which were glittery. Oh yes when I think of it now! No wonder, it wasn’t anything but a homely kitchen. I just wanted, after living in homes where there were wood stoves and everything was homely, which I should have realised was the most important part, I just wanted a modern kitchen, with a dining room coming off it, and it’s not always the thing (Emily: Interview 1998).

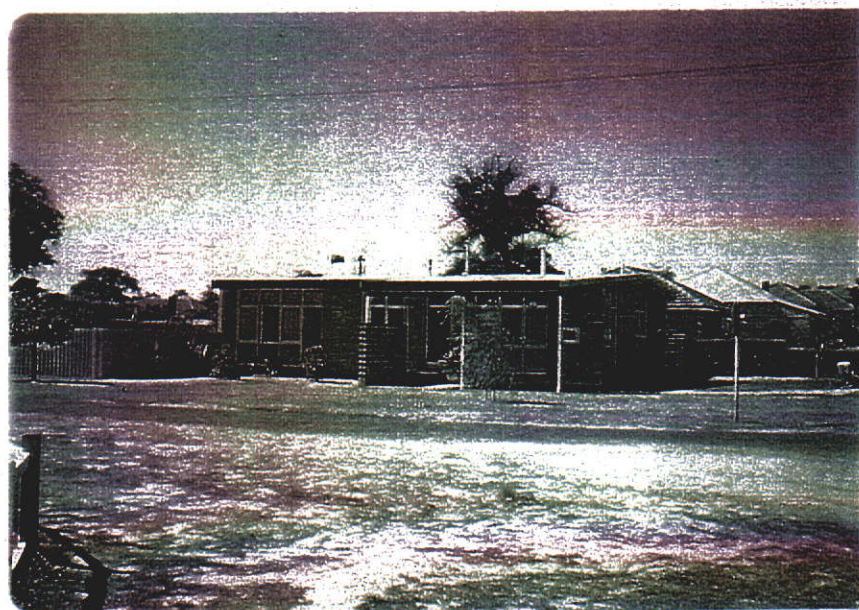


Figure 4.8 Meg's 1950s modern built-in kitchen and modern house
(Courtesy: Meg)

Cupboards were cream, and of course, that was starting to come in through the homes in those days, cream colours ... The cupboards were cream and the tops were black laminex, and black lino floor. It was quite striking, even though it sounds horrible, but it was quite striking, you know when you went into it (Emily: Interview 1998; see Figure 4.9).

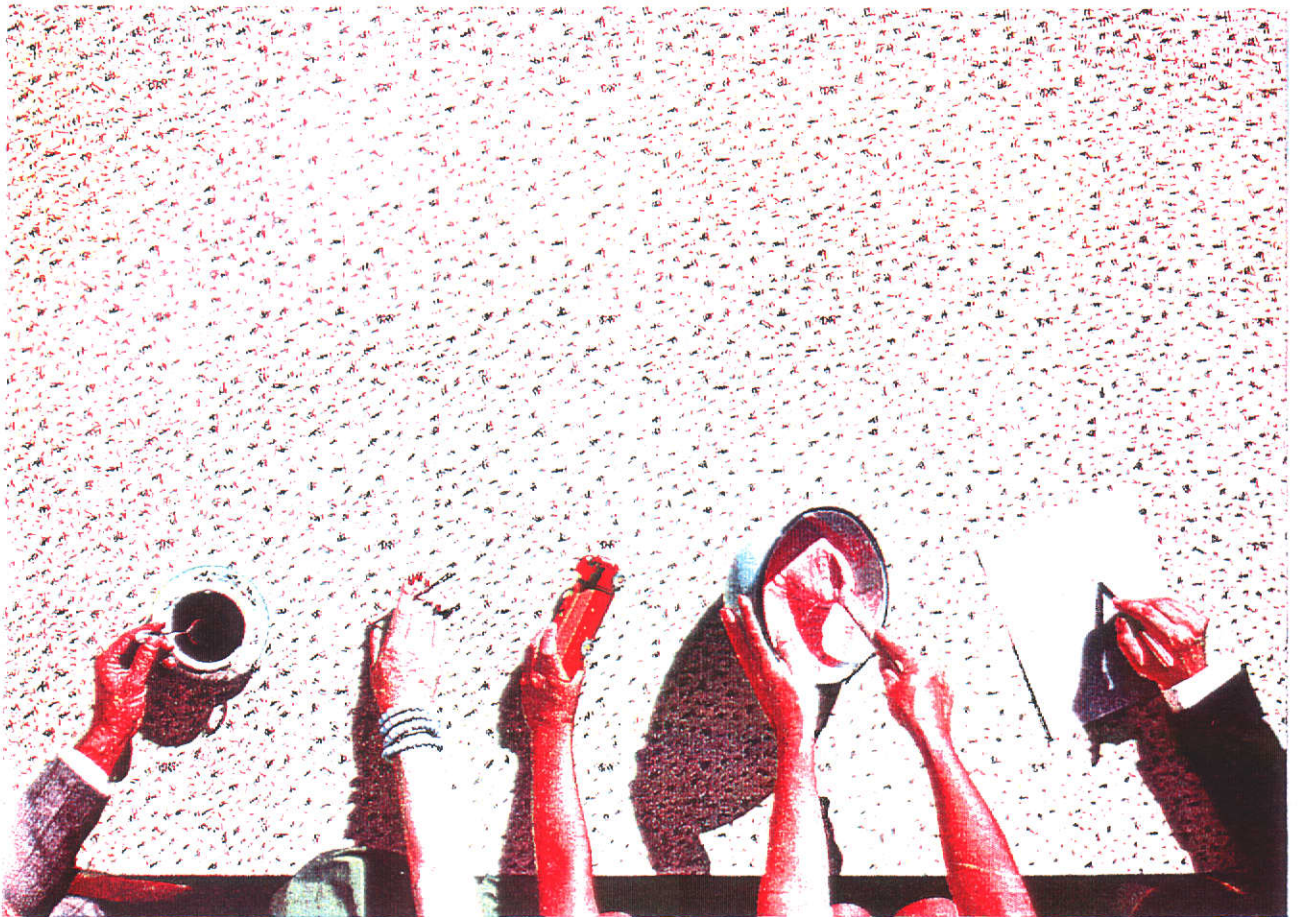
Emily's kitchen looked beautiful and it was functional, in the strict sense, fulfilling the modernist tenet that all things functional would be beautiful, but it was not *home*: "that kitchen, it's not a good house to describe in that it wasn't a home. Because it was one of the worst ... not homely, it was showy and everyone came and said 'oh isn't this lovely', but it just wasn't the part it should have played" (Emily: Interview 1998).

The 'unhomely' feeling of Emily's kitchen was also one of the critiques of early, avant-garde modernist architecture such as designs by Le Corbusier: the designs had integrity (in terms of architectural principles/plans) but they lacked warmth. As Emily states:

Well, it was one kitchen, I can say even though it was our first home, it wasn't a kitchen you could sit in. It was a modern kitchen, it was just cupboards, little square place and the dining room was off it. The dining room was off it and then the kitchen, and of course upstairs was the lounge, so you didn't have that family effect in it. That was the coldest kitchen I could say, not in temperature but in atmosphere, that I had (Emily: Interview 1998).

Emily had specifically desired a modern kitchen but it was not until she had to work and live in it that she realised it did not match her expectations of what a kitchen should be. She asserts:

Well, I wanted a modern kitchen and that was probably our mistake in thinking that's how it should have been, that was the style then I suppose. Which wasn't our type, possibly other people would have thought it was marvellous, but from our family's point of view I didn't think so (Emily: Interview 1998).



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Figure 4.9 Laminex also had patterns that were distinctly Australian!
 (*Architecture and Arts*, December 1956)

Emily's critique of her kitchen can also be related to the connection of home as a reflection of identity (Brine 1995; Duncan 1981; Hage 1997; Marcus 1995). The link between home and identity is not fully realised for Emily, a disjunction between the two occurs; her home and her identity remain unrelated because her kitchen does not create a feeling of home, through warmth created by social and family relations.

Home and identity are also linked for some women who renovated existing homes that were, in most cases, in desperate need of maintenance. Renovation provided the women in my study with an opportunity to practice their design and decoration skills and they transformed these houses into 'homes'.

Emmeline⁵⁷ remembers seeing her 'new' house for the first time, the "dilapidated" weatherboard house in Victoria Park, and knowing that she could not live with her parents-in-law, had little choice but to rent it (Interview 1998). She recalls:

In 1954 ... we rented ... it for £2 a week ... [W]hen we came out I sat outside because it had a broken down fence, the weeds were so high, the couch grass was so high, I sat there and I started to cry and my husband said to me, "well what do we do, we take this place or we go home and just live with in-laws", you know. I said, "no, we'll [move in]", and so he and his brother came out and ... whitewashed or kalsomined [the outside] ... and we cleaned it up. Some of the officers from his department used to come out and they would go back and they would say, "I don't know how R. can invite his young wife to go and live in that place". So we ... just did room by room and as I say I made those gingham curtains and things and straightened the fence, and then in six months, I'll never forget it, the neighbours would come down and say "we can't believe it", it had the best show of petunias and things and it was really beautiful. It was really beautiful to bring this old place from an absolute dump up to this little picturesque place, they couldn't believe it. But we got in there and we worked and the kids in the street would come and sit near the fence and talk to me and say "I remember this house, but it's not the same" (Emmeline: Interview 1998).

Henrietta bought a neglected weatherboard house in Applecross in 1954 but by contrast it was her husband who did not want to live there. She recalls: "K. said to me 'you needn't think I'm living in that dump, I'm not'. I said, 'well you buy it and

I'll do things to it'" (Henrietta: Interview 1998). Henrietta organised the renovation of the house and garden which included builders and a gardener. She wanted to live in a weatherboard house, which was quite unusual for the 1950s - weatherboard was not at all 'modern'. She states: "I love weatherboard houses. That's why my persuasion [of her husband to buy the house] eventually got through I think ... I know that I argued with him about the buying of it, but I wasn't happy until he went in and bought it. So he bought it ... [for] four thousand and something pounds" (Henrietta: Interview 1998).

Thus, renovation allows the women to 'make' the houses their own. Importantly, one of the first spaces to be renovated was the kitchen because it was the focus of the home:

My husband and I renovated that kitchen, it was a real old kitchen when we first went [there]. Everything was chocolate brown, and we ripped all the cupboards out and we bought the timber, things we had never done in our lives, we made new cupboards and we got the wood stove taken out and installed a gas cooker, [an] 'Early Kooka'. We really went to town on our kitchen. As I said that became the focal point of our home (Louisa: Interview 1998; see Figure 4.10).

Hence, like the renovated and built homes which envelop them, kitchens are the repositories of feelings of intimacy and warmth, of security and familiarity, and in terms of 'making' and building home, the kitchen is a central site of creating a feeling of home.

⁵⁷ Emmeline is an Australian born Chinese woman. Even though she and her husband rented their house in the 1950s they eventually bought the house, demolished it and built a new house in the 1980s.

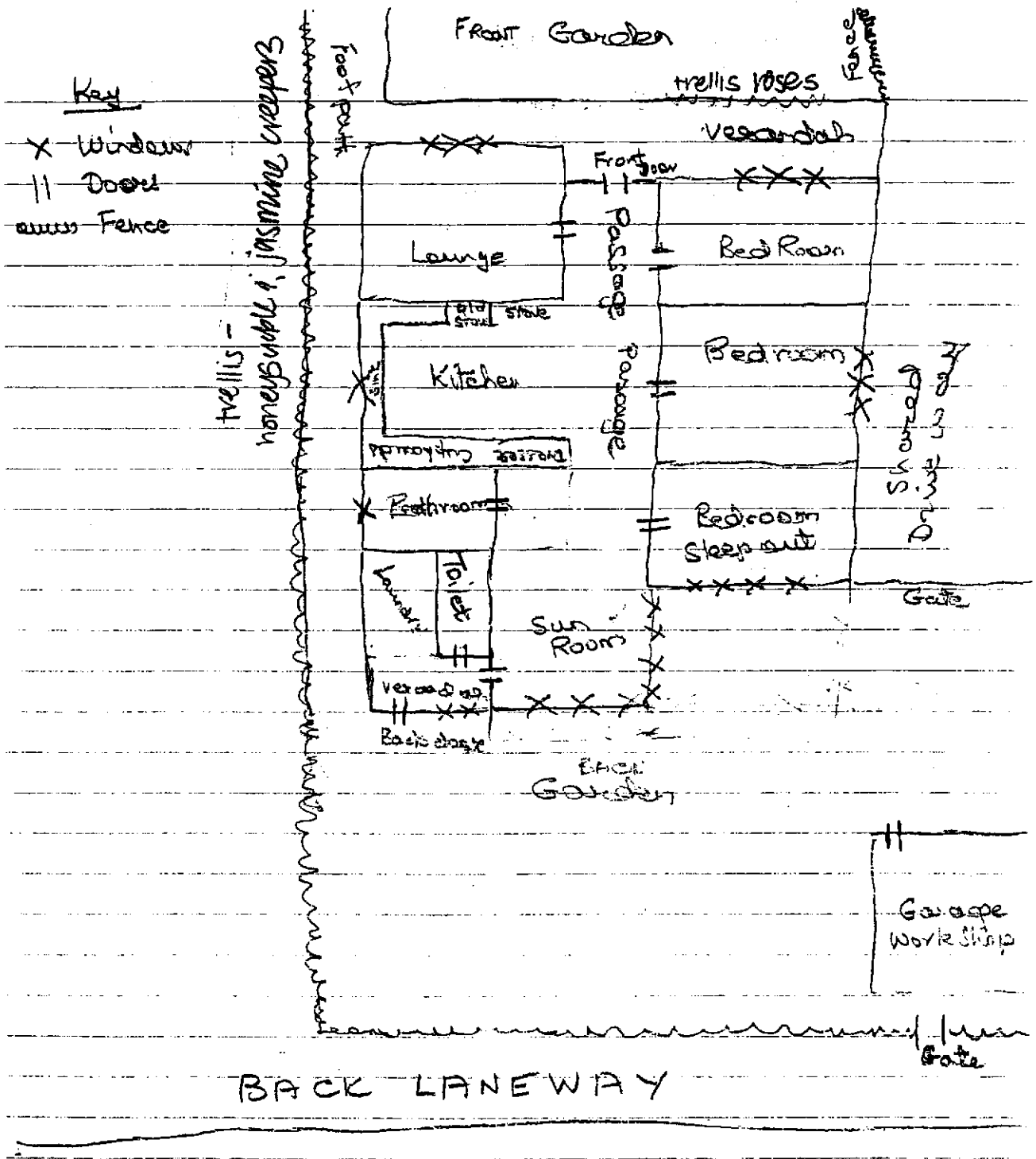


Figure 4.10 Louisa's house plan (Hand-drawn plan)

Kitchen as Home

The women in my study show the multiple and overlapping ways to 'make' home and they concentrate on making the kitchen as comfortable as possible because, "(t)he kitchen from the beginning was in many ways the heart of the house" (Dorothy: Interview 1998). The continual making and remaking of home for the women in my study creates a 'feeling' of home centred in the kitchen which is manifested through the care of their families. Busch (1999) succinctly describes the kitchen as home - where functionality and emotion intersect:

It seems, then, that no matter how far the kitchen goes in becoming a high-tech laboratory, it also remains the hearth, the landscape of sustenance. And the beauty of the kitchen is that it's one of those rare places where we can have it both ways. As the opposing sensibilities of our appliances and accessories suggest, cooking is a science and an act of love. The kitchen is where chemistry and passion intersect, where conflicting sensibilities coexist (Busch 1999:49-50).

In the kitchen women fulfil their 'labour of love' as wives, mothers, housewives and homemakers (see Chapters 5-7). The interaction between space and gender in the kitchen structures the division of labour, work patterns, work flow, social relations, marital relations, parent-child relations and design. Hence, it can be argued that architecture shapes the social life just as social life shapes the architecture.

For all, recognition of the 'kitchen as home' primarily adheres to an ideology of home 'ownership'⁵⁸ which encompasses creating and re/making a home 'we own'. The making of home for migrant women in Australia importantly encompassed the maintenance of language and cuisine, through which their ethnic identities were re/negotiated (see Chapters 5-7). In this sense creating a home becomes integral to the women's identities as being Australian - migrant or Australian born.

The kitchen becomes multi-functional, not only is it a gathering place and a social space for both friends and family but it is a work place for women. The kitchen is

⁵⁸ In this sense ownership is linked to Hage's (1997) "building of the feeling of being 'at home'" and, I argue can refer to a home of their own, whether owned or rented.

regarded as the centre of family life - the site of embodiment of women's multiple identities:

everyone congregates there, we eat there [wife], we chat there, at that time there was music there, things that I liked [housewife], when the babies were crawling around it was there - they could see me and I could see them [mother]. The dog was there, the dog was always in the kitchen, he could smell the food, he knew mum was there and everybody else was there. It was a 'togetherness', a safe haven [homemaker] (Edna: Interview 1998; see Figure 4.11).

The kitchen's central importance in foodmaking necessitated that the women in my study spent a lot of time there. Concomitantly the women practised being wife, mother, housewife, homemaker while cooking and cleaning (see Chapters 5 and 7). They also entertained visitors in the kitchen while they continued to cook. "No, [having visitors] didn't worry me ... You have to take me as you find me" (Louisa: Interview 1998).

Thus, the 'kitchen as home' manifested in particular practices: a central gathering place for family and friends where women worked and talked with other women about family life, recipes and child-raising; a place to eat; a space where women sewed, knitted, read, helped children with homework, wrote letters and played games. It was also a place where many women felt they could relax, that they did not always have to be working: "I loved my kitchen. That was like my home. It was another skin" (Louisa: Interview 1998). Hence, the women embody their practices of the kitchen, which become 'natural' extensions of who they are in the world (see Chapters 5-7). The kitchen was:

a woman's - once more we're talking about my era, in those days - a woman's home, you were in the kitchen all the time. You felt safe and confident in your kitchen because it was yours, your job/your work or whatever you do, you feel confident, but if you meet someone else outside of that you lose a little bit of that confidence. And I think that's why I felt - in the kitchen, I felt good ... Whatever I did everybody always seemed to like it. Cooking or whatever it may be, we just sat down at the table and it was a wonderful feeling. Yes (Emily: Interview 1998).

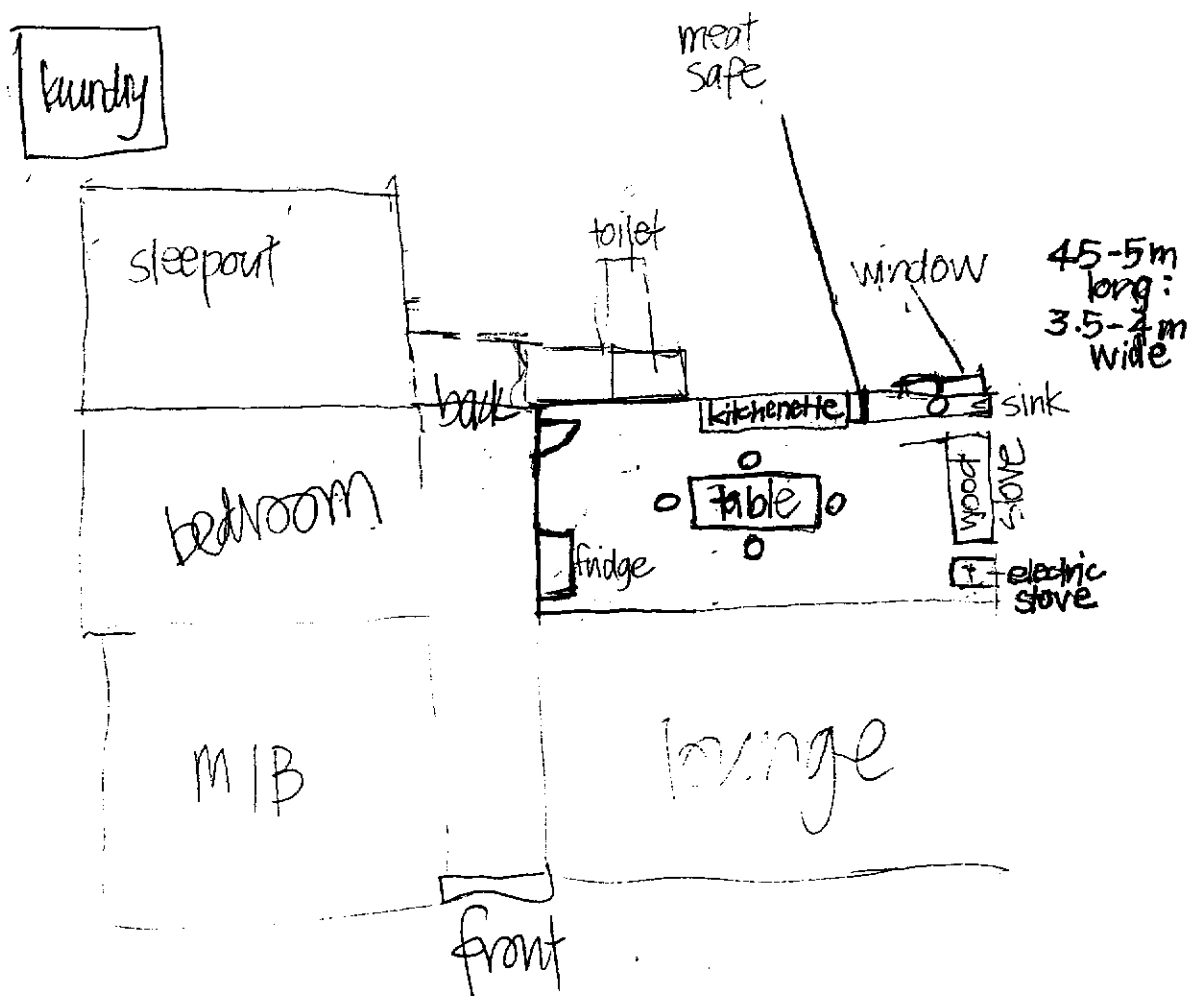


Figure 4.11 Edna's kitchen
(Hand-drawn plan)

Many women described the kitchen as the focus of the home and the space in which they 'felt most at home'. Louisa states: "Even if we had friends we all sort of, [the kitchen] was like a magnet, we all gathered in the kitchen and drank cups of tea and had little chats around the kitchen table" (Louisa: Interview 1998).

In the kitchen, family and social relations were established and maintained. "I think [it] is the heart of the house. And that's where the heart is, suddenly the family who eats together, stays together. I believe that" (Lina: Interview 1998). Emily, a migrant from Scotland, believed that the kitchen as the central place of gathering when her friends visited, was particularly Australian. It is also evident in Emily's story a re/negotiation of culture occurred:

a friend of ours, of my husband's family had been to Australia and he said "don't be surprised", because in Scotland we thought it was terrible someone coming into your kitchen, because you always had a sitting room/parlour where people came, but he said, "in Australia they don't do that. They come in your back door and they come into your kitchen and they sit down". And I thought "oh my goodness gracious me", I thought that was terrible, but now I realise what a lovely atmosphere that does give, the fact that someone comes into your kitchen because that's where the home is (Emily: Interview 1998).

Importantly, women construct 'home' through the kitchen and they re/negotiate culture to ensure that the kitchen and their central placement within it produces a 'feeling' of home. Women also shape the kitchen in terms of their own understandings of efficiency, and through decoration, using colour and accessories, to 'make' the kitchen home.

Work Triangle and Efficiency

Through their organisation of space and kitchen practice, the women in my study re/negotiated dominant kitchen design and decoration discourses. An 'ideal' kitchen type existed in popular discourse in the 1950s (indicated in magazines such as those below) informed by ideas of efficiency and scientific management, that is, a work triangle arrangement of appliances and work spaces - with streamlined built-in and continuous cupboards and work surfaces (see below; see Chapter 2; see Figure 4.12).



An almost ideal arrangement of living quarters is found in this plan for N.W., Concord, N.S.W.

Is this the ideal kitchen?

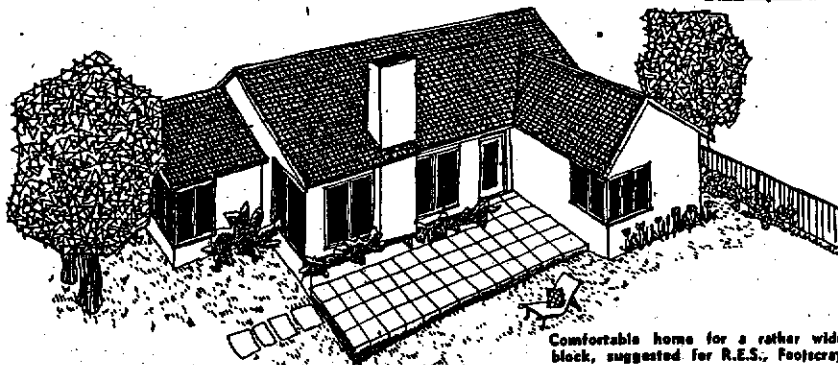
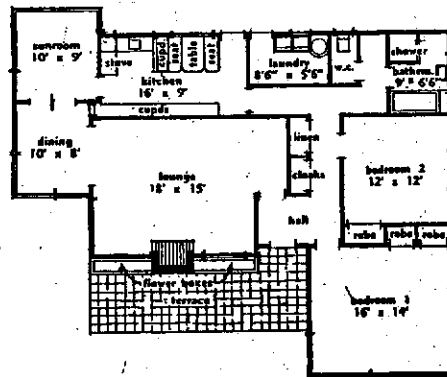
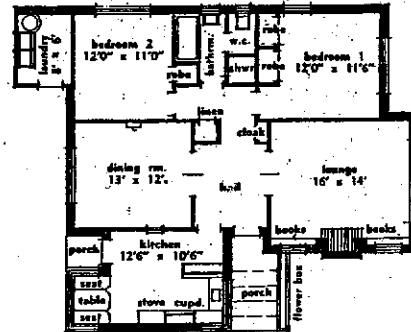
by L. Hume Sherrard, A.R.I.B.A., A.R.A.I.A.

THE traditional position for the kitchen in town houses in London and many other big cities is in the front of the house.

In Australia, kitchens are usually planned at the rear of the houses, and this placing has certain advantages, but more Australian architects are planning kitchens at the front — partly as a gesture to housewives.

In the plan R.E.S., of Footscray, Victoria, has sent me for criticism there is an ingenious compromise. It might well be that his proposed kitchen, with all the advantages of a front, side and rear, outlook, is the ideal for which many Australian home planners are seeking.

In London town houses, placing the kitchen in the front of the house was not done out of any kindness for the cook, but merely because it was the most convenient place. Kitchen windows looked out on to the uninspiring blank wall over a narrow area, or on to a light court topped with an iron railing. Through this railing the cook might see the feet of passers-by,
Please turn overleaf.



Comfortable home for a rather wide block, suggested for R.E.S., Footscray.

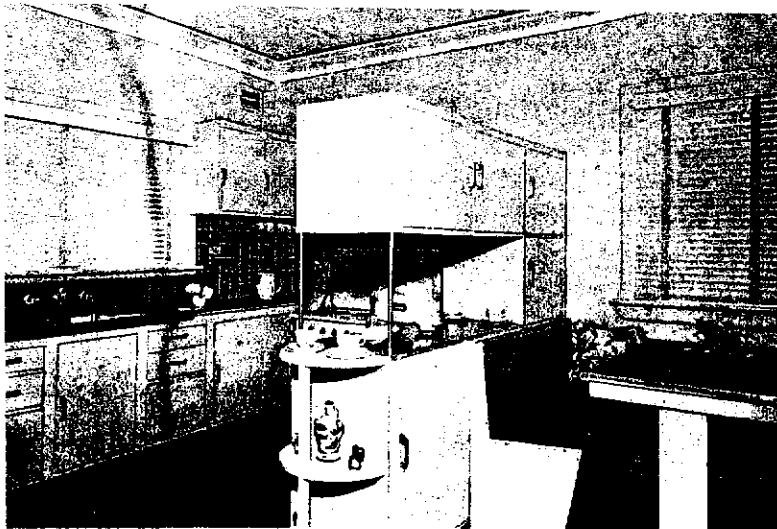
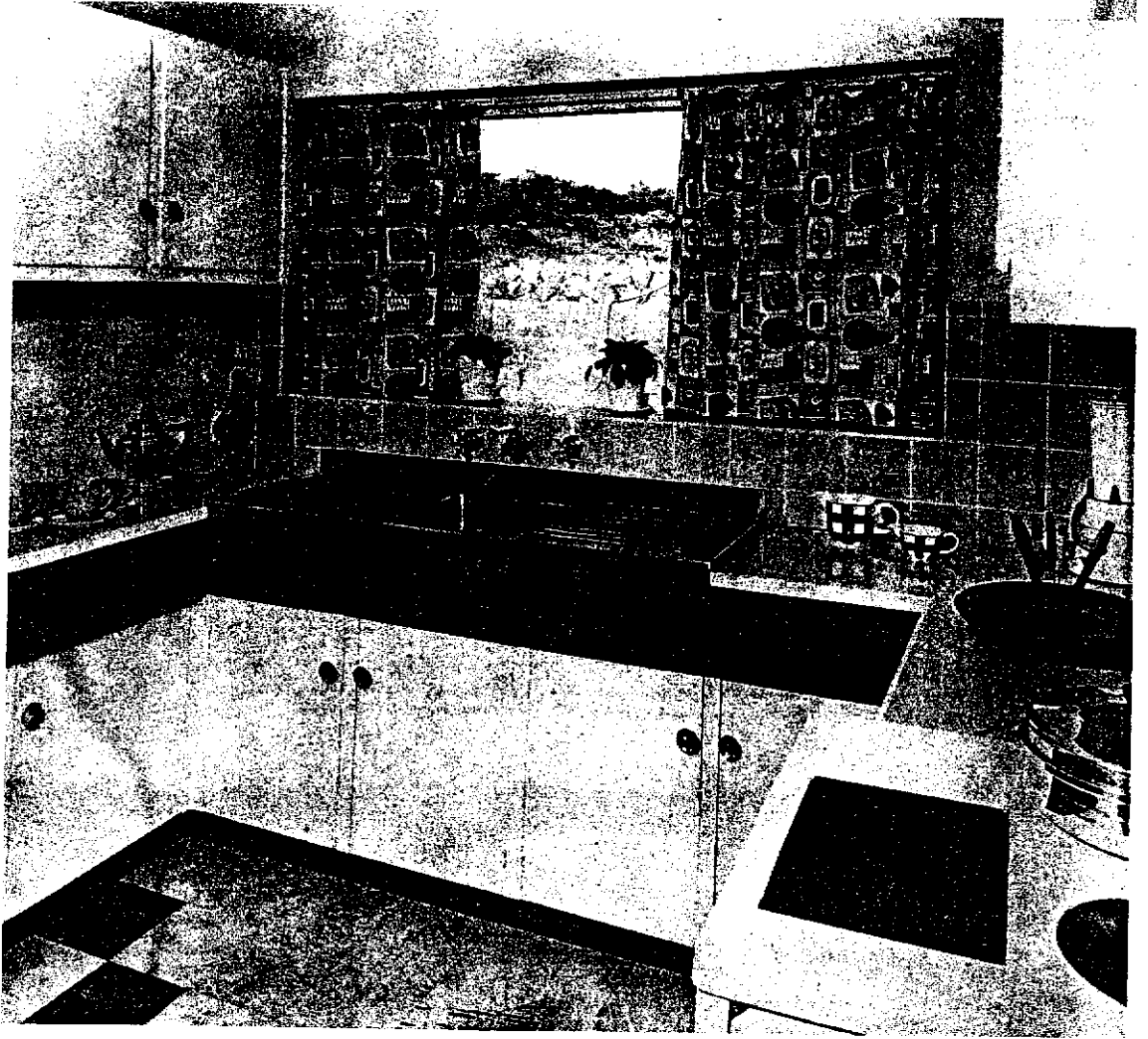
Figure 4.12 The 'Ideal' kitchen existed in popular discourse, but women in my study lived in diverse kitchens (refer plans and photos throughout) (*Australian Home Beautiful*, December 1948)

Generally such kitchens did not have room for a central table, but often a separate breakfast 'nook' or a dinette, which was built into one end of the kitchen, with built-in seats and table (cf *The Australian Home Beautiful*, December 1948; June 1951; *Australian House and Garden*, October 1954; December 1954; March 1955; see see Figure 4.13). The women in my study however lived in diverse types of kitchens. Thus, even though the ideal existed, the women modified, renovated and built kitchens that suited their own needs - they used and worked the space according to their own requirements (see Chapter 5).

The basis of an efficient kitchen is a triangular arrangement of appliances and work spaces (see Figure 2.4). Sparke (1995:85) contends that with scientific management the kitchen became a one-worker space (see Chapter 2). Streamlining of surfaces to the worker's height was inherent to Frederick's (1913) scientific management principles of the kitchen. Height specific cupboards and benches apparently allowed for greater efficiency in women's work practices, specifically because if work areas were comfortable, that is, according to height, the implication was that the worker (woman) would be more efficient. Frederick's (1913) kitchen was - "preferably small and laboratory-like - in such a way that walking between working surfaces, the cooker, the sink, the food storage, the utensil storage and the serving table could be minimised" (see Figure 2.2). Hence, the work triangle informed the basic design of the kitchens of the women in my study. They were aware of such scientific management and efficiency ideas, but women actually used the space of their kitchens in diverse ways:

Of course later on, well about that time I suppose ideas about greater efficiency through watching time and motion were sweeping in on the world and we had dear old Dr Lilian Gilbreth (sic) here who told us all these new ideas - if you put this beside this it saves you walking and wasting time (Dorothy: Interview 1998).⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Dr Gilbreth was 81 when she visited Perth in the late 1950s on a lecturing tour. She was a consultant engineer - an efficiency expert - and published four books on time and motion (scientific management) in the home. She was the mother of twelve children and published a book *Cheaper by the Dozen* on her efficient methods for raising children (Kaledin 1984).



Above: Kitchen in the J. Coleman home, City Beach, W.A., which is a real step saver, all utensils being near at hand, power points at each section. Architect, Gil Nicol.

Left: Kitchen of Mr. and Mrs. Hughes, Normanhurst, N.S.W., which has a buffet-cum-storage room divider and a dining nook. At right, sparkling white cupboards point up the black tiled walls. Flooring of grey rubber.

Figure 4.13 Built-in cupboards, kitchen nook, displacement of central table
(*Australian House and Garden*, March 1955)

The 'ideal' organisation of space incorporates ideas of scientific management and efficiency of which women were aware (they adjusted bench heights and excluded overhead cupboards). But the efficiency that I predominantly discuss below is one in which the women efficiently use the space of their own kitchens and create their own competing discourses of efficiency. Women show resistance by using the space differently to how it was initially intended (Attfield 1989; Partington 1989).

In terms of kitchen efficiency, scientific management and the design process, many women had significant impact.⁶⁰ Dorothy states: "I remember [adjusting the bench height], because the wash troughs and the sink were [too low], that was an important thing. I had had too much bending down where I'd lived before so I was aware of that problem" (Dorothy: Interview 1998).

Anna designed three of the kitchens in my study. Significantly the kitchen was placed in the centre of the home and in one of the houses (Gretel's) the benches were adjusted to suit her height (see Figure 4.14). Judith and her husband designed their house together, and Judith had considerable input to the kitchen design. The cupboards and benches were adjusted to suit her height, that is, two inches lower than the normal three feet (Judith: Interview 1998). Furthermore, Judith's kitchen design did not have its basis in design books or magazines, but as she explains: "... I just thought how I would be working around and how it would be the best for what I could afford" (Judith: Interview 1998).

Hence, many women's use of space in the kitchen produced competing discourses of efficiency and scientific management, such that particular women's work practices within the kitchen become sites of resistance:

⁶⁰ Stoves were also important in the work triangle and scientific management of the kitchen, see discussion in Chapter 7.



Figure 4.14 Gretel's kitchen in the 1990s - she lived in her 1950s house she built with her husband until 1999 when it was demolished and her daughter built a new house with a private wing for Gretel. (Supski)

Once upon a time I knew what was the most efficient place to put what next to what ... The fridge is here, the sink is here, the stove is there and they are all serviced as it were by the table in the middle. I take things out of the fridge or off the stove or wash and dry them at the sink and in each case dump them on the table. Someone said to me many years ago, "It's better for your legs to walk than stand. Standing gives you varicose veins". I don't want all my things [appliances] pushed next to each other. I thought that was an interesting if unexpected point of view (Dorothy: Interview 1998).

Thus, Dorothy used her table as a median point (see Figure 4.7). The 'ideal' kitchen did not have a central point such as the table primarily because it would have meant taking more steps around it to get to the required destination, thus interfering with the work triangle. Furthermore, Dorothy's house was designed by an architect who would surely have known of the work triangle and ideas of efficiency in the kitchen. However, in her case the table was still placed in the centre of the kitchen. Edna's table was also centrally positioned and was used as a workbench for food preparation, for cutting sewing material, for "everything" (Edna: Interview 1998; see Figure 4.11). Hence, the table was integral in some women's kitchens, which defied scientific management of the kitchen by Frederick (1913) who had "proposed the abolition of the central table" (Sparke 1987:16).

Those women who placed their tables in the centre of the kitchen,

found it efficient. Occasionally, years after we built we might have said, "what we should have done when we built was so-and-so", as though we had been silly not to do something, ignoring that we had had to cut back madly anyway because we'd run over our money. But no I don't remember longing to have something different and wishing we had this or that. We were going to have in the original plans a servery that opened between the kitchen and the dining room because both of us had had them as children and they are very handy and so save steps. That was one of the things that was cut out, so we didn't ever have that (Dorothy: Interview 1998).

The efficiency of design is not always paramount. The women in my study worked in the kitchen and manipulated the space according to their own needs. A logic is apparent in the 'ideal' kitchen informed by dominant architectural discourse which *generally* pervades kitchen design, but there is also the reality of working in the kitchen (Summerhayes: Interview 1998). In effect, each woman in my study

produced her own discourse of efficiency - which often competed with the ideal - according to her own kitchen configuration, and importantly to her own working practices.

In contrast, some women preferred to use benchtops and the sink rather than the table as their preparation area, therefore adhering to the ideal work triangle arrangement. Mabel's table was adjacent to her preparation space and therefore did not interrupt the work triangle configuration.

Some women defined efficiency through the presence of consumer goods. Renata had several 'conveniences' in her kitchen: "Yes, it was efficient. I had everything, hot water, cold water, electricity, wood stove. First we used the wood stove, but after when I had the electric stove I used [that]. It was a nice kitchen in that time" (Renata: Interview 1998).

By contrast, Myra's kitchen was efficient in terms of scientific management and time conservation, but not in relation to modern appliances. She states: "It was efficient in that it was a small area so I didn't have to walk far to reach anything. Yes, I guess it was. It wasn't efficient as far as having all the modern conveniences. But space wise it was efficient" (Myra: Interview 1998).

Furthermore, many kitchens were considered efficient (and modern) by women who had been living in makeshift cottages on their block of land, while they were building their houses (see above). Having a workable kitchen that had hot and cold water, a stove and electricity would have been vastly different to the very old houses they had been living in after migrating to Australia where the facilities were not as modern or efficient. Therefore, the definition of efficient and 'modern' is also relative to what the women had experienced previously.

Colour and Decoration

In the 1950s in Australia, as in Great Britain and America, a "new colour revolution" was also occurring in kitchens (Sparke 1995:194; cf Madeleine: Interview 1998). Women in my study use colour as a creative outlet and also to define the kitchen as a

gendered space. Within the 1950s kitchen there was a feminisation of colour particularly in relation to structural elements, wall paint and floorcoverings, and accessories, canisters and dining suites. However, women also reappropriated 'feminine' colours, such as, pink to identify the kitchen as a gendered space. Sparke's (1995) contention that a feminisation of the kitchen occurred through colour elicits an adherence to dominant design discourses and also reflects embedded cultural values of women's position within society (Attfield 1989). But as I argue below, women in my study disrupt and reinterpret dominant discourses of kitchen design through their use of colour.

Coward (1984) suggests the "decoration of the home", in particular the kitchen, is a source of women's creative output (see Chapter 2). In this way women follow what Attfield (1989) suggests is the 'traditional' split in architecture, that is, "form (female) [aligns] ... women to the private, domestic realm and to the 'soft' decorative fields of design" (Attfield 1989:201).

Because the home has been made so important for women, the decoration of the home matters a lot to women, perhaps more than it does to men. In a world of limited opportunities, there can be no doubt that in the construction of the house there are creative possibilities offered in few other places. It is also crucially important to women that they feel all right about where they live (Coward 1984:71).

Although, above I have argued that some women did participate in the functional design of the kitchen, all women in my study made the decisions about decorating their kitchens. They decided on colour of utensils, tables and chairs, curtains/blinds, floorcoverings and paint for walls, cupboards and benchtops, which importantly reflected their personalities and emotional attachment to the kitchen (Sparke 1995; see Figure 4.15).

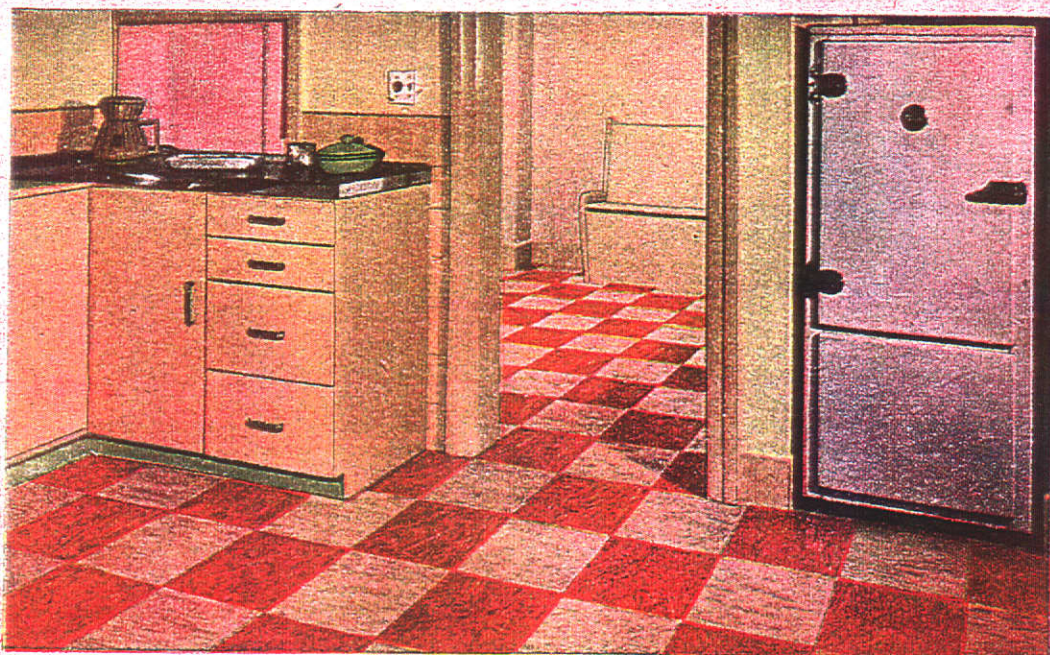
Decorating was a way in which many women could 'improve' their already established homes, and colour was integral to this. Kitchens like Sylvia's, illustrate the impact that colour was having in 1950s interior decoration in Western Australia. Her mother bought an already established house in 1951 in Inglewood and Sylvia and her husband lived with and cared for her blind mother (Sylvia: Interview 1998). During her interview with me, Sylvia consciously feminised her decisions about colour. She states: "I don't know why, it must have been a female [instinct] ... we always used to love colour ... definitely in the house, you'd change your ideas as you go along" (Sylvia: Interview 1998).

Sparke (1995) argues that colour and decoration allowed for individual tastes to be articulated and in doing so, women 'personalised' their kitchens. This type of personalisation that Sparke (1995) suggests, also has resonations with how the meaning of home is constructed for the women of my study. Re/decoration of the home continually expresses women's personalities. This was the case for Sylvia:

I was always improving on [the kitchen] because it had wooden floors. The first thing I bought was some 'fruit salad' lino to brighten up the room, which was, after living with it for about six months or so, it used to grate on me a little bit because it was so bright with all orange and green, because the kitchen was green and cream, and had a terrazzo sink, but I was always improving (Sylvia: Interview 1998).

Sparke (1995) suggests that improving or renovating the home, of which colour design was a part, began with elements that could be changed easily, such as Sylvia's change of floorcovering (see Figure 4.16):

So while colour found its first and most obvious outlet in the painted and papered surfaces of the structural elements of the home, introduced either by the 'do-it-yourselfer' or the hired decorator, it rapidly moved into moveable two- and three- dimensional items manufactured outside the home. Floor and kitchen surface coverings were joined by add-on details such as cupboard and door handles and, eventually, by household goods themselves, from dinner plates to refrigerators (Sparke 1995:194).



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Figure 4.16 Rubber floors; note the colour, 'tangerine and cream'
(*Australian Home Beautiful*, December 1948)

Another common way of integrating colour in the kitchen was through accessories such as canisters, which provided storage for dry goods such as rice, flour, sugar and salt. The canisters formed a distinctive decorative display within the kitchen. Very often they were placed on the mantle or in a canister recess above the stove or hearth recess. Metal or plastic, they were normally in vivid colours, such as red, blue and green. Often for the women in my study the canisters did not match entirely with the other furnishings, but colours within the set would complement existing colour schemes. As Harriet comments: “Well the [canisters] were cream and red. Simply they were the colour given to me (laughter). They were quite nice, a little bit of red” but they did not match perfectly with her predominantly green and cream kitchen (Harriet: Interview 1998). Jessie’s did not match her predominantly pink kitchen either: “You know these ones you used to get, each one a different colour ... (T)hey were plastic ... They were each different colours, one would be white, one would be green, one would be red, just a set of them” (Jessie: Interview 1998).

With respect to decoration, many women in my study could be characterised as ‘do-it-yourselfers’, either instigating or completing changes. Sylvia states: “My husband wasn’t very good at being a handy man about the house, he wasn’t that way inclined” (Interview 1998). Besides the linoleum floorcovering, the “white lacy crossover curtains” with venetian blinds, and the kitchen cupboards being painted green and cream, Sylvia also bought a new “kitchen suite” consisting of table and chairs (Interview 1998). The kitchen suite also expressed Sylvia’s love of colour:

I think later on in the ’50s ... we bought a green laminex table with chrome legs, that was in about 1955 or ’56, that was another thing that I tried to modernise the kitchen ... I saw this kitchen suite which I really fell in love with ... Again I didn’t discuss it with my husband, I just bought it and that was that ... With the green laminex top and it had a chrome piece around it and it had chrome legs and to do it different, I bought red and green chairs which really screamed at the orange and green lino [laughing] ... they had a green piece in the middle and two red pieces around, the bottoms were red, with the green ribbing around the edge (Sylvia: Interview 1998).

Many women in my study ‘modernised’ their kitchens through colour design, immersing structural elements such as walls, floorcoverings, cupboards and moveable objects, such as tables and kitchenettes, in colour (Sparke 1995:194; see

Figure 4.17). For example, cupboards: “were Masonite with laminex. The laminex was yellow. The table and chairs were laminex and chrome and they were yellow and black. The cupboards were painted ... white” (Myra: Interview 1998). Although, some women did not have built-in cupboards, stainless steel sinks or money for “modern conveniences”, their use of colour was “quite modern at the time” (Myra: Interview 1998). Myra describes the various decorative elements of her kitchen gleaned from *The Australian Home Beautiful*:

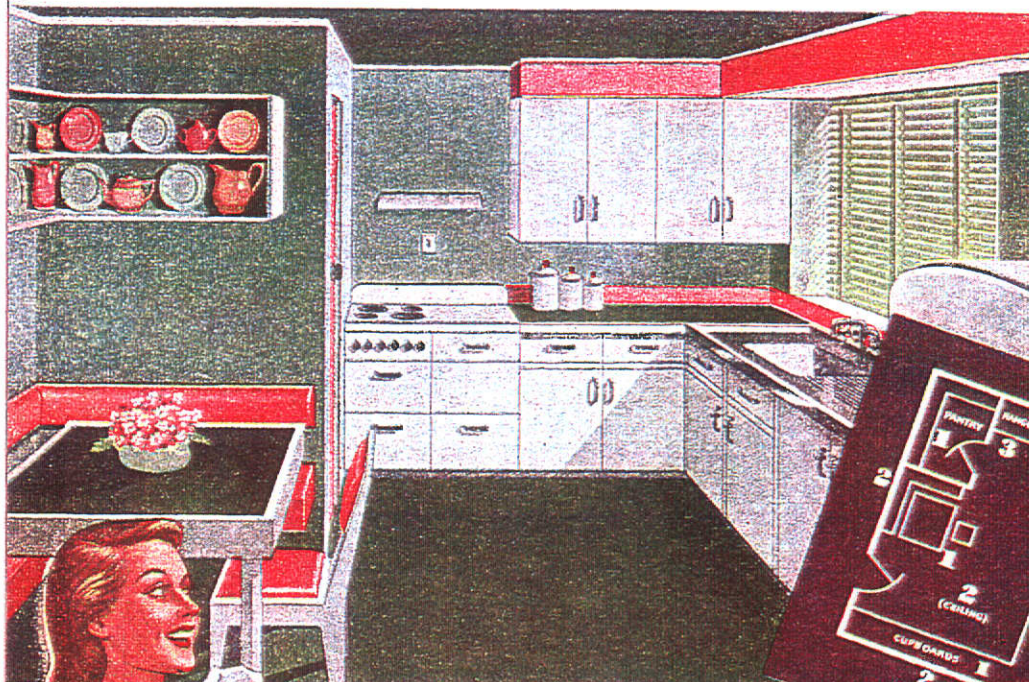
The plastic curtains [had] a white background with yellow sprigs of flowers or something. The yellow [was] to try and team in with the yellow [laminex of the cupboards]. And one of the walls ... the window wall of the sink was done in a very dark [bottle] green ... Because it was one of those trends at that time. Why on earth we had trends, we lived in ... a house that [didn't] len[d] itself to trends, but the kitchen, we tried to be trendy and three walls were done in one colour and one was done in ... dark green. I guess it was done to create a feeling of more space - the darker wall. [*So what were the other 3 walls?*] They were pale primrose yellow, dark cream or something like that (Myra: Interview 1998).

Most of the women in my study used strong, vivid colours such as blue, red, yellow and orange - colours that were popular with the modern architects, for example, Le Corbusier (see Chapter 1). Other prevalent colour combinations in the kitchens of my study were green and cream and blue and cream to complement the predominant colours of Metters wood and gas stoves. Hence, many women decorated their kitchens using the stove as a base or contrast colour for the other furnishings. For example, Harriet's built-in cupboards, “were cream and very pale green [to match her wood and gas stove]. It was a very popular colour then” (Harriet: Interview 1998).

However, not all women had the chance to choose their colour scheme for cupboards and benchtops. Carmella had a green kitchen, but it was “the builder [who chose the colour], he knew I liked green” (Interview 1998). Her cupboards were pale green and the tops were laminex – “bits of green and very light pink and cream in it. They were the ‘in’ things in those days” (Carmella: Interview 1998). Carmella's linoleum coordinated with her kitchen bench tops “it was a pinky, flecky, grey [colour], with bits of green, it was quite nice actually” (Carmella: Interview 1998).

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Figure 4.17 Colour in the kitchen "means better lighting and encourages cleanliness". On all surfaces from blinds, floorcoverings, benchtops, walls, tables and crockery colour could be injected into the kitchen (Australian Home Beautiful, July 1951)

Some women's desire to have a modern kitchen impacted on their housework. For Sylvia, the 'fruit salad' linoleum:

was all ... raised, it was terrible stuff to keep clean because you know, it was a pattern and it was like fruit salad, it had oranges and greens and then yellow. It was all done around in circles and it was sort of raised up a bit and it had these dents in it like very similar to the tile indents. You know what I mean, but there would be a big orange here, and then there would be a little green one and it was all patterned around the furniture, they called it fruit salad lino. But it was lined in green and yellow and very vivid colours (Sylvia: Interview 1998).

The dominant discourses of cleanliness and hygiene, discussed in Chapter 2, inherent to efficiency and scientific management, impacted significantly on the amount of time women spent ensuring cleanliness in the kitchen (Sparke 1987). Furthermore, as with Sylvia having 'modern' furnishings and appliances often meant that women expended more time in maintaining them, challenging the labour-saving aspects of the efficiency and scientific management discourses (Cowan 1983; Sparke 1987; Strasser 1982; Wajcman 1991; see Figure 4.18).

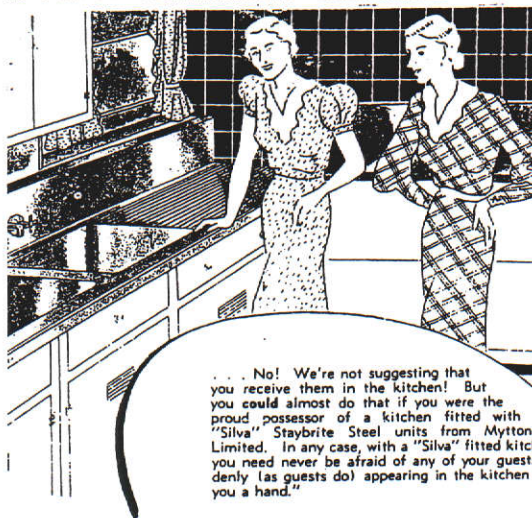
The use of colour in the kitchen also defined it as a gendered space. This was definitely the case for Jessie, the kitchen was her space and her domain. Such self-identification through colour ensured in many cases that the kitchen was identified as a 'feminine' space. The primary colour in Jessie's kitchen was pink - she had pink laminex table and chairs. She recalls:

We bought that when they had the laminex tables. When they came out the different colour laminex table, we had this pink laminex table with the chairs to match. You know with the piping, was sort of steel. [*Chrome?*] Chrome, yes. They were chrome legs on that and then they had a little back on it. [*And what colour was the back of the chair?*] Pink to match the table ... a very light pink (Jessie: Interview 1998).

Sparke (1995:196) argues that the most obviously feminine colour that appeared in the 1950s house was pink. She contends that pink reinforced gendered spaces for women and men and:

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Figure 4.18 Modernising your kitchen
(*Australian House and Garden*, December 1954; Oliver 1999)

Linked with the idea of female childhood, it represented the emphasis on distinctive gendering that underpinned 1950s society, ensuring that women were women and men were men ... Pinkness reinforced the idea that femininity was a fixed category in the lives of women from childhood onwards and by surrounding themselves with it women could constantly re-affirm their unambiguously gendered selves (Sparke 1995: 196-197).

The other colours (on walls, cupboards, benchtops) in Jessie's kitchen were neutral either white, cream or beige, except for her wood stove which had a cream door and green surround. Thus, following Sparke (1995), Jessie's kitchen clearly demarcated the space as feminine, her husband explicitly refused to do any cooking (although he did dishwashing) and therefore I contend that Jessie decorated the kitchen to clearly identify that it was her space. Furthermore, she would also iron and sew in the kitchen: "(S)ometimes I'd bring my machine out and sew in the kitchen because it was nice and bright" (Jessie: Interview 1998). Hence, I argue that Jessie's use of pink was a reappropriation of the most feminine of feminine colours.

The kitchen/home becomes the place where women express their identities and personalities. Theorists, such as Hayward (1975) and Marcus (1995) suggest that for many people home is integral to the way in which people see themselves:

some people think of home as an integral part of themselves. This concept finds expression in several ways: person and environment as mutually defining entities, home (and home environment) as embodying the essence of self and self-identity, home as an extension of self, home as analogous to inner self, or home (and home environment) as inseparable from self (Hayward 1975:7).

This is particularly so for women in that there is a gendered notion of home that resonates with women's lives - so that the architecture shapes the women's lives and the women shape the architecture, but more than this, women revalue - resist, disrupt, conform - to patriarchal understandings of kitchen design and decoration to suit their lives. Specifically, Darke (1994:11) suggests "women value their homes in a particular way": both architectural design and emotional attachment to the kitchen allows women to 'make' home.

Conclusion

The building and making of home for the women in my study is about the desire to have a private space that is theirs, and that also reflects their personalities and has a 'feeling' of home, through providing a sense of security, community, familiarity and possibility.

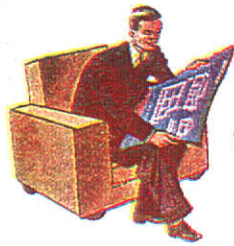
The ambiguity of 'making home' in Australia can be seen in the women's practices of homemaking: the women lived in Western Australia but cooked traditional foods first illegally in their huts (and later, in their homes, see Chapter 7). Thus, not only did women make home in Western Australia, in a physical sense through creating - building, renovating, renting - their homes, but importantly, they made 'home' through the re/negotiation of their ethnic identities by creating a kitchen space that reflected their ethnicity, maintained social and familial relations and, in many instances, embodied the identities of wife, mother, housewife and homemaker. This process is non-linear: the migrant women were confronted with a foreign and strange culture and what resulted was a hybrid identity and a simultaneous reconstitution of culture.

The process in the 1950s becomes one of continual 'making' and 'remaking' of home and hence the creation of a 'feeling' of being at home. The desire for a sense of placement was central to the way migrant women constructed their identities as 'Australian' in that they began to 'feel' at home. For Australian born women owning their own home fulfilled the 'Australian dream' that many working class and middle class women aspired to in the 1950s.

The following chapter continues the examination of women's identities as wife, mother, housewife and homemaker, the discourses of femininity, domesticity and efficiency and women's relationship to these discourses through the practices of ironing, dishwashing and shopping.

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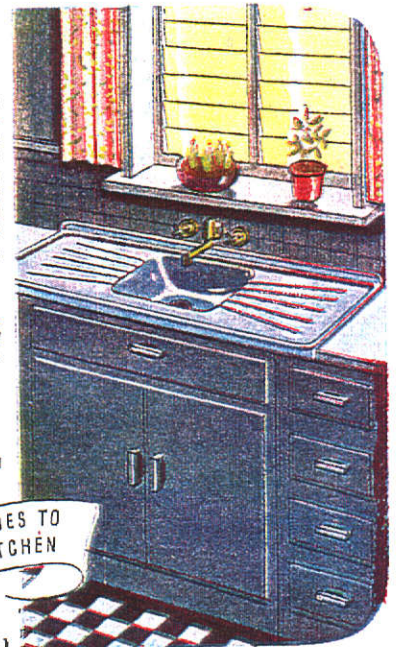
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Figure 5.0 Coloured sinks for modern kitchens (Australian Home Beautiful, March 1950)

Chapter Five

“The kitchen is a woman’s domain”⁶¹

My kitchen to me then and probably still is/was my haven. If I was miserable or if I was depressed about something, to be in my kitchen and to cook something was my means of coping with it and working it out. I’ve always loved being in the kitchen. It is as simple as that (Myra: Interview 1998).

Introduction

How women negotiate their identities in the kitchen is the focus of this chapter. As indicated in Chapter 1, women in the 1950s believed that the kitchen was their space and domain. Their identities were socially ascribed - both by societal expectations and their own agency. Contrary to feminist theorists, such as Friedan (1963), de Beauvoir (1949), and Marxist feminists, Hartmann (1981 a&b) and Rowbotham (1973) who do not contest the dualistic knowledge of breadwinner/homemaker, but rather focus on women’s oppression by men and the economy, I show how women gained power through their embodied practices of the kitchen (see Chapter 1). In particular, this chapter focuses on the practices of ironing, dishwashing and shopping and the meanings women attach to their work. Importantly, I argue that women’s identities are layered, emphasising their complex and contradictory subjectivities.

Women’s subjectivity in this period is very much influenced by and dependent on their practices in the kitchen. Rosenwald & Ochberg (1992b:1) argue “personal stories are not merely a way of telling someone (or oneself) about one’s life; they are the means by which identities may be fashioned” (in Riessman 1993:3; see Chapter 3). It is through the ‘micro’ level of storytelling that I examine the women’s lives - their stories provide a view of life lived as a microcosm. Yet there are contradictions in the way that women of my study discuss their identities. Many women perceive their identities as wife, mother, housewife and homemaker but their aspirations and

⁶¹ Sylvia: Interview 1998.

realities move beyond those socially prescribed. Women's subjectivity, though emotionally and physically bound to their identities, is also embodied in a lived reality which often differs from the dominant notions of these identities. Such embodiment is constantly re/negotiated, and an examination of the lived realities of the women in my study shows this as a dynamic process.

Integral to women's performance of their practices and subjectivities of wife, mother, housewife and homemaker is the interconnectedness of their tasks. Cowan (1983) writing about household technology, examines the heterogeneity of women's daily work and uses the term *work process*, to articulate the connectedness of their tasks:

The phrase *work process* is used instead of the simpler term *work* in order to highlight the fact that no single part of housework is a simple, homogenous activity. One might be tempted to say that housework can be divided into a series of separable tasks – cooking, cleaning, laundering, child care, et cetera. This analysis does not go far enough, however, because each of these tasks is linked to others that it does not resemble ... The concept of work process reminds us that housework (indeed, all work) is a series not simply of definable tasks but of definable tasks that are necessarily linked to one another: you cannot cook without an energy source, and you cannot launder without water (Cowan 1983:11-12).

Whilst Cowan's (1983) conceptualisation of work process is useful to examine the intricate details of women's practices - it indicates what is important to women, how they value their work and gain a sense of power and achievement. It is also necessary to simultaneously explore women's meanings of their work and the nuanced subject positions which emerge from their work practices.

“I mean it was pleasant in some ways, but it was a bit of a chore”⁶²

How did women negotiate their identities in the 1950s kitchen? Hybrid subjectivities appear to form wherein there is a possibility of reciprocity between women and the discourses of domesticity, efficiency and femininity. Dominant 'feminine' positions within patriarchal culture are 'performed' in practices such as ironing, shopping, budgeting and cooking, within the actualities of women's everyday lives.

Simultaneously women subvert or resist the 'good' wife and mother dominant identities expected of them. Further, the discourses shape women's lives as well as women shaping the discourses (Cameron 2000; Smith 1999; see Chapters 6-7).

For example, women like Elizabeth make a clear distinction between their identities of mother and housewife in the central space of the kitchen. She states:

Well I think that everything that goes on in the kitchen is a bit of a chore. It's things that you *have* to do for your family and I didn't consider that as *my* role. I considered my role as more a mothering role and bringing up my family. Part of that is feeding them of course, but a lot of other activities went on apart from kitchen duties (Elizabeth: Interview 1998, her emphasis).

Though inextricably interwoven, women's identities most notably motherhood are differentially valued - cleaning and cooking are not "that important" (Elizabeth: Interview 1998). "Cleaning I just didn't like. I felt that I could, should, be doing other things besides cleaning, but we didn't have the money to afford help in those days so I just had to do it", states Elizabeth (Interview 1998). There is an ambivalence amongst the women between necessity and enjoyment in the embodiment of multiple identities in the kitchen. While women like Elizabeth analytically separate their identities of wife-mother-housewife, they are physically and emotionally intertwined and hence such a distinction is rendered false. Women must feed their families and keep house in order to be a good woman, mother and wife (Duruz 1999a:247; Matthews 1984:87).

A variety of practices inform women's identities in the kitchen space: cooking and swapping recipes; washing; ironing; sewing, knitting, crochet and embroidery; decorating; reading; bottling and pickling; cleaning and polishing; teaching children and helping with homework; socialising with family and friends; shopping; caring for children and elderly parents; builder's labourer and farmhand, rounding up and feeding animals, milking, producing dairy goods, gathering firewood and cooking for shearers. Specifically, women's practices construct their identities as Woman and enact a femininity that is publicly defined and sanctioned. As such many women perform selected or assigned practices in the kitchen as a 'labour of love' (Balbo

⁶² Elizabeth: Interview 1998.

1987:51). Women's practices are an emotional investment in their own identities and they create an "emotional warmth" (Reiger 1985). While Game & Pringle (1983:127) call this labour an "emotionalisation" of housework whereby women's work practices in the kitchen are seen as an expression of love for their families, the kitchen is also a site of contestation. Though, the work that women undertake in the kitchen is creative, "humbling" (Kathleen: Interview 1998) and pleasurable, often it is labour intensive, repetitive and boring. Such contradictions are reinforced by descriptions of the kitchen as the 'heart of the home', but such a homily belies the actual emotional and physical support that most women give to their families. Thus, ambiguities present in women's practices of the kitchen explain why women embody multiple subjectivities, and indicate that their identities can be contradictory:

Yes and no and yet I hate the stereotyping. You have to be, sort of, you know in the kitchen pregnant and be barefooted. I never liked that idea because to me cooking is creative. Put it that way, I'm not [a] slave to it. So if I go there I like to create something that I like or other people like ... so I suppose it is important to me. But I don't know if it is the most important place (Jadzia: Interview 1998).

Further, the women's subjectivity is shaped by their own practice and by how they *feel* about themselves - their pleasure gained, their abilities, competencies and achievements. This is particularly evident when I asked Sylvia about the centrality of being a wife and housewife to her identity as a woman:

Yes. Because I guess it is. I might be old-fashioned ... [in] very traditional ways. We did say it was traditional because that's how I've always looked at life, that the woman's role ... is making a success of [the kitchen], and that is what I term success. And you can be successful with just doing those simple things than going out and trying to capture the world sort of thing and not being anything ... I always felt that I made a success of those things and it was appreciated - for the ones that mattered most. And so, so I always felt that I achieved, ... doing what I did and I loved, you know, I loved it, I loved what I was doing. [That's] (m)y way of looking at it (Sylvia: Interview 1998).

Sylvia's part time job in the city was not regarded as central to her life. I argue that she believed that such work outside the home did not bring success or status, perhaps

because paid employment for women was not socially prescribed.⁶³ Significantly kitchen practices are inscribed on/in their bodies so that the associated performance of subjectivity becomes a ‘natural’ part of the way in which they position themselves not only within the home, but also within the context of the wider society (see Chapters 1 and 7).

We were brought up in that era where families were so important, so you never worried about it, you just automatically did it. One, you had to be a good provider, you had to keep your house clean, you had to have good meals on the table, if you had children you looked after the children. I think in that early stage that was the role of the wife or the female of the house and it just came automatically (Emmeline: Interview 1998).

And Beverley:

I just accepted that that was my role in life and I had to do it *properly* ... Well I was instinctively a mother. I always wanted to have babies and children, they were my first priority – [I] wasn’t a very social butterfly or anything like that. I was just happy in the home and in the kitchen actually (Beverley: Interview 1998: my emphasis).

Women’s focus on kitchen activities indicates a reproduction of social positionings (see Chapter 7). The kitchen was the focus of Sylvia’s activities as a child. She invokes her mother’s ‘recipe’ for maintaining her housewife duties in relation to household management: “my mother always used to say, the main thing in the afternoon is to have the bed made and the tablecloth on, and the table set for tea and that way it always looked as if the meal was going to come out [laughing]” (Sylvia: Interview 1998; see discussion below).

Does being successful as mothers, wives, housewives and homemakers empower women? Many women’s stories show their power within the home and they value their positionings. Such an understanding of women’s power and positionality within the kitchen can be derived from feminist poststructuralist and standpoint theory (see Chapter 2) - women in my study embody the identities of wife, mother, housewife and homemaker (patriarchally defined and imposed) but shape their own

⁶³ This does not preclude the fact that many women did undertake paid employment throughout the 1950s, as Sylvia did and believed it did not significantly contribute to their identity (Meg: Interview 1998).

performance of kitchen practices. Hence, power is exercised through patriarchal definitions of woman being ‘twisted back on itself’: the women embrace these positionings and practices and claim them as their own, shaping, subverting and resisting where patriarchal discourses inevitably do not fit. Meg states:

I had other identities. I wasn’t a house frau and I never ever wanted to be a house frau. That was just part of the person that I was. Those were the things, like I said, I could tidy and do everything I could to keep us healthy and all those sort of things. We weren’t going to get salmonella and all that sort of stuff. So it was part of a role, not *the* role (Meg: Interview 1998, her emphasis).

Ivy reiterates: “Oh yes, there were times [that I enjoyed it] [laughing] ... [I was an] (a)verage cook, very average housekeeper/cleaner, not my favourite pastime, housekeeping, but it had to be done” (Ivy: Interview 1998).

Hence, even though the women do not question their fundamental identities; neither do they see themselves as subordinated. They believe that their job in the home is worthwhile and valuable to their families and the wider society. The social discourse after World War II combined with nuclear definitions of family encouraged women to return to the home - it was their ‘duty’ (Game & Pringle 1979; Lees & Senyard 1987; Sheridan 2002; see Chapter 1). Such a call reinforced the gendered division of labour evident in pre-war industrialisation by emphasising women’s contribution to a more stable life. Women were enjoined to make a commitment to private happiness within domesticity as a means of insulating against earlier fears of economic instability, fear of war and the threat of communism (Harvey 1993:xii; Murphy 2000). Furthermore, it was argued that women’s place in the domestic sphere guaranteed personal fulfilment and individual happiness (and also ensured the happiness of the family). Game & Pringle (1979:8) argue: “the war had an important role in laying ... the ideological preconditions for the development of family life. After all, what were Australian men fighting for, and women working for, if not the good life – a home and family when the war ended”. This ideology is played out in Ivy’s life:

In the ‘50s, it was just following on from the war, the men had been away at war, our families had been farming families, so the men had never really

done anything around the house, and I guess that just carried on in our lives. The men helped and acted as fathers and left everything to the mothers 'cause those days fathers didn't do anything like child changing, or washing, ... The home was for women mainly, men were out in the fields (Ivy: Interview 1998).

Even though the kitchen is perceived as a place of women's societal subordination it is also clear that women in my study exercise power through their various subject positions in the kitchen. Dorothy explains:

Well, [it was] acceptable [to have separate roles]. Yes because it didn't mean that you didn't have a say. I think of my Mother; my Father was older, he was very easy going and he sort of went along happily and Mother was the one who struggled and thought out things and said, "If we do this, we can manage to do that". Mother would have laughed herself silly if anyone thought that she was a sort of second class citizen (Dorothy: Interview 1998).

Therefore, even though some of the women I interviewed very often characterised their identities within the kitchen as following a gendered division of labour, they also implicitly understood that their identities as mother-wife-housewife-homemaker provided them with a degree of power. As Weedon (1987) states: "the positions of wife and mother, though subject to male control, also offer forms of power – the power to socialize children, to run the house and to be the power behind the throne" (Weedon 1987:19).

Thus I argue that women in my study exercise power. The women are agents - they negotiate and renegotiate their power through their embodied practices (see Chapter 2). For example, some women express succinctly the power relations of their kitchens. Ivy's husband was a prominent Western Australian politician in the 1950s and consequently was rarely home. When Parliament was sitting, he would eat at Parliament House from Tuesdays to Fridays and when it was not sitting it would often be 11pm before he would return home. Hence, the family duties and decision making about them were very much Ivy's domain. Ivy's words echo other women's sentiments:

It makes you very selfish probably, but you know, you're responsible for the family most of the time and when they [husbands] want to change, well then,

you know, you feel that you're doing it 90% of the time, you don't like to be overridden [laugh]. Not that it happened very often, very seldom. The kitchen was my domain (Ivy: Interview 1998).

However, some women also discuss power that follows wider societal gendered expectations. Myra explains that the kitchen "was certainly my territory for want of a better word" (Interview 1998), but in terms of power:

If it was a time when father [her husband] wasn't there I was in control, but if my husband was home he was very much in control ... I would [still] have been in control of what I was cooking and that sort of thing (Myra: Interview 1998).

Ivy sees herself in control of the family, in terms of care, decision-making and finances - perhaps this is because her husband worked long hours and it was up to her to maintain the family and home. However, she does not often defer household power to her husband. Myra deferred power to her husband when he was present and regarded herself as powerful in the kitchen, but believed her husband had the 'final say'. Following feminist poststructuralism, Myra and Ivy experience power at differing levels, exercising resistance, subjugation and domination (Cameron 2000; McNay 1992; Sawicki 1991).

Identifying multiple subject positions for the women of my study reveals a disjuncture: dichotomous knowledge, namely of breadwinner/homemaker, men/women, and women's subjugation to patriarchal discourses, such as domesticity, femininity and efficiency, is actually layered (see Chapter 2). By emphasising difference, which feminist poststructuralism seeks to do, and showing the ways in which women actively negotiate and renegotiate their practices and self-fashion their identities, it is possible to articulate the ways in which women exercise power in the kitchen (Cameron 2000:47; Gibson-Graham 2000:95; McNay 1992; see Chapter 2).

Ironing

My passion for ironing began when my mother used to tell me family secrets as she ironed. The smell of steam rising from laundry that's been dried on the line, sprinkled with water and rolled into damp little bundles in a washing basket still gives me a feeling of calm and security. What's most satisfactory about ironing is that, unlike the work many of us do for a living, the effort results in completion (von Adlerstein 2002b:44).

Ironing, a labour intensive practice for the women in my study has a distinct work process (Cowan 1983). But there is also an emotional aspect to ironing to which von Adlerstein (2002b) alludes in the above quote. A sense of completion is achieved from ironing - the work process of washing and then ironing - there is pleasure in knowing that clothes and linens are clean and ironed (Anna: Interview 1998). A sense of pleasure and achievement are recognisable in the women's stories, but often, as the stories below illustrate, ironing was not a favoured job.

In the early 1950s the majority of women in my study used flat irons to do their ironing. The flat iron was a "thick piece of metal that is heated and then pressed over a fabric, usually a damp fabric, to keep it from scorching" (Cohen 1982:100). However, the temperature of flat irons was extremely difficult to control, thus requiring the use of at least two flat irons to complete the ironing (Myra: Interview 1998). Ruth, a Dutch woman who arrived in Western Australia in 1954 and lived on a farm in a small country town, explains this laborious process:

I had two irons that I put on the stove, and you could clean your stove, but it is never clean, so I put the iron on the stove, I had the ironing board close by and if it was hot [weather], it was not so nice - but I had to iron certain [clothes], like the school uniforms. And sometimes it appeared that the iron was dirty and you would [have to] start all over again. So by the time you did half a shirt, it was cold and you had to put the other [iron] on, and you were forever changing the two irons. It was not very nice, no. I'm not an ironing person anyway, so you can imagine (Ruth: Interview 1998).

Ironing was integral to the lessons in Meg's and Shirley's domestic science classes at school (in the 1940s). What to iron first was a lesson many girls learnt. Shirley recalls that they were shown "what part of the garment to iron first, [on] shirts" (Interview 1998). Meg gives a detailed explanation of the use of beeswax and flat irons in domestic science classes, where she learnt to iron.

So you ... learnt to iron with the old flat iron that you put on a range and heat it and rubbed it in bees wax, and [we] had to make starch ... Well [beeswax] ... made the iron slippery so that you could run it over. You heated [the iron] on the range and they were heavy as hell and you lift them up and you rub it in the bees wax and then away you'd go ... it all had to be done *properly* ... [*So when you put the iron onto the range ... wouldn't the range be dirty, so wouldn't you get the clothes dirty?*] No, well that was another reason why the bees wax was on, I can't remember what it was on, it was on some sort of surface or other which you had to put it in and squiggle it round, so then you had a clean iron, but a smooth iron, because it took everything off it and then away you went. No such thing as the electric iron (Meg: Interview 1998, my emphasis).

Some women living in the country without an electricity supply often had no other choice but to use flat irons (Barton 1985:123).⁶⁴ Norma explains how she came to her decision to continue to use flat irons: "Well you could have them or you could have the electric iron, but you had to put the engine [generator] on. So I elected for the flat iron so I could iron at any time" (Norma: Interview 1998). Norma's power supply came from a 32 volt generator that charged a series of batteries (Barton 1985).⁶⁵ As she states flat irons were more convenient and efficient because she did not have to walk to the generator (which was situated away from the house because of the noise), put petrol in it and start it up. Norma's decision to continue to use flat irons, disturbs the debate surrounding technology being labour-saving. Cowan (1983) suggests that not only should technology be questioned in its ability to save time, but also because other processes become disturbed: "This concept also becomes important when we try to discover whether industrialization has made housework easier. We must ask not only whether one activity has been altered, but also whether the chain in which that activity is a link has been transformed" (Cowan 1983:12). In Norma's case, flat irons were labour-saving because using the electric iron involved more labour and time to initiate the power source.

⁶⁴ Barton (1985) states that by 1947 "almost all urban houses and half the country houses in the state had running water and electricity" (Barton 1985:123).

⁶⁵ Norma makes the distinction that 32 volt is not electricity, however I believe the distinction she is making is between 240 volt alternating current electricity that is supplied to homes now. Importantly, appliances could be run while the generator was charging batteries and also they could work on batteries alone. But it was costly to buy petrol and to run the generator all the time.

Other types of iron technology present in the 1950s kitchen were petrol irons that burned shellite,⁶⁶ electric irons and steam irons (Myra: Interview 1998). Irons were also one of the first possessions bought by women in my study (Renata: Interview 1998). Ivy recalls, among her labour-saving appliances, her electric iron was prized (Interview 1998). Electric irons⁶⁷ however did not have thermostat control, as Meg discovered:

by the time I got married in the '50s I had a ... there was no such thing as steam ... [that] you turn on and off, you had to put the thing on and make sure you didn't leave it on because I burnt a hole in the chair in the kitchen because I put the [iron] on the chair ... And that was World War Three because they got hot, very hot, and you had to learn to turn it on and off and all that sort of thing (Meg: Interview 1998).

Even though by the late 1950s iron design and technology had improved, women still encountered problems that required resourcefulness to solve. Kathleen had been given the latest technology in irons - steam - as a wedding present in 1956. But as she explains the 'dream' of efficient technology did not always make work easier for her:

we had to keep getting the bottom replaced ... it corroded. I remember saying to my mother, we can't afford to get this iron fixed up, and she said "look I'll get you one", someone she knew had just bought a new iron so we got an iron passed through [the family] which worked a lot more efficiently than this very expensive one (Kathleen: Interview 1998).

In terms of iron design, Olive,⁶⁸ remembers having "a yellow colour [electric iron] ... a Nelson [brand]" (Interview 1998). The handle was yellow and the 'skirt' of the iron was metal/chrome. The injection of colour into domestic appliances Sparke (1995) argues, was to "evoke a more emotional response" based on desire to have not only a labour-saving appliance, but one that appealed to ideals of beauty primarily achieved through the streamlined appearance of the iron (Lupton 1993:24; Sparke 1995:134; see Chapter 2). The change in colour of the iron from the traditional black signified a "feminising" of the iron and enhanced the appeal of the iron to women as

⁶⁶ Shellite, a brand name product from the Shell company, is a liquid fuel similar to lighter fluid.

⁶⁷ The women in my study discuss electric and steam irons. Steam irons reduce the need for 'dampening down' the clothes before they are ironed as many women discuss.

⁶⁸ An Australian-born woman, living on a farm in south-west Western Australia.

the principal users and consumers (Sparke 1995:137). Thus, the iron was no longer *just* a utilitarian object but signified “through [its] sensuous curves and dramatic chrome details ... a world in which fantasy and desire could be achieved (Sparke 1995:138).

Many women recalled the relationship with their mother while learning to iron, hence, a reproduction of labour can be discerned (Dempsey 1997; see Chapter 7). Myra demonstrates the acquisition of such knowledge:

Well I guess we always had to do things, as young as I can remember we were, I grew up in war time in another country, children just had to help Mum. It was as simple as that. So you learned to iron the hankies first, the little things and then you progressed. I guess you learned by watching (Myra: Interview 1998).

Oakley (1974/1985) suggests that, in the socialisation of girls, three aspects are sometimes evident, “the direct rehearsal of housework tasks in childhood: a more general imitation of the mother as role model; and the repetition of the mother’s housework in the daughter’s own” (Oakley (1974/1985:15). The link between mothers and daughters provides insight to the socialisation of girls. The reproduction of domestic tasks through social relations in Isobel’s case were reproduced from mother to daughter, including the use of home-help. Isobel had ‘home help’ and as a child, her mother also had a servant. Oakley (1974/85) indicates socialisation occurs at a number of levels, this was the case for many women in my study. Oakley (1974/85) contends:

The performance of the housewife role in adulthood is prefaced by a long period of apprenticeship ... Housework is not unique in this respect: other occupations also have apprenticeship schemes. But a female’s induction into the domestic role – unlike these other schemes – lacks a formal structure, and consequently is rarely seen as an occupational apprenticeship. A main reason for this is that preparation for housewifery is intermingled with socialization for the feminine gender role in the wider sense (Oakley 1974/85:113).

However, some women’s stories illustrate that it was not always mothers whom daughters reproduced their domestic practices, in some cases it was their father’s domestic skills that they imitated (see Chapter 7). In the 1940s when she was a child

Meg's father did the "bulk of the ironing", but as she got older she was expected to do the washing every Saturday with her brother's help (Meg: Interview 1998). Her father was "a bit of a perfectionist. And I suppose because I was always obsessed and I took a lot of pride in what I did, a great lot of pride, I wanted everything to be just so" (Meg: Interview 1998). Hence when it came to Meg ironing for her own family, she also "had to have the best of everything" and a sense of pleasure and achievement is discernible:

I used to do that for years at home, all the doilies had fluted edges, you pulled up like that so that they all went [out] like that. And I ironed towels, sheets, undies, everything, every single thing in our house was ironed, right through the kids school, right till fairly recently. I haven't ironed towels for years, but other than that I used to do the ironing (Meg: Interview 1998).

As daughters learned domestic practices from fathers they disrupted gendered knowledge, illustrating that patriarchal knowledge - gendered division of labour - is layered and contradictory, that is, men perform 'women's' work. Cameron (2000) highlights that "by leaving unexamined the putative sameness of women's experience of domestic labor, we are potentially undermining the exploration and endorsement of difference in all other dimensions of sociality, sexuality, and subjectivity" (Cameron (2000:66-67)). Hence, it is possible to subvert dominant discourses of domesticity and femininity and show clearly how women contest or resist patriarchal understandings of their identities. Women learn from their fathers, thus, subverting or resisting patriarchal understandings of women's work. However, like Meg above, they also conform to discourses of domesticity and femininity.

Ironing was more than a matter of taking the clothes from the washing basket and ironing them, because in the 1950s most clothes/linens were still made of cotton (rather than synthetic materials, such as viscose) which made ironing labour and time intensive (cf Harvey 1993:i). As such many women in my study developed a method of ironing. It included an ironing blanket and sheet that was rolled out on the kitchen table, dampening down clothes with water from a bottle with a holed lid, rolling the clothes up for a couple of hours so that they would be damp and easier to iron, and then ironing on the kitchen table or ironing board (Meg: Oral communication,

November 1999; von Adlerstein 2002a&b). Thus, Cowan's (1983) idea of 'work process' is evident in many women's ironing routine.

My husband used to leave very early in the morning, when he was going on a business trip, about quarter to five. I'd bring the clothes off the line and they still had the dampness, you know the dew, and then I would have to sprinkle them down, you had a bucket of water with [a] sprinkler thing off [it] and well, I drenched mine because I wasn't used to it! But I found it much easier to bring them off the line very early in the morning and just roll them (Isobel: Interview 1998).

The kitchen table is central to ironing:

[It] was a fabulous utility ... you'd even iron on [it]. You know, you'd put the ironing rug on and you would iron on the kitchen table. The kitchen table was a very useful table at that time, it was a very, very used utility in the house (Emmeline: Interview 1998).

In this way Emmeline suggests that the kitchen becomes the focus of the house: "If ... you were going to iron, or whatever ... you'd do it on the kitchen table. So therefore, the kitchen became the most important part of the home" (Emmeline: Interview 1998; see Chapter 4). Jessie ironed in the kitchen because it was "nice and bright", but unlike many of the other women who ironed on the kitchen table, she "had an ironing board" (Jessie: Interview 1998).

Most women in my study had weekly and daily routines for the domestic tasks. Most women describe undertaking their practices according to a routine, Monday was wash day, Tuesday was ironing day, Thursday/Friday, Saturday were baking days (cf Reiger 1985).⁶⁹ Some held strictly to these routines, such as, Isobel who had a weekly time limit that she would iron - two hours. Like most women she ironed everything including her "undies, always yes ... you just did" (Isobel: Interview 1998). She describes her routine:

table cloths ... everything had to be ironed, everything I had, was either a doily or a table cloth and they were starched and [most women] ironed and ironed and ironed. *I didn't*, I ironed for two hours and if there were three

⁶⁹ My paternal grandmother's routine was very similar with Thursday being shopping day, Saturday baking day.

things they were left, that was my limit and I reckon that was fair enough (Isobel: Interview 1998, her emphasis).

In this way, Isobel shows that she contests the discourses of femininity, efficiency and domesticity - the 'good' wife and mother, she did not finish her ironing. Other women in my study had similar feelings about their practices in the kitchen:

I mean I'm not a servant, but that's what I like ... I loved my family ... I can keep myself occupied and like I said, "I like to read", so if I'm home on my own, I mean, I'm not a slave over the kitchen ... the kitchen is one interest ... which I have which is really important, you know (Lina: Interview 1998).

The routinisation of such household work as ironing is intimately linked to women's performance of their gendered identity and is integral to socialisation. Dempsey (1997) suggests that, "(f)emales learn to see themselves primarily as future homemakers and mothers and judge their personal worth by how well they perform as wives and mothers" (Dempsey 1997:9). Some women in my study explicitly discussed this internalisation of gender identities: "Nobody thought of going out to work, you just got farewelled from your job as a spinster and then you were a married woman and looked after a house and a husband" (Florence: Interview 1998).

Following a routine is inherent to the professionalisation of housework and linked with scientific management of the kitchen in which women were taught in domestic science classes how to manage the home (even though they were supposed to be able to do this 'innately' because they were women (Reiger 1985:69-70; see Chapter 2). Reiger (1985), writing about the impact of modernisation on the Australian family 1880-1940, argues that domestic science education and the introduction of technology into the home were principal strategies used by reform groups such as the medical profession, teachers and domestic science educators to "'rationalize' the domestic world: to extend the principles of science and instrumental reason to the operation of the household and to the management of personal relationships" (Reiger 1985:3; cf Reiger 1987). In this way women's knowledge was aligned with more highly valued public knowledge. It is possible to see the impact of such discourses in the stories above and below: "(W)hen one got married ... you had a day to clean the windows, a day to wash the floors, a day to do the washing, a day to do the

ironing and a day to cook your cakes and things and you had a routine and you did it like that” (Florence: Interview 1998).

Besides a weekly routine many women in my study also had a daily routine that centred around the kitchen:

Well I lived mainly in the kitchen, because once I got breakfast done, there was the washing and the babies, and of course babies always need feeding and washing. The ironing, making sure everything was clean, to have a proper routine, you have to have a system otherwise it won't work. *Discipline* (Edna: Interview 1998, my emphasis).

The routine of housework develops as a means of women structuring their work - but importantly it is through this routinisation that women define their identities. Women structure their days and weeks enacting a type of self-surveillance (Foucault 1979; 1984). Women's bodies become 'trained' to fulfill their routines – they become docile bodies and enforce an internalised self-discipline (as Edna states above). Such discipline is enforced by women themselves and by familial and societal expectations of being a 'good' wife, mother, housewife and homemaker (Hunt 1989; Matthews 1984). Further, Craik (1989) suggests the kitchen has become a panopticon in which the surveiller and the surveilled are one and the same, namely the housewife. The kitchen as panopticon operates in two ways: women are disciplined in terms of self-surveillance to fulfill their duties in an efficient manner; and the architecture of the kitchen is panoptical, because scientific management and efficiency of the kitchen has reduced it to a streamlined, one-worker space (see Chapters 2 and 4). Craik (1989) uses Bentham's (1843) and Foucault's (1977) understanding of the panopticon to elaborate how the kitchen can be regarded as a disciplinary site. The panopticon,

assures the automatic functioning of power ... the surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action; that the perfection of power should ... render its actual exercise unnecessary; that this architectural apparatus should be a machine for creating and sustaining a power relation independent of the person who exercises it; in short, that the inmates should be caught up in a power situation of which they are themselves the bearers (Foucault 1977:201).

Moreover, Craik (1989) argues that the kitchen is the “site and source of domestic power ... yet, it is constrained by its very internalisation and institutionalisation” (Craik 1989:48). Pamela’s⁷⁰ experience of ironing is panoptical:

I remember counting, my husband changed socks, shirts, hanky everyday; and he never put shirt or hanky, shirt on him, hanky in his pocket, without being ironed. So it was a continuous job to wash, iron, wash, iron and cook and that was ... I must admit that was constantly on my mind to be up to date (Pamela: Interview 1998).

After preparing meals, “(w)ashing and keeping clothes tidy” for husbands and children, was for many women in my study the “most important” aspect of being a wife, mother and housewife (Pamela: Interview 1998). Women regulated their own behaviour which was also surveilled by husbands. There was an *expectation* created and perpetuated by Pamela and her husband that washing and ironing were her “job”, specifically, such internalisation of identities - wife, mother, housewife, homemaker - was inherent to women’s socialisation (Craik 1989; Dempsey 1997; Oakley 1974/1985; Reiger 1985). However, as Weedon (1987) suggests, patriarchal discourse, such as the gendered division of labour is “immensely seductive. It signifies warmth, happiness and emotional and material security” (Weedon 1987:16). The identities of many women are *defined* by such patriarchal discourse. For example, Pamela⁷¹ explains:

Well I tell you one thing, Croatian men are very, very patriarchal people, they think that whatever wife’s job is, it is below their dignity to give a hand. In the house, men don’t really do much at home, and the wife they continue the same role here [in Australia]. It was up to me to decide what to cook, when the meals will be served, and the children, and help them with homework and ... washing, ironing, cleaning - the house - it was my job (Pamela: Interview 1998).

However, importantly the subjective experience of women in my study gives meaning to their lives - their daily lived experience provides opportunities for nuanced understandings of their positionings (Smith 1999). Sawicki (1991) elaborates: “By eschewing reductionism, the Foucauldian can bring to light the heterogeneous forms that gender embodiment, the practice of mothering, and power

⁷⁰ Pamela, a Croatian woman who arrived in 1959.

relations producing gendered individuals take” (Sawicki 1991:59). For instance, Kathleen summarises the relative importance of her multiple subjectivities: “No, it was a combination of everything and a wife as well. That was very important. Try to fit them all in, in no particular order, as long as everybody got their attention and everything got done” (Kathleen: Interview 1998).

Hence, though many women operate within the boundaries of their expected identities they resist their normalisation: “There was always plenty of food, there was always plenty of everything for them. There was love, security, there was always somebody home when they came home, but there was more to life than food. A lot more to life” (Isobel: Interview 1998). In this way, as Sawicki (1991) suggests “(e)schewing the notion of a core identity, [a person can] attempt ... to mobilize the many sources of resistance made possible by the many ways in which individuals are constituted” (Sawicki 1991:65).

While it is clear from the stories above that women in my study did organise their days to follow a routine, that is, washing on Monday, ironing on Tuesday, some resisted, they did not feel compelled to follow strict guidelines for household routines. Gretel who worked full time during the 1950s resisted household management discourse:

I’m not a person that says I have to wash today and ... iron tomorrow. I do it when I feel like it ... There was only when I was working full time [did I do that], then I only had the weekend off. But even then you know, I’m just not a person that sticks to a certain rule, I do it when I feel like it (Gretel: Interview 1998).

Moreover, not all men believed that housework was “beneath them” (Pamela: Interview 1998). Jessie’s husband washed and ironed: “All through my married life I don’t think I ironed a shirt. He ironed all the shirts and the blouses” (Jessie: Interview 1998). However, Jessie controlled what her husband ironed, maintaining power over the private, domestic items of the home: “I didn’t let him do those [tablecloths], he did the shirts mostly, and pants. He did them because he was in the navy and he was used to doing that” (Jessie: Interview 1998). Thus, a sexualised

⁷¹ Pamela’s story is interesting because she discusses in the interview how she perhaps would not do the same now, as she did then. Pamela completed a Bachelor of Arts degree in the early 1990s.

division of labour still existed between Jessie and her husband, that is, even though he ironed clothing, she was responsible for the more visibly feminine items, such as tablecloths and doilies.

Above, the women in my study articulate through the practice of ironing how they performed their multiple identities - conforming, disrupting and resisting discourses of domesticity, efficiency and femininity. Through the use of routines to structure their days they perform their practices in ways which provide them with power. The importance of examining iron technology, routines and the meanings women attach to their practices is to indicate that women's work in the kitchen can be used as a 'template' for revaluing women's knowledge and celebrating difference in and amongst women. In doing so, another practice in which there is a disruption of the gendered division of labour is dishwashing.

Dishwashing

Having grown up washing dishes, I am surprised to find that so many people have not been initiated into the mysteries of this ancient and ritual-laden art. My husband, an orderly, logical person who actually enjoys washing dishes, hadn't a clue about ordinary dishwashing procedures when I married him. He stacked dirty dishes and pots on both sides of the sink; he put washed ones down among the unwashed, rinsed ones among the unrinsed ... (T)o me it seems something like heresy or insanity or the end of civilization. Traditional dishwashing rules are so ingrained in me that I could far more easily walk off and leave all the dishes unwashed than bring myself to wash glasses after skillet or mix washed and unwashed items on the same side of the sink (Mendelson 2002:106).

Of all domestic chores dishwashing is one of the tasks in which men consistently participated. Just under half of the husbands either did the dishes everyday or 'helped' occasionally.⁷² It is interesting that men engage in this task. Unlike the physicality of washing clothes where it was often men's strength that was required to wring them, there was no such physical necessity required for doing dishes. So why did men help with the dishes but not generally other domestic chores - was it because as Mendelson (2002) suggests above, they enjoy it?

Following feminist poststructuralist theory, Cameron (2000) suggests that there is a “queering [of] the household”, signaling “(m)ultiple (f)emininities and (m)asculinities” (Cameron 2000:60). In such ‘queering’,

[the] fluidity and transformation in the household is that associated with the negotiation of meaning around gender, and especially in the undermining of a naturalized connection between masculinity and particular domestic chores and femininity and other ones (Cameron 2000:60-61).

Hence, using Cameron’s (2000) ‘queering’ theory it is possible to articulate heterogeneous discourses of masculinity and femininity present in the 1950s kitchen. Specifically, the gendered division of labour was disrupted - doing the dishes was considered not necessarily as ‘women’s work’, as cooking may have been. Many husbands ‘helped with the dishes’, that is, they would wash the dishes or dry them, but they did not cook. In this way, Cameron (2000) suggests that:

(r)epresenting households as heterogeneous ... makes, inconsistencies, incoherencies, and moments of rupture in the household seem obvious and normal (Gibson-Graham 1996: vii-xi; Sedgwick 1993). One effect of rendering moments of inconsistency ordinary is to undermine the hegemonic narrative of binarized gender. Instances of men’s nurturance and caregiving, and women’s physical power and capacity, for example, might then seem commonplace rather than extraordinary (Cameron 2000:61-62).

The women in my study indicate in their stories of dishwashing in the 1950s that gendered categorisations of housework into masculine and feminine were important, but significantly, disjuncture in understandings of feminine and masculine identities opens up the possibility of dominant discourses, such as domesticity and femininity being resisted and subverted as well as conformed to. The example of dishwashing clearly indicates that multiple subject positions exist for women and men in the kitchen, but importantly women do not feel their identities of wife, mother, housewife, homemaker are undermined through exploring alternative housework practices (Cameron 2000:57):

⁷² 13 husbands helped on a regular basis, 6 helped occasionally or if they were at home, 24 did not help at all, 1 child helped and with 4 women a clear answer was not given.

I had a very good husband ... he was fantastic ... he'd do anything but he wouldn't come into the kitchen and he didn't like cooking. So the cooking always fell to me, but he'd do a lot, he'd do washing, he vacuumed, cleaned, he was very, very good. But I never got help in the kitchen, he would wash up ... Yes [everyday]. He would always wash the dishes. But I had to do the cooking ... I wish he liked the kitchen, but he said "Well I don't love, and I'll do anything else, but I don't cook" (Jessie: Interview 1998).

Dorothy's husband also made a conscious choice about which chores he participated in:

He didn't cook. He could cook a little. *But he didn't cook.* He'd cut sandwiches. He'd make a cup of tea in the morning to bring into me. And he always helped with the dishes, that sort of thing, but not cooking (Dorothy: Interview 1998: my emphasis).

Kathleen also believes that there was a clear division about what her husband would do in the house and furthermore which section of the process of dishwashing (washing the dishes, then drying the dishes) he would do:

He helped with the dishes and those kinds of things but certainly not with the cooking and cleaning ... More than likely drying them. [*Was that everyday?*] Oh yes, in the early married days, yes. I would say he's always been very good at that part of it. It was like a lot of men, when they get to the saucepans "oh well, they'll dry by themselves". But because there were only the two of us, there weren't usually a lot of them [laugh]" (Kathleen: Interview 1998).

By their work in the kitchen some husbands show clearly the disruption of the gendered division of labour and gendered subjectivities. Such disruption is limited by men's understanding of their own subject positions and ethnicity. As indicated above, some men would not cook believing it to be 'women's work', however in my study ethnicity appears to be a factor in some men's willingness to engage in domestic tasks. Carmella's Italian husband only began to help her when he could see that she was unable to complete all the household chores due to illness. The issue of his masculinity was then called into question by his brother. Carmella states:

he never helped me until my youngest one was four years old. Because I'd had a lot of problems having her and I wasn't very well and he could see I needed help. He was a wonderful person, and I'm not just boasting about it, he was very kind and a very generous person, but it was just that Italian men

had been [traditional], and he had an older brother. Whenever his older brother saw him helping me, he'd always say ... "put a dress on", that's how it was. He used to help me wash up ... He'd even come home from work sometimes and wash the kitchen floor for me and help me do all those sort of things (Carmella: Interview 1998).

Some husbands did also cook, for example, Shirley's husband, also Italian: "sometimes ... got home before I did so ... he'd help me with the dishes or he'd do a bit of cooking for me too" (Shirley: Interview 1998).

This cross-cultural view of masculinity disturbs the hegemonic view of masculinity which existed in 1950s Australia (see below) and Italy. It reinforces Cameron's (2000) argument that subject positionings articulated in the micro-workings of the household maybe different from hegemonic understandings of the domestic as a place of subjugation for women. Emmeline, an Australian born Chinese woman believed it was a man's job to do the dishes. She states:

He'd wash up, that was the man's role. I'd do the cooking and he would do the dishes, and that was something that, even with entertaining, I would do all the cooking and then he would help clean up and then we would get together and just clean up to make sure ... we always shared whatever chores that we had. Not having any children, you just have this sort of combination where you both get in there and work and it's a very good combination (Emmeline: Interview 1998).

However, there were husbands in my study who adhered strictly to male breadwinner and female homemaker identities. Meg states that, "I would have done it [washed the dishes] ... because guys didn't do that either. They didn't do any housework" (Meg: Interview 1998). According to Ivy too, this was "very rare, very rare. [Men washing dishes] wasn't done in those days [laugh]" (Interview 1998).

Edna says of her husband's lack of participation:

in those days I don't think men were ever expected to help and I never asked him or forced him and he never offered, and also being a shift worker he had to have his meal and go to sleep. So we had to compromise and maybe *I worked harder than he did* (Edna: Interview 1998, my emphasis).

Although women do not tend to articulate that their domestic work is *more* important than their husbands' paid employment, which through patriarchal discourse privileges men's work and devalues women's domestic knowledge, Edna regards her work in the kitchen as equal to or more important than her husband's work outside the home (see Chapter 2). Hence, Edna's articulation that her work is valuable disrupts the binaries that devalue women's work in the home and again reinforces that women derive power from their practices within the kitchen.

Some women who felt that the kitchen was their domain regarded husbands' help as 'interference'. Tami, a Pakistani woman, explains that her husband did not help with the dishes because:

I did my role properly but I wasn't going to be like that [submissive], that as soon as he says something, I had to leave everything and go. But he didn't do anything because he was ... busy with business which I didn't mind, actually I liked it, he was doing his role, I [was] doing my role. Up to this day I don't like interference from my husband, sometimes he used to do the washing up, I didn't want him to ... To me my house is my domain, and I want things the way I want. If anyone else is doing it, even my husband he does it differently, I don't like that (Tami: Interview 1998, my emphasis, cf Mendelson 2002:106).

Tami resists the expected submissiveness of her identity as a wife, homemaker and housewife. She regards it as her duty but also asserts that the home is her source of power and that her power is derived from her practices within the kitchen. Hence, she declares a difference between submissiveness and duty - it is her 'duty' to be a wife, housewife and homemaker, but she performs these identities in a powerful way.

Lina also has the same expectation as Tami of her identity as wife and housewife. Consequently, Lina's husband wanted to help with the dishes, but she refused. She states: "Actually my husband wanted to help me wash the dishes but I wouldn't let him, because in Italy men do not wash the dishes. They go to work, the wife does the cooking, washes the dishes ... they do everything" (Lina: Interview 1998).

Hence, some women maintain subject positions that reinforce their identities of mother, wife, housewife and homemaker. However, I have argued above (and throughout this thesis) that women occupy multiple subject positions with a fluidity

that often disrupts the dichotomous gendered division of labour. For example, some women also gardened - the outside of the house, was traditionally men's domain (Duruz 1994a, b, c; Holmes 1994, 1995). Emmeline states:

But what I would do then is go out into my garden and that's my relaxation, so one complemented the other [kitchen and garden] ... and be creative. You're creative in the kitchen in one sense, but that is an automatic thing that you had to [be in the kitchen]. But to get out in the garden and to do things and create things within your garden to your own way of doing without saying "well I have to do this because this says I have to do it". But out in the garden it's a different thing altogether. You're creating something to suit you as an individual not to also suit somebody else with you in the house. If you have somebody in the house then you must do in the kitchen to be able to accommodate someone else ... but when you're out in the garden, it's your own, so you do it the way you [want], because you're the one who's creating that and as long as it pleases [me], then I'm happy. So one complemented the other (Emmeline: Interview 1998).

Hence, the public space of the garden provides women with more opportunities to express themselves. Another public space activity that also impacts on the private space of the kitchen is shopping.

Shopping

Food shopping is an integral part of the process of both literally and psychologically nourishing and reproducing labour ... In the world of the family, both middle and working class women provide 'nurture' in the form of planning, shopping for and preparing meals (Bowlby 1988:62 & 63).

Bowlby (1988) argues that "provisioning the family is a major part of married women's everyday activities" (Bowlby 1988:62). This was the case for all the women in my study except two, whose husbands did the shopping (again reinforcing disjuncture in the gendered division of labour). The women shopped weekly or bi-weekly for the family, sometimes twice at larger retail shops, but they very often went to the 'corner shop' for bread or milk and many had these everyday items delivered to their door (see Chapter 6).

Shopping was a social and political activity - it was a form of entertainment and provided pleasure for the women in my study in a number of ways, not always

involving money. Through shopping women embody femininity, including the continuance of the nurturing role (labour of love) (Balbo 1987; Bowlby 1988; Matthews 1984). Femininity and pleasure are expressed through 'dressing up for town' and window shopping. For Australian born women shopping also maintained a sense of community, especially for those living in country towns.

For migrant women shopping was a chance to learn and practice English. Most migrant women in my study experienced difficulties and pleasures in learning a new language whilst shopping, but of also initiating and maintaining a sense of community and belonging as they began to negotiate two cultures, especially in relation to language, food and finding ingredients (Hage 1997; see Chapters 4 and 7).

Shopping as Pleasure

For many women in my study shopping combines pleasure and necessity. It was an opportunity for the women in my study to socialise, which they state is extremely important - shopping allowed for friendships to be nurtured, to share life's joys and disappointments and for a sense of community to be established and maintained.

Another dimension to shopping, not always elaborated by the women in my study or examined by theorists, is a lack of context. Dowling (1993) examining the nexus of consumption and femininity argues: "Context-free analyses have exacerbated the prevalence of dichotomous thinking in this literature, where consumption is either pleasurable or oppressive, but not both [McRobbie 1991]" (Dowling 1993:296). For many women even though shopping was a 'chore' that had to be done, many found pleasure in the activity because it was an opportunity to catch up with friends, to 'dress up' and to 'window shop', and as indicated above, it was a 'labour of love'.

Pamela's shopping included these activities:

(O)nce a week I would go usually, on Friday, around 10 or 11am and stay 'til 2 in the afternoon. It was really browsing and looking for materials and doing other things, not just groceries. That was one trip a week and then you do all sorts of things, and we used to wear white gloves and even a hat and all dressed up, you know ... never go shopping without white gloves ... I never remember going anywhere for a cup of tea or coffee, but we would organise to meet and go shopping together. That was our time for looking at

the shops, to discuss things, and we probably never bought anything, but we looked and tried on (Pamela: Interview 1998).

Many women shopped frequently in order to socialise.⁷³ Ruth states: “I walked to [the Italian shop] with my youngest when he was in the pram. So I did mostly shopping every day, because it was an outing” (Ruth: Interview 1998). Sally found shopping a way of interacting with her neighbours because they all had children. But importantly it was also a social event that often lasted four-five hours and sometimes occurred twice a week. Louisa also shopped everyday to socialise at the local corner store because it was only five doors from her house and she would spend “about an hour because I’d have a little chat with the grocer and his wife” (Louisa: Interview 1998).

Shopping also became a form of entertainment, as Emmeline explains:

It [the shopping] would only take about a couple of hours because what you’d do, the two hours would not be spent specifically on shopping, one would occupy the time by looking around because ... you did not have the money to go out for entertainment. So if you got out of the house then you would make it like, you’d go shopping around, meeting a few of your neighbours or what have you (Emmeline: Interview 1998).

Clara discusses two types of shopping: necessity, for the weekly grocery shopping; and pleasure, often on Saturdays with her husband which was generally a social activity. Grocery shopping for many women was laborious and time consuming, but was a necessary aspect of being a good ‘woman’. Clara went grocery shopping mostly twice a week into Fremantle from Bicton on the bus, a round journey of approximately 10 kilometres. She remembers carrying the shopping bags back home,

by bus. The memory of all those things. I said to H. the other day, we were in Swanbourne, our doctor is still there and we were driving back and we passed the bus and I saw a lady coming off with bags, and I said, “oh my God, that brings back memories”. Honestly, two, three and four bags in each hand, it was murder! (Clara: Interview 1998).

⁷³ There were other reasons for shopping frequently, in particular, many women did not have refrigerators. Items such as meat and dairy products could not be stored for more than a couple of days, which necessitated at least, bi-weekly shopping (Edna: Interview 1998; Helena: Interview 1998; Louisa: Interview 1998; Kingston 1994).

Renata walked several kilometres (approximately 10km as a round trip) in order to do her shopping and visit with a close friend. She remembers:

... in ... Victoria Park, the market opened up. I used to put the [three] kids in the pram take them there, do my shopping and then my husband [would] come on [his] pushbike, put the big box on the pushbike and I would trot with the kids back home [laughing]. [*You walked there?*] Yes, we walked there, to Victoria Park [from Belmont]. My daughter's godmother lived in Victoria Park, we used to walk to each other, we didn't [think] anything much of it, you know, but if it was too hot, we didn't. But if it was nice weather, we'd put the kids in the pram and we went. I don't think today many people would want to walk to Victoria Park, but we did (Renata: Interview 1998).

Like many women, Clara discusses the more pleasurable aspects of shopping on Saturday with her husband, and meeting up with friends: "I think when we went on Saturday with my husband, we used to go by our[selves]. But Fremantle was full of 'New Australians' and we always met somebody and maybe had a coffee and a tea, at the tea shop [Culleys], it's still there" (Clara: Interview 1998). Therefore, it is possible to see in Clara's two stories the different aspects of shopping and women's relationship to it, both as chore, a necessary part of being a good wife and housewife and, as pleasure.

An interesting juxtaposition to women regarding shopping as socialising is Mariola's story. Mariola's husband did the shopping because he had a better grasp of English, and Mariola, a Ukrainian woman, felt uncomfortable about shopping by herself. I asked her how long it took her husband to do the shopping:

Sometimes it would take longer than it used to [take me], you know, men [are] different. Sometimes if I went with him, it would be done a bit quicker; when [he went] by himself, he looked for something, maybe he met somebody in the shop and 'yakked' a bit. It's different, but say roughly, one hour, maybe one and a half, sometimes it happened he went for hours [laughing] (Mariola: Interview 1998).

Mariola's story highlights the different perceptions women have of men - her husband takes on characteristics that are normally associated with women - that is, that women like to talk a lot/gossip (Tebbutt 1995; see Chapter 3). It also shows that men follow a similar pattern to women, that is, they liked to meet their friends and in

doing so, shopping also provides a sense of pleasure, cultural reinforcement and a sense of community for them as well.⁷⁴ Furthermore, this story indicates men's different relationship with space. Following dichotomous knowledge, men claim public space as their own and women claim private space (Torres 1996; Wilson 1995). However, as with other dichotomous knowledge discussed in this thesis, there are disruptions to this knowledge, as is evidenced by women's socialising whilst shopping.

For women living in rural areas, shopping would occupy a whole day due to travelling time, shopping and socialising. For rural women, shopping day was often the only time they could meet with friends, visit the doctor and do other miscellaneous chores. Norma, an Australian born woman, who lived in an isolated country area shopped on Fridays, because "(e)verybody used to go on Friday. It was quite a busy day" (Norma: Interview 1998).

Myra explains succinctly the routine of shopping in a country town:

My husband and I would both have done the grocery shopping as in, we would go to town once a week, always on a Friday ... You wrote a shopping list of the stores you needed, and when you went to town, you didn't go to the supermarket like you do now, you would go to the little general store, and there was only one general store so everybody did their shopping there. You would hand your list in, you would go and do other little chores, you might want to go to the chemist, and the men would go off and do the farm shopping and you would go back three hours later and everybody's stores would be collected and put in a box with your docket ... Your shopping list, your stores would basically be always the same [every week]. You knew exactly what you could have for what money you had, so you didn't really deviate. The psychology of shopping was really a lot different from what it is now (Myra: Interview 1998).

There were some country women who did not go to town very often and had their groceries delivered once a week. However, as with other kitchen practices women were resourceful: Olive was one of the only people in her district that had a

⁷⁴Torres (1996:249) argues that public squares - the traditional meeting place in many European cities - have been replaced with shopping malls. This is evidenced in my own shopping centre I can find at least seven (if not more) Italian men gathered on the seats around 4pm every afternoon chatting, telling stories and laughing.

telephone, so several of her neighbours used to order their weekly groceries using her telephone and consequently this became a weekly social gathering in her kitchen.

... Our food used to come out on a truck to ... the crossroads ... we had a subsidised transport truck and we used to ring the shop in O. and ask for our grocery and as the kids got older they would sit there and repeat [mimicking Olive] because they used to know this order would be the same, you know, every time ... "Ooh, [activities] never stopped", well everything happened in the kitchen ... This old telephone, all the people that didn't have telephones used to line up at our door and take it in turns to come in and ring their order through to the shop in O. so that their orders, their groceries would come out on the truck. It used to run Friday mornings and they all used to come in and ring up, it used to be a meeting place outside and we used to seem to be feeding cups of tea for these people. Some of them were just old bachelors and most of them were ... a family of girls who lived over the road, they used to come across, it used to be a social day, I'd have to be all tidy and ready by the time they came to put their orders through, but everything seemed to happen around the kitchen (Olive: Interview 1998).

Hence, the women's stories intimate the disruption of dichotomous thinking that Dowling (1993:296) asserts is present in consumption literature. The women in my study simultaneously experience pleasure and necessity in their daily and weekly shopping activities.

The Language of Shopping

Many migrant women found the English language difficult to adapt to initially which meant shopping for ingredients was more difficult, and cooking especially when labels were misread, interesting! (see below). They experience difficulties with language whilst shopping which causes both distress and laughter. However, they tell stories of various strategies that enabled them to shop and find the ingredients necessary to cook their traditional food. They discuss the lack of cooking ingredients and also their dislike of Australian versions of staple food items, such as bread and cheese. Migrant women show skills of resourcefulness and an ability to improvise and adapt to the available foodstuffs. Such skills are integral to women's negotiation of culture, but also many other practices discussed throughout this thesis. The split between the women's private lives in the home and experiencing the public sphere through shopping is explicit in the women's stories of their difficulties speaking English to purchase ingredients. However, Baldassar (2002) has argued that it was

this interaction with the public sphere through shopping that increased women's fluency in English. Such an argument can be sustained for some women in my study. Furthermore, through shopping, language and food, women continue their journey of making home in Western Australia. Therefore, through women's daily public sphere negotiations with food, language and culture, a sense of security, familiarity and community brought about a 'feeling' of home (Hage 1997; see Chapter 4).

Migrant women also intimate that a reciprocity and interweaving of cultures is apparent through migrants opening their own stores which caused a change in attitudes, and consequently a more diverse range of ingredients became available (Peters 2001). Moreover they continue the process begun in the camps of re/negotiating cultures - Australian and their own - through confronting the 'foreignness' and 'strangeness' of the food (see Chapter 4). But migrants were expected to 'assimilate' to Australian culture and many state that they encountered ethnocentric attitudes, but they also indicate that their ability to 'make' home is through food and language - the very requisites that 'white' Australia insisted they give up (see below). Sheridan (2000a:130) contends, "(m)igrants themselves were required to negotiate the 'third space' (Ang 1996:46) of ambivalence, the space between sameness and otherness in which they are symbolically included, but also confined".

Shopping for ingredients often caused a great deal of anxiety:

It was very different, I found it so hard, we couldn't speak English, we couldn't go in the shop and, in those years, I must admit, a lot of Australians were rude. When you went into the shop and you couldn't speak [English] and there was no self-service then. [There were shop assistants] behind the counter and [if] you wanted something and you didn't see it or you saw it, and then you said something that you thought maybe it would be, and now I know they more or less said, "if you can't say it, don't buy it". And you had to point at what you wanted, "oh it was terrible". Then you had to remember, 'oh that was ham, or that was sugar or that was that', you know. You more or less went shopping ... and memorised what they said it was, or wrote it down and you copied what it was. *Terrible, it was heartbreaking, I tell you* (Marlene: Interview 1998, my emphasis).

Or laughter:

Once a week, we [went] to Victoria Park and then we lived in Kenwick we went by bus with six ladies. We made a list with a dictionary and found the names and then we went in the bus ... to Charlie Carters, the only supermarket close by. Well there we did our shopping. Well we had of course, we had a day out, we made it a day out. And we had funny things happen. Plenty of ladies didn't know what the names were, like for instance, one of the ladies walked out and she had done all her shopping and she said, "gee I forgot mince". And I said, "you better go back, there is another week before we come again". So she walked back in the shop and she said "come with me", and I said "alright". Things were behind the glass in the butcher shop and I said, "here it is". And I let her go herself and then she said to that man, "I want a kilo of Charlie Carters". I said, "no it is mince dear" [laugh]. Well there is a ticket on it with the name Charlie Carters all round and I'd never seen [the name] so much. And she thought it was that but the butcher didn't pull a face and he said "sorry madam", he said "Charlie Carters is not here". And I laughed my head off, of course, and we walked outside and we told the story and she had a red [face], so you know, she said "what a shame that I said that [Charlie Carters, instead of mince]", you know, "oh well that is that". We had lots of things like that you know, that we can't think of the name, and so on. For years she had to hear that, we were teasing her, but that sort of thing happened [laughing] (Nancy: Interview 1998).

Hence, shopping together was a way of helping each other learn English, but importantly, through socialising cultural community links were maintained. However, not all women's experiences initiated laughter. I have juxtaposed Nancy's story with Lina's because there is an element of frustration in both, but Lina's story shows the insidious ethnocentrism present in 1950s Western Australia affecting migrants:

Oh there was a bit. They always pretended that they didn't understand you. At one stage I needed, I don't know what you call [it], tracing paper, you know ... I had to trace a pattern - and I needed transparent paper ... I went to the shop where they sell everything and I asked for the paper and they didn't understand. I said "TRANSPARENT". I mean you'd have to be pretty dumb not to understand transparent, because in Italian it's 'transparente'. I got really upset, very upset because I knew I could read it, it was exactly the same in Italian but everything ended with 'e'. Everything we do, trasparente, we do, that was in Latin, English has got a lot of Latin words. The big words I understand all of them, just about. But the little [words] like 'pay', I had to write it down, I never remember that one or the [silent] K, knife. I pronounce my K, K-nife then I know when writing and things like that, see because we pronounce things how we read them. It's R B CHE D [a, b, c, d], and we write them like that and we pronounce them like that. You have silent letters, it's very hard to learn English. My husband

never wanted me to go to school because he was jealous, he never wanted me out of the house. He thought maybe I would fall in love with some Italian you know, because he spoke Italian! (Lina: Interview 1998).

Because of the language barrier women like Mariola and Lina often waited for their husbands, who had a better grasp of English, to do the shopping:

I find [shopping] hard because I have to know what to call everything. You know I baked my own cakes most of the time myself, so I never knew to search for self-raising flour, sometimes you buy plain flour because you want to cook [with] yeast, and I have to find that out, what's it called that stuff [laughing]. I need different [ingredients], so when my husband was home, most of the time he did the shopping ... I would tell him what I want, and he would go and bring it for me [laughing] (Mariola: Interview 1998).

Lina recalls one cooking experience that ended in disaster due to the generic packaging and labelling of goods from the corner store:

Yes, that was the funniest part, those days, like sugar and salt you didn't buy in a packet like now, which is sort of identified by the ... cover; those days you go and buy and you buy so much in the brown papers and one day I made this beautiful sweet. And I thought it would be beautiful and instead of putting the sugar, I put the salt in. Then I had to bury it, because it was no good. It was at times [hard], but then I go shopping when he [her husband] come home, so you know, it wasn't too bad (Lina: Interview 1998).

Although Austrian women, like Grace who arrived in 1951, recalled that it was not difficult for her to find the ingredients for her cooking, she remembers that the task of shopping was laborious. Most shops were not self-service in the 1950s, therefore people had to ask for what they wanted, an extremely difficult task for non-English speaking background women, as discussed above. Grace, avoided her local corner store because she did not know the English words for household items and food, thus she spent considerable time travelling (to Perth and Fremantle) to do her shopping because they had supermarkets. She states:

No, no, the only thing that was hard because we didn't know how to go shopping and say what we want. You had to look what you want, and there was only one shop in Perth, Charlie Carters⁷⁵ in those days where you could go and pick your own things, you didn't have to say what you want. So

⁷⁵ A self-service supermarket, that sold food and other household items.

everybody was going to Boans⁷⁶ also, I think it was existing in those days. In Perth, you can go and take what you need without saying what you want (Grace: Interview 1998).

In the early 1950s migrant women found it very difficult to source ingredients for cooking, and everyday items such as bread, coffee and cheese were very different from those in Europe: bread in Australia was like 'cotton wool', the only coffee available was made from chicory (a coffee essence), and there was only one type of cheese (Gretel: Interview 1998; Pamela: Interview 1998; Symons 1982). Louisa expresses the difficulty in finding ingredients for Sri Lankan curries:

We did find a place, Kakulas⁷⁷ I think it is, in Northbridge. He had the different curry powders in seed form (coriander and cumin). So we went out and bought a vitamiser, we bought the seed and we were able to powder the stuff and make our own curry powders (Louisa: Interview 1998).

Louisa, was not the only woman who shopped at Kakulas; Sally also found ingredients there such as, tomato paste, pasta, haricot beans and spices used in Maltese/Egyptian food. Tami, a Pakistani woman, also discusses the availability of spices in the early 1950s:

Oh yes, there weren't very many ingredients. Only those days there was 'Clive' curry powder. No other spices at all. Salt and cayenne pepper it used to be called, the chilli powder, I had that and then this curry powder ... that's all I used to use. So there wasn't anything else you could have going back to 1951 which is a long, long time ago [laughing]. That was all you could get in spice form (Tami: Interview 1998).

Jadzia believes that the scarcity of ingredients because of the war made it harder for her to cook Polish foods:

Well it was not that easy because I think Australia was ... very isolated and during the war naturally a lot of things weren't [available], you couldn't get lots of things, and Australians don't use herbs and things like that. My mother couldn't buy some garlic, "it smells, it stinks" [believed Australians], she couldn't get veal, [they] didn't know what veal was. I remember once when I asked for vanilla bean ... they thought I was completely crazy. So it

⁷⁶ A department store that sold primarily domestic goods, clothes, shoes, etc.

⁷⁷ Kakulas is a European smallgoods and grocery shop in the centre of the Perth CBD. It was established in 1912 by a Greek man Kakulas and supplies a large variety of spices, condiments etc.

was difficult sometimes because the ingredients weren't available (Jadzia: Interview 1998).

Many women found the lack of availability and variety of continental smallgoods difficult: "you just couldn't get any continental things and we didn't know the other things, you know, it was pretty hard, sometimes you search the whole Saturday morning around for things" (Gretel: Interview 1998). Marlene discusses the lack of variety in meat:

A lot of those [German] soups you cooked with smoked meat, but that was a bit hard to get. Not just bacon, smoked meat, like the shank or the ribs or something like that. That was possibly the hardest part of it [adjusting to life in Australia] (Marlene: Interview 1998).

Women like Pamela, a Croatian who arrived in 1959 remembered that even at the end of the 1950s it was still difficult to get particular foods:

I tried, yes, but vegetables were different here in Australia than in Croatia and also smallgoods, I miss my own smoked sausages and hams and different sorts of salami that we used. While at that time there was only polony and ham, probably it was all pressed ham, not as natural as smoked ham that we used at home. So that's probably one thing that I missed; and also at that time there was no bread variety like we had at home, it was just sliced bread, and it tasted like cotton wool to me (Pamela: Interview 1998).

Hence, improvisation and adaptability became a way of life for most migrant women "mix up a bit here and there and make a nice meal! (Concetta: Interview 1998; see Chapter 7). Edna, an English woman who lived in India for most of her life before migrating to Australia, believes that such resourcefulness: "[you] should pass down to your children ... especially if you are able to improvise a lot. In those days we did improvise because you never had much, and if you knew how to improvise it was a bonus" (Edna: Interview 1998; see Chapter 6).

Many women became resourceful and swapped ingredients for others and adapted ingredients to suit their needs:

Oh we improvised, we improvised really, and what I found, because we [Croatians] are so close to Italians, our staple food also, besides vegetables and fish, [was] spaghetti and pasta dishes, and I found that the cheeses were

not what we needed for our pasta dishes, those melting cheeses and nice parmesan cheese and things like that. Here there was mostly 'Kraft' cheddar and I don't know what ... hard cheese[s] [were] about, no, no [there was] not a variety of cheeses (Pamela: Interview 1998).

Hence, adaptability in food preparation was a skill that most women (including Australian born) possessed. Nevertheless, many migrant women believe that it was due to the influx of migrants that a variety of food and ingredients became readily available. This was in part because migrants opened their own businesses which then supplied ingredients that were necessary for cooking and also through demand - "later on it got better here. Gradually it climbed up because all the migrants b[r]ought something with them. That made Australia what it is today. That's normal" (Aline: Interview 1998; see Peters 1992, 2001). Concetta states that when migrants opened their own shops, cooking became easier: "Many things [weren't available at] that time but then they started to come in, Italian shops and ReStore⁷⁸ and places, they had stuff" (Concetta: Interview 1998).

It all came in with the migrants. They [Australians] started to slowly pick it up. Mostly what you could get was polony, ham, salami, that was the limit more or less. More or less polony, but my son adored it, but I couldn't take the polony! That was so cheap, now you pay a mint for it (Marlene: Interview 1998).

Apparently the war also played a significant part in changing food habits: "after the war with so many soldiers going overseas and getting a taste for this oriental cooking, things finally came into Perth" (Edna: Interview 1998).

Shopping became an activity that brought women together not only migrant women but also Australian born women and maintained cultural links. Clara recalls many women from Germany and Austria all shopping at the one place because it was the only shop in Fremantle that they could obtain meat to cook traditional foods:

Mostly, because we didn't really know, we only went to Watsonia in Fremantle to buy pork, that was the only shop you could get [it], everybody went to Watsonia. And you didn't cook lamb then, I just [cooked] our things more (Clara: Interview 1998).

Through cooking traditional cuisines migrant women ‘made’ their home. Importantly, the negotiation of culture through language has an explicit impact on women’s ability to renegotiate the strangeness of the food. For the first years of her life in Western Australia, Carla’s home was a tent as her husband built roads in the north-west of Western Australia. After she became relatively proficient in English, Carla, an Italian woman, began to cook for the six men in the camp. She maintained her traditional Italian cuisine, but she also learnt how to cook ‘Australian food’ and then she began to ‘feel’ at home. Carla explained:

Yes, yes, I could cook pasta, soup, anything, yes. Doesn’t matter where you live, when you know, you can cook anywhere. I cooked bread too, in a camp oven ... When I was up in the bush ... I would dig a big hole, and put it in the fire and ... make a special damper or bread ... I was making the bread for a long time [for] myself. You make the hole, you put your pasta dough or whatever in the camp oven, put the lid on top, put it in the fire, it would be beautiful bread. I learnt lots of things in Australia, darling, lots and lots of things. I learnt them in Australia, not Italy, because when I left Italy I was young and I always had my mother cooking [laughter] (Carla: Interview 1998).

Yet, not all migrant women initially found a place for themselves in Australia. Claudia, an Italian woman, actively fought against Western Australia becoming her new home. When she arrived she was so unhappy and homesick that she refused to learn English. “I don’t know, don’t ask me, ‘cause I never wanted to learn any English, I wanted to go back to Italy that’s all” (Claudia: Interview 1998). But she used shopping as a means to practice her English and as a way of ‘escaping’ the house in order to socialise. It was a practice that she continued from Italy, hence Claudia demonstrates the constant re/negotiation of culture present in many women’s stories of shopping. She comments:

Twenty [times]!! [laughing] I used to go up the street with a pushbike, oh I used to go up a couple of times a week ... [I] used to think what can I cook tonight, maybe a different meat, I used to go - not like now, now I stick the meat in the freezer. But before I used to buy when I used to need it. I used go on the pushbike and get the groceries. [Yeah, also because that was your social event].⁷⁹ I used to stop in the surgery, I had a friend there and talked

⁷⁸ The ReStore was opened in 1936 by the John and Maria Re. It is an Italian shop that sells pasta, coffee, Italian wine, cheeses, smallgoods and gifts.

⁷⁹ The bracketed comments are from Claudia’s daughter who also participated in the interview. She not only helped with the translation of some questions and ideas but expanded on her mother’s stories.

for a little while with her, and then I went and saw the lady in the boutique. And I used to go very often just to do something different and not [be] stuck inside the house all day long. [Also that tradition of daily buying of the fresh bread, 'cause initially [in Australia] they still do that, you do it daily, you don't do the weekly shopping]. Yes (Claudia: Interview 1998).

Hence, shopping is a practice that the women undertake as part of their identities of wife, mother, housewife and homemaker, but as their stories indicate it was much more than this. Shopping provided the opportunity to socialise with other women; it was a source of pleasure and also distress; it allowed women to perform aspects of the discourses of femininity, such as 'dressing up', but also through shopping women fulfilled their gendered identities - shopping allowed the women to perform their private identities in the public sphere. Further, migrant women indicate the dynamic nature of culture - through reciprocity Australian food changed (Duruz 1999a&b; Hage 1997; Symons 1993).

Conclusion

The women of my study consider that the kitchen is their domain. The kitchen is a site of power for the women in my study, and of pleasure (see Chapter 7). The women reveal through their practices of ironing, dishwashing and shopping their multiple subject positions/identities. By emphasising difference, that is, showing how women undertake their diverse practices - conforming, subverting or disrupting dominant discourses of domesticity and femininity - it is possible to articulate the kitchen as a place of power, rather than the source of women's subjugation to patriarchal discourses, such as the gendered division of labour.

In terms of financial decision-making the women in my study are also powerful - this is particularly evident in budgeting which will be examined in the next chapter.



Homemaker

Running a home is no small job, even with the help of modern equipment. That is why so many young wives have a household cheque account. Paying the grocer, insurance, time payments, rent, and so on, is quickly and easily done in your own home when it is simply a matter of writing a cheque. What's more, a current account provides a permanent record of your expenditure.



See the Manager of your local branch of the

BANK OF NEW SOUTH WALES

FIRST BANK IN AUSTRALIA

(INCORPORATED IN NEW SOUTH WALES WITH LIMITED LIABILITY)

Figure 6.0 Homemaker - women were encouraged to open their own bank accounts
(*Australian House and Garden*, December 1954)

Chapter Six

“There was only so much and that had to do, and it did”⁸⁰

You should pass down to your children what you can, especially if you are able to improvise a lot. In those days we did improvise because you never had much, and if you knew how to improvise it was a bonus (Edna: Interview 1998).

Introduction

The 1950s, especially the early ‘50s, can be characterised by what Parr (1999) calls a “burden of prudence” (Parr 1999:101). As indicated in Chapter 4, many women of my study were encumbered by the memories of their Depression era childhoods, food rationing and the lack of food (especially migrants, who had come from Displaced Persons camps in Europe) which made them extremely prudent with their money. This “depression mentality” (Parr 1999:101) accounts for the carefulness that the women show in the financial organisation of their family’s income. Further, Reiger (1985) argues that in this time period two other strands of thought guided the desire for economical use of money - “moralistic notions of thrift and ... newer scientific justifications for economy in the household” (Reiger 1985:65). Both these ideas can be seen in the stories that the women relate about their budgeting strategies - thrift is seen clearly in the women’s ‘make do’ attitude and, in their use of domestic science discourse as the basis of meal planning. In this chapter I provide a brief social context of the women’s need/desire for a budget which is primarily related to the discourse of ‘making do’ prominent in all the women’s lives, and underpinned by the “burden of prudence”. In particular, I analyse women’s position within 1950s consumer society in Australia and their consumption of whitegoods. I examine the power relations entailed in the budget decision-making process between husband and wife - how to allocate household money, whether or not to develop a budget, what to

spend their money on, and particularly, how the weekly budget was organised. Meal planning and the use of hire purchase are also examined as specific examples of how budgeting explicitly impacted on the women's lives.

'Making Do'

In the 1950s consumerism was contradictory for the women in my study. As indicated above, the Depression years ingrained in many women a desire to save and purchase only with judicious care. As discussed in Chapter 4 as children the women had witnessed family members succumb to impermanent employment and unstable incomes. As a child in Western Australia Amelia witnessed her parents lose their farm. She recalls:

When Dad came back from the war [First World War] Mum's parents went guarantor on a farm for him, but when the Depression came my grandfather died and my aunty felt that they shouldn't have to go guarantor to Dad so Dad was ... asked to move [from] the farm. So when I was about eight or nine we had to pack the few pieces of furniture and leave, basically walk off with, nothing (Amelia: Interview 1998).

Further, all women, both migrant and Australian born, had grown up during the Second World War and many had experienced food deprivation and lack of shelter. Such life experiences impacted on the women who vividly remember how they managed the family finances in the 1950s and how they played an integral role in financial decision-making.

The discourse of 'making do' underpins the budgeting process and permeates women's productive activities. Many women bought second-hand furniture, made their own clothes and of course, their own food (see below; Chapter 7). Although bombarded with a surfeit of household goods and appliances and being enticed to consume (with the help of hire purchase), the women in my study preferred to enter the consumer market on their own terms. Parr (1999) suggests that perhaps the prudence the women displayed was "optimistic ... [they were] not aggrieved by the

⁸⁰ Clara: Interview 1998.

plenty denied but mildly cautious about plenty promised” (Parr 1999:195). ‘Making do’ allowed them to negotiate the monetary commitment they made to this new ‘consumer world’ that they (or their parents) had not previously experienced.

As indicated above, women maintained strict budgets by producing much of their own food. Australian born and migrant women made jams and pickles (for example, Edna, Meg, Carla, Claudia, Isobel and Helena; see Figure 6.1), migrant Italian women and those married to Italian men, made their own pasta and tomato sauce (for example, Shirley, Carla, Carmella, Claudia). Women also made their own bread (for example, Meg, Carla, Mabel, Myra). Because they regarded mass-produced cakes and biscuits as a waste of money and lacking in nutrition, many baked their own (Chapter 7; Reiger 1985). Some grew vegetables to supplement their weekly shopping, and raised chickens to provide themselves with eggs, and sometimes meat (for example, Clara, Carla, Amelia, Phyllis).

Women also saved and economised through sewing their own and their children’s clothes. Amelia “used to sew for the kids, knit for the kids, like the majority of the people that had to in those days” (Interview 1998). Florence also sewed for her children and economised by buying remnants: “I would go to the tailors and get offcuts from their suits and things; people did that and you got beautiful pieces of material for the boys’ pants and I also got offcuts for their safari jackets and things. We didn’t have a lot of money that way” (Florence: Interview 1998).

Women’s work is integral to the ‘making do’ philosophy and without their labour and household decision-making, successful budgeting would not have occurred. While budgeting was difficult but necessary, it also provided them with significant power and pleasure:

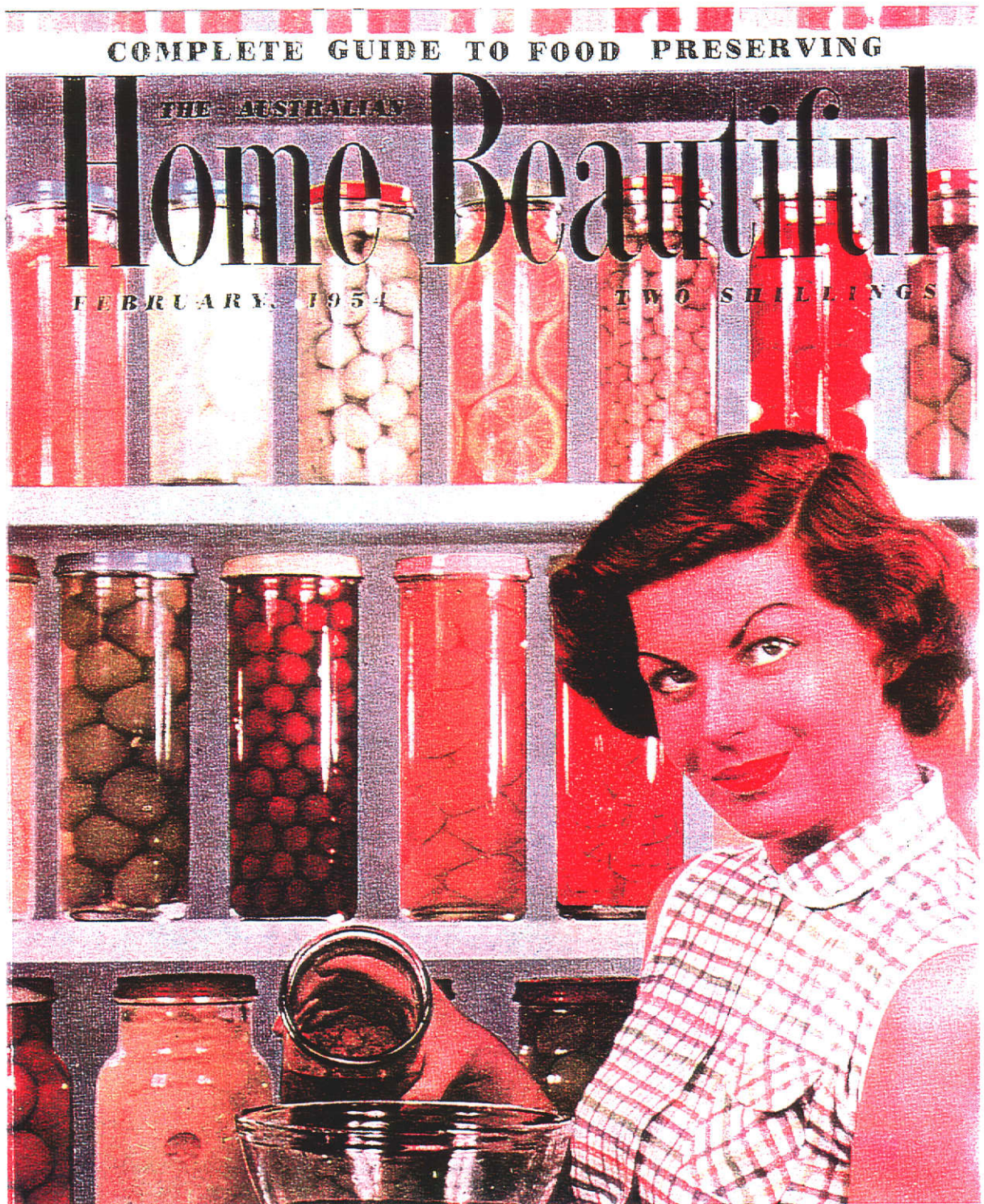


Figure 6.1 Making-do: bottling and preserving
(Oliver 1999)

everything had to be budgeted at that time, but you didn't miss anything because what happens is you learn to enjoy, when you look forward to that time coming when you can go off and do these things, because you budgeted for it. I think when I look back on it now, it certainly taught you to appreciate things. It was a good time, it was hard, but it was good and it sort of prepared you and now that you're comfortably off that you can say, "well you know they were still the good old days" because it taught you a lot, nothing came to you on a silver platter, you had to learn (Emmeline: Interview 1998).

As Emmeline intimates, learning to budget, save and consume were necessary in order to manage the family's income. Women's power and decision-making in this process is multi-layered and they engage with the 'new' consumer society in differing ways.

Women as Consumers

As indicated above, the post-war boom period heralded a new consumerism, for mass production required mass consumerism and mass marketing; with steady employment and rising wages more money was available for "discretionary purchases", namely, household goods and services that were not basic requirements (Blackburn 1992; Sheridan 2002:19). Thus, a site of contradiction developed for women who were now being targeted as consumers (see Chapter 2). Rather than being required/compelled to save (as they had been during the war), in the 1950s they were being persuaded by manufacturers and advertisers to spend (Blackburn 1992; Pringle 1983; Sheridan 2002). Through advertising and marketing women were encouraged to buy particular products believing that this would make them a 'good' wife, mother, housewife and homemaker (Matthews 1984:90, 98-99). Women were expected to achieve and maintain different femininities, from seductive wife to nurturant mother, and advertising and consumption showed possible ways of accomplishing this. For example, intense marketing and advertising programs made connections between labour-saving devices, particularly electrical appliances in the kitchen, and women's identity of "glamorous hostess' proud to show her guests her new acquisitions" (Sparke 1987:105; see Figure 6.2).

Hence, Blackburn (1992:61-62) argues that advertising agencies, through demographic studies, began to target women as the principal consumers:

The objective of the manufacturers and their advertising agencies was to 'educate' the figure most associated with the home - the housewife - to consume rather than produce (housewives had traditionally made their own items, such as pudding, soups, jams, clothing, etc. through their own labour; and they had traditionally done cleaning by hand, such as hand washing and sweeping) (Blackburn 1992:63).

The new split between domestic production and consumption, concomitantly brought the public sphere into the private realm (Reiger 1985:66) as goods which were once home produced by the women of my study were being replaced with 'purchased' goods. The success of this shift between public and private sphere "depended on the promotion of consumption as a 'way of life' and the superiority (and relative cheapness) of the 'bought' over the homemade" (Pringle 1983:90). Such a discourse diminished women's traditional knowledge and often contradicted their own beliefs in 'making do' (see below; Chapter 2).

Importantly, the rise of consumerism in the post-war years affected working class women, who were now being targeted as consumers. Middle class women, having access to disposable income, had been influenced years earlier (Kingston 1994; Sheridan 2002:19; see also Reiger 1985). In effect, "(f)or working-class and middle-class people alike, this involved unlearning ingrained habits of frugality, learning to 'abandon the idea that a comfortable life is automatically an immoral one'" (Sheridan 2002:19; Blackburn 1992:66). While such an entrenched habit of frugality was slow to change, all women in my study participated in the new consumer revolution - through saving and then buying, entering hire purchase agreements for furniture and appliances, or 'making do' with second-hand goods.

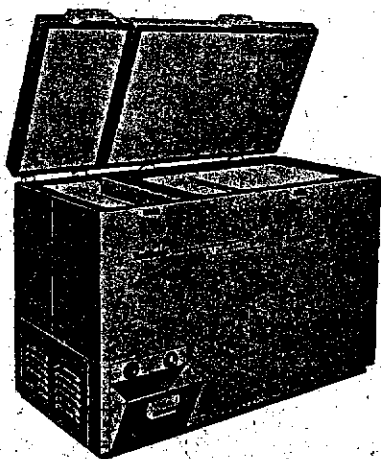
Unexpected dinner or supper guests don't worry me

... since I've had my

Flashfreeze



It's no trouble at all to cater these days . . . extra people come to dinner and I whisk pre-cooked meat from the Flashfreeze, a few extra vegetables, and everything is under control. Supper's the same, we come in after the theatre and I pop a few savouries from the Flashfreeze into the oven and I can cope with any number of people.



Flashfreeze quick-freezing units are of simple dignified design and blend into any kitchen setting . . . their sturdily made rustproof cabinets are of the same standard of manufacture as the robust motor which keeps your frozen-storage food at the correct temperature.

The Model illustrated is the PR14 . . . the Flashfreeze chest-type Freezer-ator . . . a combination freezer and refrigerator in the one cabinet.

Write to the sole distributors for N.S.W. and Queensland for illustrated literature and the name of dealer where you can see Flashfreeze.

WOYES BROS. (SYDNEY) LTD.

Box 1587, G.P.O., Sydney — Phone B0254

Figure 6.2 Seductive wife, nurturant mother, glamorous hostess
(*Australian House and Garden*, October 1954)

The way in which women performed household practice was undergoing a fundamental shift:

Significantly for the development of consumer culture, there has also been a process by which housework has been *aestheticized* in the sense that the standards by which housework is judged have come to include not only 'scientific' or 'technical' standards of hygiene and efficiency, but also those of style, harmony and 'atmosphere' (Forty 1986; Partington 1991). This aestheticization has been closely tied in with prevailing notions of masculinity and femininity ... More specifically, the activity of buying has itself come to be increasingly defined as worthy and significant, creating a new role for women as administrators of the home, directing consumption by their selection of goods and services (Lury 1996:127-128).

Following Lury's (1996) assertion, women in my study direct consumption through their choices of goods and services (including those associated with all aspects of design and architecture; see Chapter 4). The power to make financial decisions became significant: for example, Sylvia did not ask her husband about their new kitchen suite, she felt it was her decision to make and purchased it without prior discussion with him (Sylvia: Interview 1998). Although many did not have absolute freedom in decision-making, women often had the 'final say' on what was purchased, particularly in relation to decorating decisions (see below; see Chapter 4). Moreover, Sparke (1987) suggests that "(w)hether or not women actually paid for their appliances, the consumption choices were theirs" (Sparke 1987:6).

By the late 1950s the discourse of consumption pervaded the lives of the women in my study. The ability to purchase appliances, furniture and other decorative items was integral to being modern (see Chapter 4). Dorothy contextualises household appliances or "gadgets" in the emerging consumer society of the 1950s:

a lot of women ... want their kitchen to be not only spick and span and shining but to have modern equipment, and the latest gadgets and things ... I think that's inherent that people wanted to have, might not be quite so gadgety but there were always things coming out. Perhaps smallish things but different things. And also they wanted to, 'I'm tired of this I want to get some more china' or 'I want to get another dinner set, I want to get something'. They want to get breakfast sets, 'something I can just have', yes, [that desire was] always there, built up in the way, in the same way a wardrobe is built up. Thinking of what I am going to do is that I am going

to get this. Yes, I think so. Certainly of that generation, not so much probably now (Dorothy: Interview 1998).

But, not all women in the 1950s however, particularly migrant women, could afford to buy labour-saving devices or gadgets. Thus, the ability to consume (appliances, design and architecture) is also a class issue.

Budgetary concerns and being able to successfully budget were extremely important to women. Interestingly, labour-saving appliances such as floor polishers, steam irons and mixmasters were often given to women as gifts (see Figure 6.3). Amelia remembers her first appliance, a mixmaster, given as a present. She states:

Yes I think I might have got the Mixmaster reasonably early, that might [have] been courtesy of my in-laws partly, but I did get that, then my husband did say that I really should have a polisher, and he bought me an electric polisher. When, back in those days the money was - What will we get this year? Will it be carpets or a washing machine? And I said something about carpets, I think he said we should get a washing machine so I think we got a washing machine (Amelia: Interview 1998).

The women have vivid memories of their first appliances, what brand they were and what year and how they purchased or received them. Most women bought fridges as a priority once they were married, had saved enough money, or had built their house. This was the case for Gretel who purchased her fridge in 1954 after her house was completed and the electricity had been connected (see Chapter 4). Gretel also allowed her friends to store their perishable food in her fridge because: “(I)n the beginning I was the only one to have a fridge, my friends came and put things in!” (Gretel: Interview 1998). But it seems that other labour saving appliances, such as floor polishers, mixmasters and frypans - the major source of consumption in the kitchen - were considered luxuries. In some cases the women bought the appliances when they felt that they could afford to make a ‘luxury’ purchase or they were given as gifts (by husbands or as wedding presents). Meg was given a refrigerator as a wedding present. Meg’s refrigerator was “luxury” in terms of design - it was the first refrigerator that had square rather than rounded corners (Meg: Interview 1998; see Sparke 1987:23; see Figure 6.4). Meg discusses how she came to have the refrigerator as a wedding present:

B.G.E.
ELECTRIC HOME HELPS

No finer nor more useful

Gifts

S&C VACUUM CLEANER

B.G.E. FAN

Genalex MANTLE RADIO

B.G.E. JUG

Genalex CLOCK

S&C IRON

S&C RANGE

B.G.E. TOASTER

S&C POLISHER

Genalex REFRIGERATOR

British General Electric Co. Pty. Ltd.
REPRESENTING THE **G.E.C.** THE GENERAL ELECTRIC CO. LTD. OF ENGLAND
BRANCHES IN ALL STATES

Figure 6.3 Appliances as gifts
(*Australian Home Beautiful*, December 1951)

It was the first of the square line fridges. My grandfather bought it for us when we got married. And that was my money for the will. He said, “you might as well have it from me while I’m alive, and you get nothing when I’m gone”, which is what happened. But that was a very expensive fridge for those days. And it’s never ‘turned a hair’ since the day it was bought. And it’s been all over the world, up to Christmas Island, up to Geraldton, all around, and it’s still going like a charm. [*So what brand was it?*] Kelvinator. First square line Kelvinator model that came out. That was luxury. So we were very lucky to get that, because we couldn’t have bought it. But like I said, my grandfather bought it before we built the house, we used to store it in G.’s father’s shed, we bought it the year before we built, so it was two years sitting in a box (Meg: Interview 1998).

Meg later gave the refrigerator, still in good working order, to her second daughter when she was married in the early 1990s.

The gendered nature of labour-saving (or luxury) appliances as gifts is explicit in many women’s stories (Strathern 1988). Beverley was given a mixmaster after the birth of her third child. She states: “When I got to Waroona ... J. and the children sent up to Musgroves and got me a mixer and that would have been the first thing I would have had in any help like that”⁸¹ (Beverley: Interview 1998). Carmella was also given a mixmaster after the birth of a child. She states:

Yes, a mixmaster. I went off into hospital to have F. and my husband came to see me and he said “I’ve bought a mixmaster”. I said “but we don’t have any money”, he said, “don’t worry about it, it’s all paid for”. That’s how we got the mixmaster (Carmella: Interview 1998).

⁸¹ Waroona is a small country town approximately 200km south-west of Perth. Musgroves was a shop that sold small electrical appliances and furnishings.

Only this brilliant NEW KELVINATOR gives you all these
FULL-WIDTH FEATURES
 — plus the mighty "POLARSPHERE" SEALED UNIT *



1 FULL-WIDTH FROZEN FOOD CHEST

Holds 27 lbs. of frozen foods. Refrigerated on 5 sides for quicker freezing—efficient as a full-sized home freezing unit. Makes 3 trays of ice cream—or 63 cubes of ice at a time!

2 FULL-WIDTH MEAT TRAY

Sliding shelf right below Frozen Food Chest gives extra-cold storage for 11 lbs. of meat and fish. Keeps steaks and chops fresh for up to 10 days! Also acts as a defrost tray.

3 FULL-WIDTH CRISPER

This sliding plastic crisper gives fully-refrigerated storage for 18 lbs. of fruit and vegetables. Keeps salad greens moist and fresh. FULL-WIDTH—that means you don't have to chop up cauliflowers or cabbages to fit!



KELVINATOR "SPACE-SAVER-SEVEN"
 Width 24 1/4 ins.; Depth 27 7/8 ins.; Height 53 1/2 ins.

INSIDE: Three plastic door shelves. Big cabinet storage space for bottles. Easy-to-reach Temperature Control Dial with wide range of safe temperatures, plus "Defrosting", "Vacation" and "Off" positions. Inside door trim—of easy-to-clean plastic. Cabinet interior—of oven-baked porcelain enamel. OUTSIDE: Bright chrome-plated steel metal work. Cabinet of durable, oven-baked synthetic enamel. Left-hand opening door for greater convenience. Simple, sure, fast-locking latch.

PRECISION BUILT BY KELVINATOR AUSTRALIA LIMITED

New streamlined "SPACE-SAVER-SEVEN" takes up less kitchen space — yet gives full 7 cubic feet of refrigeration!

Kelvinator designers have created a completely new refrigerator design—inside and outside... with 7 cubic feet of true refrigeration, right from top to bottom plus those 3 full-width features for extra value. Every graceful line of this brilliant new Kelvinator gives better refrigeration. Every inch of cabinet space provides the right degree of moisture to preserve the flavour, vitamins and other precious values of your foods — all year 'round.

Inspect the full range of four beautiful models—priced as low as £139/10/-. See the new Kelvinator-8, the new Kelvinator-5, and the big De-Luxe-7 model. Five Year Protection Plan.

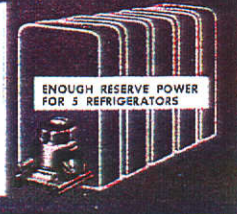
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 Please send me your free illustrated information on the new Kelvinator range.

MY NAME.....
 MY ADDRESS.....

*Plus the MIGHTY "POLAR-SPHERE" Sealed Unit

"POLARSPHERE" has enough reserve power for 5 refrigerators! Yet costs no more to run than an ordinary refrigerator. Hermetically sealed—and permanently self-lubricated in a bath of oil for smooth, silent power. Remember—only Kelvinator can give you this mighty "POLARSPHERE" Sealed Unit.



ENOUGH RESERVE POWER FOR 5 REFRIGERATORS

CHOOSE
Kelvinator FOR BETTER LIVING

Figure 6.4 Kelvinator fridge (Australian House and Garden, October 1954)

The acquisition of appliances or gadgets was marked as significant in the women's lives. Such gift-giving may indicate important events in women's lives, such as weddings or births; or they are remembered because they were luxuries and were expensive. For example, Harriet makes the comment: "I was never rich, but I always wanted the facilities you know for cooking, and as I picked up more with catering I bought myself a mixmaster" (Harriet: Interview 1998). But the impact of household appliances on women's work often served a status function (following Baudrillard 1983), appliances are given a sign value, that signifies status, class, consumption) rather than easing domestic labour, as Dorothy suggests above (cf Forty 1977). Further, Sparke (1987) contends that electrical appliances - as "'jewellery' for the kitchen ... had as much significance as status objects, as items of utility" (Sparke 1987:105).

Forty (1986) and Sparke (1987) suggest that appliances were infused with specific discourses such as hygiene and domesticity, but such discourses were not always apparent. Specifically, designers believed that the shape (streamlined) and colour (usually white) of appliances could reflect a 'modern' aesthetic, and therefore would be inherently beautiful and efficient (see Meg's story above):

(I)n the 1930s and 1940s manufacturers styled appliances in forms reminiscent of factory or industrial equipment to emphasize the labour-saving efficiency which they claimed for their products. At that time, domestic equipment was still intended principally for use by servants. However, such designs made housework look disturbingly like real work and in the 1950s, when many of the people who bought these appliances were actually working in factories, the physical appearance of appliances changed. A new kind of aesthetic for domestic appliances emerged which was discreet, smooth, and with the untidy, mechanical workings of the machine covered from view in grey or white boxes. The now standard domestic style of domestic appliances '... suited the deceptions and contradictions of housework well, for their appearance raised no comparisons with machine tools or office equipment and preserved the illusion that housework was an elevated and noble activity', of housework not being work (Forty 1986:219 in Wajcman 1991:104; see Figure 6.5).



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Christmas
Gift**

When Christmas Bells herald the festive season your Electrolux will bring a restful season — of many, many years changing the drudgery of forever chasing dirt to a quick, easy, thorough and pleasant pastime.

Electrolux is a thing of beauty, a powerful, *silent* worker — the world's best, and it comes to you complete with every conceivable attachment for

**ONE
SHILLING
A DAY**



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**FOR THE
CONVENIENCE
OF GIFT
SEEKERS**

TO ELECTROLUX PTY. LTD.

PLEASE SEND ME WITHOUT OBLIGATION YOUR BOOKLET
ON THE ELECTROLUX MODEL 31 VACUUM CLEANER.

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ADDRESS

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ADELAIDE: Edments Buildings, Rundle Street. Telephone Central 8560.

NEWCASTLE: 5 Union Street. Telephone B3609.

PERTH: 101 William Street. Telephone B8488.

BRISBANE: 19 Adelaide Street. Telephone B1931.

Figure 6.5 Vacuuming would no longer be drudgery, but a pleasant pastime with the beautiful, powerful, silent Electrolux (Australian Home Beautiful, December 1948)

Some women seem to have particular lasting emotional attachments to appliances, perhaps in the same sense as a worker has with their tools.⁸² For example, many women discuss the Sunbeam brand of appliance, they purchased or were given, with 'fondness' (Sparke 1987). Shirley remembers: "(M)y mother gave me ... an electric frypan ... Good old Sunbeam" (Interview 1998). It is only with memory that such an observation as 'good old Sunbeam' can be made; in the 1950s the women would not have known that Sunbeam appliances would have been particularly reliable. Sparke (1987) states of Sunbeam's design that it was one of the "most stylized of contemporary domestic electrical appliances [and] ... [its] 'Mixmaster' machine constituted 34.9 per cent of all sales in 1959" (Sparke 1987:74). The Sunbeam brand had cross-cultural appeal evidenced by Sylvia, an Australian woman, and Jadzia, a Polish woman who was given her mixmaster as a wedding present. She states: "We had the electric beater. I got for my wedding from my brother a mixmaster, Sunbeam. Actually I still have it, it is still going. My mother likes to use it, just for beating eggs, etc." (Jadzia: Interview 1998).

Some women recall the design of the Sunbeam mixmaster for reasons other than its utility. Sylvia recalls: "It was a big Sunbeam mixmaster with big white bowls, heavy, it took all of your time to lift it to the bench" (Sylvia: Interview 1998; see Figure 6.6). Sylvia's story highlights the importance of design - the mixmaster was extremely heavy. Even though it was a desired item by many women in order to aid in their cooking - the implication being that they would be more efficient because they would spend less time mixing the ingredients and it would be physically easier, that is, they would not have to use so much energy to mix ingredients - the mixmaster itself was cumbersome. Moreover, appliances such as the mixmaster and steam iron which women operate, have been designed by men in the role as engineers, designers and scientists and who generally have no involvement in daily household work (Goodall 1990; Parr 1999; Sparke 1987; Wajcman 1991). Overhill (1996) reiterates, suggesting design often contributes rather than eases women's work (cf Cockburn 1997; Wajcman 1991).

⁸² Sparke (1987:16) writes of Frederick's (1913) analogy of the kitchen and the "mechanic's bench" with its tools grouped efficiently around it" in relation to the work triangle and efficiency. Hoy (1995:155) also writes of Frederick's analogy of appliances as 'tools'. See Chapters 2 and 4.

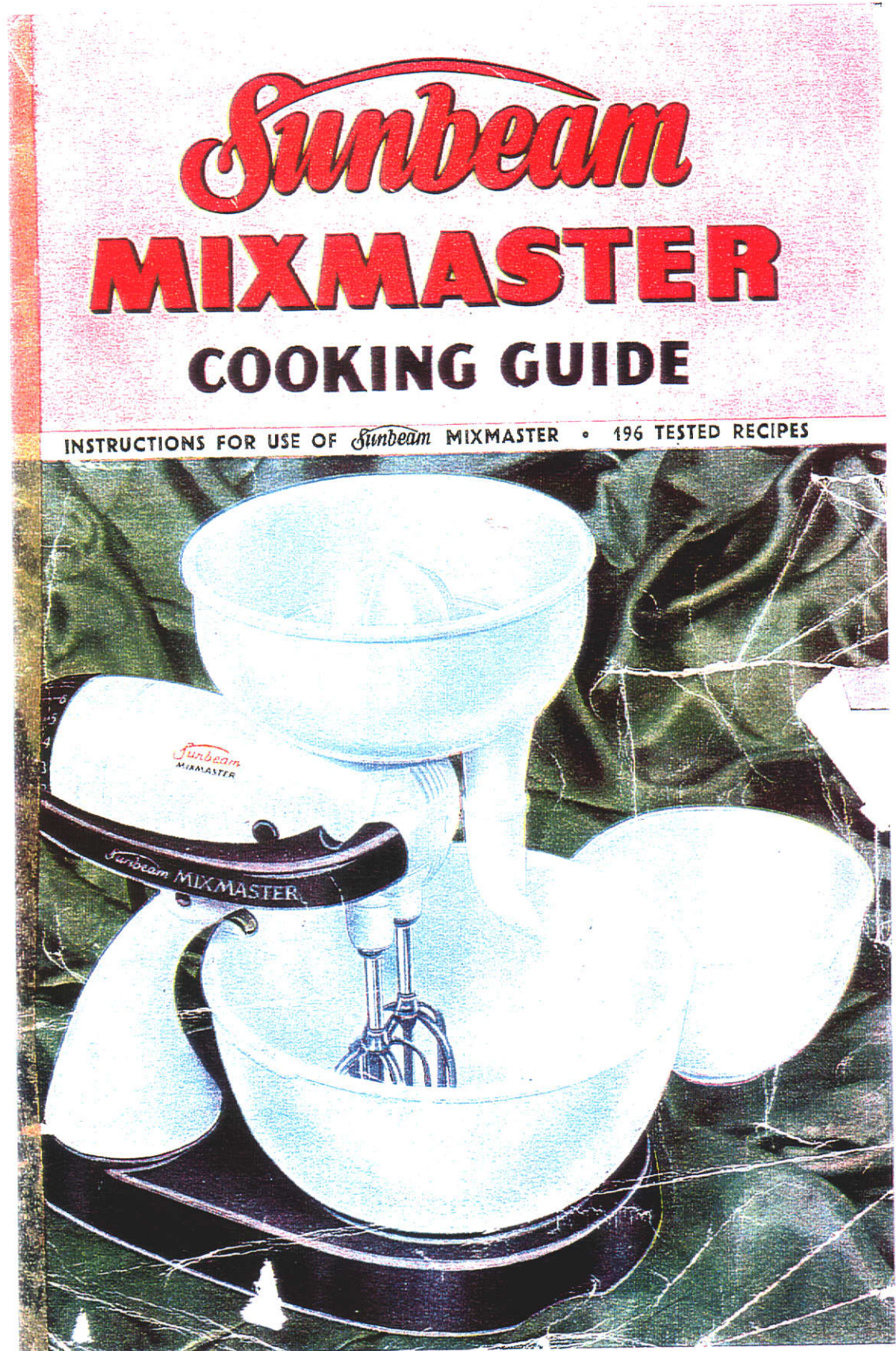


Figure 6.6 Sylvia's original Sunbeam Mixmaster Cooking Guide including recipes
(Courtesy: Sylvia)

Overhill (1996)⁸³ following Maslow, identifies four objectives that should be fulfilled by designed objects - "physical function, safety function, social needs and personal needs" (Overhill 1996:30). Thus, in relation to the Sunbeam mixmaster social needs and personal needs were fulfilled: it provided women with status, looked clean, streamlined and beautiful, was affordable, and women enjoyed using it. Wajcman (1991) suggests "(m)uch of the design effort is put into making appliances look attractive or impressively high-tech in the showroom - for example giving them an unnecessary array of buttons and flashing lights" (Wajcman 1991:56; cf Forty 1986). However, the physical function such as easy to clean and store would be questionable, and the heaviness of the mixmaster meant that it was awkward to move around. In the 'Sunbeam Mixmaster Cooking Guide' clear safety messages to the user concerning electricity and clearance of hands are also central.

Women invested in labour-saving devices, such as mixmasters and floor polishers, but sometimes preferred to use traditional practices, therefore employing competing domesticity and efficiency discourses. For example, Kathleen believed it was better for her physically and 'spiritually' to polish her floors on hands and knees:

An aunt lent me a polisher for a time until her daughter needed it. Otherwise it's just hands and knees. That's one of the best things for your back. *It is*, because you're leaning there, every pressure is taken off your spine, it's just everything is released, you just feel good when you get up and it's very humbling too [laugh] (Kathleen: Interview 1998, her emphasis).

For making cakes Renata suggests:

I prefer to use my hands. Funny thing, when I use my hands, somehow I have a feeling I know what I'm doing, you know what I mean. When the [mixmaster] machine does it, you don't really know where it is up to [laughing]. I do it when I have to, but I prefer, even my cakes, I prefer to do with ordinary [hands, spoons], because I know what I have to do (Renata: Interview 1998).

Game & Pringle (1983:125) argue "(n)ew technology in the home has contradictory effects" (cf Cowan 1983; Strasser 1982; Wajcman 1991). Discourses of

⁸³ Overhill (1996) discusses in relation to an onion chopping machine the characteristics needed and desires fulfilled by such a machine.

consumption and scientific management of the kitchen are disrupted as women like Kathleen and Renata indicate: women's practices entail skill and knowledge that cannot, or in their case, does not want to, be replaced by technology.

Hence, the women in my study engage with the 'new' consumer society in varying ways. They use their considerable skill and knowledge in order to provide for their families within the limits of their budgets.

Power and decision-making

In my study the decision-making process in family finances was either completely controlled by husbands, by the women themselves or was the joint responsibility of husband and wife. This confirms Oakley's (1974/1985) earlier study which had identified two patterns of decision-making in financial arrangements - segregated or joint; she argued that "(h)usbands and wives who share in one area also share in the other, and the same symmetry holds when the accent is on separation" (Oakley 1974/1985:142). Joint patterns of decision-making in how the family income would be divided existed in my study: for housekeeping, including food, clothing and shoes, bills, such as utilities and mortgage repayments and for savings and household purchases, such as furniture and appliances. Women often had a jointly managed general household budget for housekeeping, savings and household purchases, and a separate budget for housekeeping, which was managed entirely by the women. Most of the women managed family finances including their 'housekeeping money' according to the agreed upon budget. Sheridan (2002) suggests this was why women, not men, had been targeted as consumers. The new practice of "borrowing and consuming as normal and responsible" behaviour was aimed at them, "whether or not they themselves were earning, and whether they were given the whole of their husband's pay packet or only a portion" (Sheridan 2002:19).

Women in my study had power over how much money to spend weekly on food, clothing and shoes. Baxter (1993:88) discusses a study by Blood and Wolfe (1960) conducted in the 1950s that examines issues of family power in general decision-

making in American families. Baxter (1993) states that the Blood and Wolfe (1960) study:

argued that the comparative resources of husband and wife were the key determinants of family power and the chief resource was the economic contribution that was made by both husband and wife. Thus the spouse with the greater income would generally have the most power in the family. Blood and Wolfe also examined decision-making as a measure of family power. They asked couples who had the 'final say' in a range of family decisions, and found that women tended to have most say in decisions about domestic issues, such as how much money to spend on food, while men tended to have most say in matters such as what car to buy and where to live (Baxter 1993:88-89).

Such financial arrangements between husband and wife are evident in my study where husbands usually had the greater income. For example, when I asked Amelia who decided how the money would be allocated, she stated: "Accountants [like my husband] never give you their pay! He gave me my housekeeping, and that was what I used to try and budget on, and I did a very good job" (Amelia: Interview 1998). Many women however, unlike the Blood & Wolfe study also had significant input to budget decision-making regarding larger household purchases, such as cars and houses (see above; Chapter 4).

Baxter (1993) contends analysis of power in general decision-making is limited - decisions must first be visible and overt, whereas many decisions within marriage are unspoken or taken-for-granted (1993:89). For instance, Dorothy's financial arrangements could be characterised in such a way, that is, their financial decision-making could be explained as implicit and invisible:

My husband wasn't interested. I tried very hard to get my husband to work out a budget with me, but in some remarkably clever and strange way, he never would. He just said, "Look, we don't spend money recklessly but we spend all we've got. What's the point?" And you may be surprised to know that I never knew absolutely what he earned, never. He obviously didn't want to tell me so I didn't press him because if he didn't want to, what was the point? No, we didn't have a budget, but I had a sort of a budget. Because before I was married I had a good job actually and had been used to quite good money and if I wanted something it was just a matter of going and getting it if I had to, which isn't very good training. So I had to watch what I spent (Dorothy: Interview 1998).

Power which is visible and overt, is one-dimensional in that it points to structures or ideologies, namely ideas of power that are concrete and static. Such an understanding of power is not indicative of power exercised by women in this study as it diminishes the complexity and extent of women's budgeting decision-making and their exercise of power. Power in financial decision-making is multi-layered, for example, Helena's finances were decided jointly with her husband but she controlled them. She states:

It always has been [joint], and if I buy something, he would say, "You don't have to ask me for anything". That's one of the problems, you get husbands who don't let their wives do too much shopping, because they restrict them, but I always carried the cheque book, so I used to spend the money ... I like spending money (Helena: Interview 1998).

Hence, a Foucauldian (1978:94-95) notion of power which understands power as productive and operating at the micro-level, recognises women's power in budgeting as heterogeneous (see Chapter 2). Shirley operates within such an understanding of power: "Well I wasn't working in those days, so he used to give me the money and then I'd use it as I saw fit" (Shirley: Interview 1998).

Australian studies of family decision-making have been primarily influenced by Adler's (1965) study of Australian families⁸⁴ (Dempsey 1997:92). Adler (1965), who had already completed two different studies on Mexican and American mothers in the 1950s and 1960s, concluded that Australian mothers wielded considerably more leadership, described as *matriduxy*, in relation to decisions on such things as childcare, domestic chores, small expenditures and even key decisions within the family. Dempsey (1997) states that Adler (1965) defined *matriduxy* as different to matriarchy, the latter being "a situation where the domination of women is formalised and highly institutionalised" (Dempsey 1997:92). Australian social theorist, Bryson (1985) has argued that Adler's term, *matriduxy*, "carries the

⁸⁴ Dempsey (1997) acknowledges the limits of Adler's (1965) study. It was conducted using the answers given by 12 year old children about their parents decision-making. Dempsey (1997) states: "Such information is inevitably going to reflect the children's interaction with parents over issues of concern to them" (Dempsey 1997:92). Furthermore, Oakley (1974/1985) and Pahl (1983) have conflicted with Adler's (1965) findings, stating that he over-estimated women's familial power in Australia.

connotation of women exercising significant power and possibly the implication that women are playing the key role in family decisions” (Dempsey 1997:92).

Adler’s (1965) study reinforces my argument, women in my study believed that their power within the family was considerable and that they did significantly influence budget decision-making. Anna was always solely responsible for the budget, because her husband believed that she could “do it better than him” (Anna: Interview 1998). And Meg had witnessed her own mother controlling the family finances so she expected to do it:

But [I] knew no different, [I]’d been raised that way ... and we had a lot of fights, a lot of fights over money [with her husband] because my mother had always held the purse strings, [my husband’s] father had always done it. So we came from two very different families and you know in the early days there was quite a lot of arguments to see who was going to be ‘king of the wash’ [and control the finances] [laugh]” (Meg: Interview 1998).

Pamela, a Croatian woman, was completely responsible for her family’s budget:

Yes, yes it was always my way to save and to organise the money, do the banking and take the money [from the bank account], really put the regime on myself. My husband didn’t really restrict me in that way, but I knew our situation and I did budget and economise in my own way, but I had a free hand if I needed extra money to buy clothes and shoes, everything. It would be my decision (Pamela: Interview 1998).

According to Pamela, such control over the family finances was not usual for Croatian women. She states that even though her husband was not always happy with her purchases, she still maintained control over the family finances.

I know that some of my friends had to really ask [their] husband[s] for money for any little thing. Even though my husband used to complain, “you spend too much, you spend too much”, he never took [the] purse strings and tied them himself (Pamela: Interview 1998).

Women had to make wise budgeting decisions to ensure the family’s survival. Further, the women’s ability to be a ‘good’ wife and mother, in terms of managing the household was also tested. Kingston (1994) argues then that the ability to budget is paramount and potentially empowering:

(s)hopping may have been a useful form of power for most women ... Skill, independence, judgement, responsibility for the health and welfare of husbands and children were all involved. While it was father's responsibility to earn the money, it was the mother's to spend it wisely to maximise its value in the family's health and welfare (Kingston 1994:118-119).

The women in my study had a variety of methods to disperse their housekeeping money. Some women apportioned their money into a "tin" or into "envelopes" (Amelia: Interview 1998; Meg: Interview 1998). Amelia recalls that the:

The [newspaper] money was put in the tin, the milk money was put in the tin ... So the money was there when the people called for it, 'cause the people used to call on certain days, we used to put the milk money out on a certain day that you got your bills (Amelia: Interview 1998).

Meg also controlled the household's "very tight" budget, by allocating money for bills, savings and housekeeping 'instinctively', rather than systematically:

... I knew. I mean I knew in here [points to her head], and my kids always laughed, I always had envelopes ... I'd have envelopes everywhere ... and so I knew to the cent, what I had and what I didn't have, and how I was going to do it. To this day ... I have some envelopes, that I know exactly where we sit, I always did (Meg: Interview 1998).

Amelia divided her money in order "to pay back the money we owed" to her parents-in-law to build their house (Amelia: Interview 1998; see Chapter 4). Meg states that the main reason for having such a strict budget was because: "I wanted to do it, because I wanted to be able to save as well and get things" (Meg: Interview 1998).

A woman's shopping also related to her changing femininity, as Matthews (1984) suggests, for women were expected to engage with the discourse of consumerism discussed above (see also Johnson 1993; Lury 1996). As such, femininity was redefined through women's new positioning as consumer and household manager:

The old image of the house-bound mother continued and was strengthened, but she did move outside the home more often to do the shopping. She became the purchasing manager for the household, rather than its servant ... The image of the good woman became partially detached or disconnected

from her domestic setting. She was permitted personal pleasure as well as familial duty. She was encouraged to be seductive as well as nurturant ... Woman became the family shopper, mediator between individual desire and family budget, caught between the social meanings of consumption and economic reality. The myriad aspects of femininity were the building blocks with which the advertising experts played (Matthews 1984:90 & 99).

Patriarchal discourse also affected men's identities to be 'good' husbands. Oakley (1974/1985) contends that: "A 'good' husband is seen as one who hands over the money regularly, and who does not keep the whole of any 'extra' he earns for himself" (Oakley 1974/1985:144). "(W)e didn't have money when we arrived to Australia, we were really poor ... My husband would give me his wages and I used to deal with it, everything, bank, rent [and] paying bills (Sally: Interview 1998).⁸⁵ Hence, Sally was responsible for the budget and ensuring that there was enough money. Sylvia's husband also gave her his pay packet:

Yes, yes, my husband always gave me the money, his pay, and kept out a small amount for himself for fares and things like that. The rest he gave to me and I had to manage everything, you know the payments on our hire purchase and what have you. I had to sort it all out and then shop from there (Sylvia: Interview 1998).

By contrast, some women *wanted* their husbands to organise the budget. Marlene, a German woman, had a budget that was decided upon by her husband, she stated that her husband paid for everything - "I'm glad, even bills and that, I don't want anything to do with it" (Marlene: Interview 1998):

(H)e would always pay all the bills first and then he'd say "alright from the money this week this goes out for this and that and the rest is for housekeeping". But then you had to think about putting a penny away so you don't get stranded you know. So that's what he did, he took out for that, that and that payment and then [put a] little bit in the savings and the rest was for that. Sometimes you live a bit better, sometimes not. Sometimes you were a little bit short and you took something out for something extra ... it always comes in at Christmas and birthdays ... But always we had to live on a budget, you can't just say, "ooh we have so much to spend, lets go". Not that way, ooh no (Marlene: Interview 1998).

⁸⁵ Sally's husband was a fitter and turner. Sylvia's husband was a clerk.

Matthews (1984) argues that: "Women's lack of knowledge and lack of [absolute] control over family finances has been related by some analysts to women's general subordination in economic matters" (Matthews 1984:170). However, many of the women in my study believed they did have power in the decision-making process concerning family finances, they thought that they had control over money, whether it was sole control or jointly with their husbands. In this respect a Foucauldian understanding of power which operates at many levels is useful, because it allows for nuanced perspectives of power. The women's stories indicate there is not just one or two operations of power existing in their financial decision-making, there are a myriad of micro-power relations operating in the women's lives.

Although many women reported joint decision-making with their husbands, it occurred in different ways. In Jessie's case:

we would discuss [expenditure] when he came home, we always did everything together ... Yes, always, we always worked to a budget because otherwise it wouldn't work. I mean you've got to take out so much for rent, for the house, when we were in C., for lights and that sort of thing, before you thought of spending money (Jessie: Interview 1998).

Conversely, Florence's budget was decided jointly, but her husband had control of it:

(W)ell we worked it out together, (n)o, I wasn't in control of it, D. [was]. Whatever I needed was given me; I didn't have to buy clothes ... only materials, because I was making them all. We couldn't afford to buy anything (Florence: Interview 1998).

Kathleen's budgeting process was decided jointly and both controlled the finances. She recalls:

Yes, we did section our money out. We tried to work out ahead just how much we needed for each thing, even down to bread, milk, meat and vegies, to see if we had enough to cover that. And to see just how far we could stretch things out, without sort of starving, to make ends meet, until the next pay because there was no other place for the money to come from ... It was shared really, my husband would say how much we had after we paid rent. And we had also bought a block of land, perhaps a year or so before we were married and we were trying to pay that off. So it really was very limited. I used to like to visit my mother during the week, but sometimes

there wasn't a bus fare so instead of once a week it was once a fortnight (Kathleen: Interview 1998).

Some husbands of other informants who took total control of the finances followed a gendered division of labour, confirming Blood & Wolfe's (1960) findings discussed above. For example, Clara's husband "gave [money] for food, but he paid all the bills for the house" (Clara: Interview 1998). Dorothy's husband would also give her a certain amount of money for housekeeping (Interview 1998). Furthermore, some women had friends whose money was controlled by their husbands:

Probably most of them had to depend on their husband to give them money for the weekly shopping. Or the husband would really make a point to go with them and then even if they had to buy a dress they would go inside the shop, try a dress then walk out of the shop and say to their husband "[do you] like it?" That was also very common. Asking husbands do they like the dress, if they say "no", off it goes ... no matter what you feel (Pamela: Interview 1998).

Thus, the gendered division of labour between breadwinner and homemaker is replicated in financial arrangements and can be characterised as patriarchal. While Dorothy's husband paid bills such as rates, medical bills, repairs and the telephone, she paid household bills, such as electricity and gas. Dorothy's expenditure therefore, was mainly household and related strictly to her gendered position in the home, her husband's expenditure related to the maintenance of the house. But Dorothy's understanding of the decision-making process regarding financial arrangements in her family was egalitarian - she and her husband had similar values about money. She comments on the division of money:

(H)e spent very little on himself. He was very unselfish and very undemanding. We both had the same ideas about money and didn't worry about details. If I said to him, 'Would you pick up my dry cleaning for me?' or he said, 'Would you get some tobacco for me when you're out', we wouldn't bother to say, 'You owe me such-and-such', if the other forgot to pay. Money was money, we shared it. It wasn't a hard and fast division. And I got a certain amount. I got Child Endowment, that came to the mother, and I had a little bit of money put by before marriage and I got interest on that. I got bits and pieces. I got six guineas if I did a script on the ABC (Dorothy: Interview 1998).

Tami, a Pakistani woman who came to Western Australia for an arranged marriage had a significantly different financial arrangement to the other women in my study. She explains:

Yes, what happened actually, my father, when I was married gave me £1,000, which I had in my account. And then when I was married my husband, like we had [bride price], we call it, the husband promises the wife according to his needs, a certain amount of money, so he added to it to make it £3,500 I think it was, so he gave that to me and that was in my account. But I don't think I used it very much at all, because clothing and everything, he had clothes, he had linen, all different types of things for his business, so I could just go to the front, the warehouse we called it, one large room and he had all the stock there, I could go in and choose the outfit that I wanted to wear, I didn't have a problem with that ... He was generous in one way that if I asked him and he agreed, he would give me the money and everything, but if I bought anything without telling him, he used to get angry, upset like, "why would you buy that, that is wasting money" (Tami: Interview 1998).

Because of their budgeting skills many women considered themselves successful household managers - "I was never in that position [where there was no money at the end of the week], but I do know people who were" (Amelia: Interview 1998). Meg was occasionally in this position, and I asked her what she did:

Nothing, because I could always knock up a meal out of nothing, love, still can. Out of bits, and for it to look like it was supposed to be that way, so we always ate. And if we didn't have anything, well anything else didn't matter, because the bills were paid and I'd bought whatever. Or if we didn't, if it was Wednesday, and we needed to get through to Friday, we'd always get through (Meg: Interview 1998).

Hence, women's ability to 'make do' is linked with their budgeting skills. Especially important to women whose migrant status had made them feel 'insecure' (see Chapter 4). Lina "would never spend more, we would budget in the sense that you can't spend more next week than I spent this week or things like that" (Lina: Interview 1998). Clara reiterates: "(T)here was only so much and that had to do, and it did ... We always had something left. We were used to that [budgeting] and my husband he'd say 'go and buy yourself a dress', and I'd say 'no I will not'" (Clara: Interview 1998).

Thus, many women exercise a multi-layered rather than static power in budget decision-making (Foucault 1978). Decisions about large expenditures were generally made jointly and women controlled the weekly housekeeping budget. While some husbands controlled all financial decision-making, some wives had freedom to purchase what they thought was necessary. However, a mentality of thrift and 'making do' underpins all budgeting arrangements.

The importance of budgeting is seen clearly in relation to weekly food shopping. Many women's housekeeping budgets focus on planning meals for the week. As the stories indicate the women apply a 'make do' philosophy to recipes in order to stay within their budget, while providing their families with nutritious meals (see Chapter 7).

“Curry one night, steak the next”:⁸⁶ Budgeting and meal planning

Women's responsibility for planning and managing the budget was couched within the discourse of domestic science prevalent in the 1940s and 1950s which expected women to be thrifty and economical in their everyday lives (Reiger 1985; see Chapter 7). Being able to provide their families with nutritious meals within the weekly budget required skill and knowledge, and as such “expectations of women's competence in all aspects of domesticity were legitimized by the popularization of the message of domestic science” (Reiger 1985:69). Women's ability to make budgeting decisions that ensured the health and financial welfare of the family provided them with power. However in terms of the professionalisation of the housewife - through domestic science education in which women were supposed to 'learn' how to manage the house - links were also made between public accounting methods and private household budget management (Reiger 1985:65; see Chapter 2).

Meal planning and the related shopping list was a key part of many women's household organisation. Because of its association with the weekly housekeeping

⁸⁶ Shirley: Interview 1998

budget managed entirely by the women in my study, such planning provides women with autonomy and power.

As indicated above, many women were highly organised and planned their weekly meals before they went shopping. The connection between budgeting, meal planning and shopping is made explicit within this practice:

Well in those days, you had to watch because you only had one wage, we were four people, you couldn't just go and buy what you see, you had to know what you needed. It's different now, because in those days you had to have that little bit [extra], you couldn't just go [food] shopping and buy what you see and what you think you like (Grace: Interview 1998).

For many women planning meals was directly determined by their food budget and they adjusted recipes to suit the amount of money allocated, as Sylvia explains:

I think even in those days I shopped on the cheaper cuts of things ... I mean, there is no way if cauliflowers were at a certain cost, I'd buy cauliflower, I'd shop within my budget. I always budgeted, I never sort of said "well we're going to have cauliflower, this, this and this", because, I looked around and bought whatever that I knew would make a wholesome meal and which as I said before we used to have a lot of stews and braises and things like that. Sort of casseroles and that sort of living, not sort of go and buy a piece of steak, because lots of times I found I couldn't afford it (Sylvia: Interview 1998).

How to plan meals according to a menu was suggested in popular discourse, such as magazines and newspapers, as well as cookbooks. Gwen Hughes (1951) argued in an article "Family meals for a fortnight", published in *The Australian Home Beautiful*, that if the housewife decides what meals to feed her family and how to economise on money and time this means that: "By careful planning a week ahead you need not live from hand to mouth, but dovetail the meals from one day to another, and make considerable saving on your food bills, on fuel, and on shopping trips" (1951:56; see Figure 6.7). *The West Australian* newspaper also ran an article 'Prepare Menus in Advance' which gave advice to women to be highly organised and time efficient (March 1952). Some women in my study did organise their weekly menus (and shopping) in ways that reflected popular and domestic science discourses:

FIRST WEEK		SECOND WEEK	
Breakfast	Bunch	Breakfast	Bunch
MON. CEREAL COOKED MEAT fried; or pancake. COCOA	VEGETABLE SOUP or cold meat and salad. BANANA CUSTARD WHOLEMEAL MUFFINS	CEREAL AND MILK or steamed fruit. WHOLEMEAL TOAST with tomato sauce or leftover vegetable fried lightly. COFFEE	HOT CHEESE TOAST or cold meat and salad. JUNKET TOMATO JUICE
TUE. FRIED BREAD FRESH FRUIT COFFEE or cocoa.	SWEETCORN SCRAMBLE egg and cream. UPSIDE-DOWN CAKE Make double quantity cake mixture for evening's pudding. TOMATO JUICE COFFEE	STEWED FRUIT, CEREAL FRIED POTATO CAKES from last night's leftover. MARMALADE TOAST COFFEE	HOT FRENCH SANDWICHES (use any filling with hot meat or vegetable, leftovers from last night's dinner, add sauce). COLDEN GLOVES with warmed honey (they balls of pasta mixture and hot). Fry for day, fancy blanc mange with banana.
WED. BACON AND FRIED BANANAS or pineapple and apple rings. OATMEAL COFFEE	SCALLOPED BRAINS with fried ham sandwiches. PANCAKES with hot jam or syrup.	CEREAL, STEWED RHUBARB FISH PASTE TOAST COCOA	SPRING VEGETABLE SOUP with tiny savory dumplings. MEAT LOAF served hot or cold according to taste, with tomatoes, baked potatoes, or salad. APPLE CHARLOTTE or apple crumble.
THURS. CEREAL, STEWED FRUIT LAMB'S FRY minced and cooked slightly overnight on toast. ORANGE JUICE	SWISS POTATOES baked in layers with cheese between, and covered with milk. SMALL PASTRIES seasoned fingers. COMPOTE FRUIT	PRUNES SCRAMBLED EGGS MARMALADE TOAST COFFEE	BOSTON BAKED BEANS sweet potatoes, cold raw (shredded raw cab- bage, bean with dressing). CHOCOLATE BLANC MANGE with jelly or icecream.
FRI. PORRIDGE PASTALOONS with grilled tomatoes. COFFEE	MACARONI CHEESE HOT GINGERBREAD, with orange sauce.	PORRIDGE, MILK BACON AND FRIED APPLE RINGS ORANGE JUICE	PEA SOUP CREAMED FISH with cornflakes and baked. WHOLEMEAL DUMPLINGS and golden syrup honey. Or, for hot day, shredded raw cabbage.
SAT. FRENCH TOAST bread soaked in milk and egg, fried in butter. PRUNES COCOA	TOAST-IN-THE-HOLE minced meat baked in butter. BAKED APPLES stuffed with dates.	MUSHROOM OR ANTI- CHOKES ON TOAST or leftover vegetables with a little grated cheese, bound with egg and well-browned. COFFEE FRESH FRUIT	PEASANT SOUP all in together, gravy, vegetables, bones, pottage-like and flavoured. LAYER AND BACON TART glazed baked onions, broccoli. SAGO PLUM PUDDING lemon sauce.
SUN. TEA AND TOAST or rolls.	ROAST STUFFED VEAL baked potatoes, cauliflower, BEACH PIE or potatoes and carrots. TOMATO SAVORY	TOAST AND COFFEE in bed.	ARTICHOKE OR CELERY CREAM SOUP COLD MEAT PLATTER minced salade. JELLIES cake, cold cutlet or lobster. FRUIT PUNCH

Figure 6.7

Family meals for a fortnight
(Australian Home Beautiful, May 1951)

I remember my sister-in-law at the time she knew exactly what to cook every day, while I didn't keep strictly to the rules, she knew exactly which day is soup, and which day is fry, which days grill and whatever, and every week, no change, she was so set in her ways [my] Australian sister-in-law. But I rarely, if I feel like cooking meat one day, and fish the other, I didn't keep strict to the rule but while shopping I did really think what should I do with the food and how to organise it through the week (Pamela: Interview 1998).

Jessie and Meg were two women who planned meals and shopped, but like Pamela and Sylvia above, Meg, an Australian born woman did not always follow her plan:

Sometimes I'd do a menu, we collectively decided on what we were going to have but I found it hard to stick to that ... sometimes I was so knackered when I got home and I couldn't be bothered doing that or I forgot to get it out or you know, whatever, sometimes it didn't work out (Meg: Interview 1998).

Although they knew what they were going to cook for the coming week, some women did not have a shopping list:

You'd sort of think, I didn't have anything written down or anything like that, but you'd think what we might have. You'd think curry one night, steak the next, then meat with a sauce, and you might have - chicken was just coming in, where you would have it more often. I did think about what I was going to do (Shirley: Interview 1998).

Further, in the domestic science discourse women were also exhorted to be economical with their time, this is where planning for meals (and shopping) was important - housewives "had to manage people, food, clothing and income as well as [their] own time" (Reiger 1985:69; see Chapter 5). Many women saved money on transport because of their choice of shopping location. The notion of being a good financial organiser and being economic with time and money was integral to being a 'good' woman.

In terms of being economical with money and time, some women shopped at larger supermarkets in order to save money after realising that corner (or local) shops were much more expensive. Pamela, walked to Fremantle every Friday to shop, but caught the bus home with her groceries. She states:

Oh we used to walk down to Fremantle. There was a little corner shop, but soon I realised that it is better to walk down to Fremantle and do the shopping, [at] Charlie Carters and Freecorns, two shops in Fremantle at the time which [were] self service ... I would walk down to save the bus fare, but when I had a load of vegetables, groceries to carry I would catch a bus ... home. And I was always timing myself to [be] home before the children came from school ... the children never came home [when] I wasn't there (Pamela: Interview 1998).

The growth of supermarkets impacted in different ways on the women's shopping patterns. For example, women like Pamela shopped at supermarkets because it was cheaper and also self-serve which meant that she did not have to speak English (see Chapter 5). There were some women who shopped for convenience rather than obtaining lower prices. Ruth, a Dutch woman who arrived in Western Australia in 1954 remembers Tom the Cheap Grocer⁸⁷ opening and that it made her shopping more convenient, saving her time and money:

I remember going there and I still remember the freezing things in the middle, still remember how it looked like then. Because it was a big thing, I mean he opened up and you thought, 'hey, I can get a few things all at once', and then we went by car [with] my husband (Ruth: Interview 1998).

Dorothy's shopping was convenient, but not necessarily economical. She would shop approximately three times a week and often her groceries were delivered. She discusses the pattern:

Things were delivered then. The milkman came each night, the baker every day. We had a fish man who came every Thursday. There was a small mixed shop around in W. Avenue, the next street, who would ring up early Friday morning when they came back from the markets, and took my order over the phone, they had fruit and vegetables and groceries and they delivered them in the afternoon. I went on doing that for years long after the supermarkets opened. I bought some things from the supermarkets but all the heavy stuff like potatoes and flour ... I got from the little shop ... The butcher, too, was just around the corner and I used to go around there, it was close you see. We had - we were fortunate enough in these older suburbs to have these small shops and they carried all sorts of things ... When the children were small of course, you'd take the children with you

⁸⁷ 'Tom the Cheap Grocer' was one of the first self-service supermarkets to open in the northern suburbs of Perth. It was owned by Tom Wardle and opened in Fitzgerald Street, North Perth in 1957 (Bolton 1997:119; Kingston 1994).

(and the dog!) ... I would shop when I needed. Oh, I suppose probably three times per week I'd do things, various things, one time one thing, one, another (Dorothy: Interview 1998).

Hence, meal planning was important to the women in my study in terms of being economical with their money and time and providing nutritious meals within their budgets. They derived power and a sense of achievement from fulfilling their identity of household manager. Meal planning indicates clearly that women's skill and knowledge are embodied in their identities of mother, wife, housewife and homemaker.

Another example where women's skill and knowledge in terms of managing the family finances is indicated is in their engagement with hire purchase.

“I think Hire Purchase was the way to go”⁸⁸

Although hire purchase had, by the mid-1950s, become an acceptable means by which to obtain household goods, such as refrigerators, washing machines and furnishings, such as lounge suites, the women in my study had very different ideas about its benefits (Kingston 1994; Sheridan 2002:26). Hire purchase was integral to the new consumerism that women were being encouraged to practice, and Matthews (1984) argues that 'saving up and buying later' - the philosophy of many of the women in my study - was not the ideology that advertisers and marketers were encouraging. Instead,

varieties of financial arrangement for delayed payment were invented by consumption experts to encourage immediate purchase and consumption. The provision of such credit - time payment, lay-by, COD, hire purchase ... all altered the individual's sense of budgetary constraint and the virtue of delayed gratification (Matthews 1984:97).

As such, hire purchase was adopted differently by the women in my study. Some women were cautious of hire purchase because of their (or their parents') experience of the Depression (Sheridan 2002:26). Others refused the option, preferring to save

⁸⁸ Edna: Interview 1998

first and buy later (and perhaps were not overly influenced by the new consumption discourses).

Anna, an East German woman, engaged in hire purchase tentatively:

On hire purchase, I haven't got it anymore [the bedroom suite], I've got only the bedside table, only one of them. I gave it to my son after my husband passed away, it was a good one, I got it from Foy & Gibson⁸⁹ and, this is the only thing that I paid off hire purchase, you know. And this chair, I had another [three] of this one ... We paid £275 for the bedroom suite and the four chairs and we had a little [coffee] table ... We had to pay £75 interest on this. And for this I [could have] had the carpet, if I had saved up the money, [I] could have [bought] the carpet. I said no more hire purchase, this was the only [time] (Anna: Interview 1998).

Many women like Anna felt uneasy about hire purchase. The money repaid in interest could have been used to purchase other goods. For this same reason Florence borrowed money from her parents-in-law so that money could be repaid without hire purchase interest and avoided 'wastefulness', therefore reinforcing the ideal of thrift:

If we thought we needed some money for something, they [parents-in-law] would loan it to us, they would give it to us, but we took it as a loan and we paid it back but we didn't have to pay interest, like getting it from the bank, so we managed quite well. But there were different things, probably the refrigerator was bought like that and then paid back with no extra money (Florence: Interview 1998).

However, some women believed that hire purchase was a means of obtaining the things they needed: "We had only one wage in those days, and then perhaps you had something to pay off [hire purchase]. So you had to watch your money" (Grace: Interview 1998).

Other women used hire purchase as a strategy to help them start to allocate money. They thought that if they had a 'contract' and strict payments they would more easily be able to budget. Helena states that it was very difficult for them to save money, but that despite the extra penalty of interest they were quite good at paying off their hire

⁸⁹ A furniture shop in Fremantle and Perth.

purchase. As Helena relates below, using hire purchase forced them to start to allocate money, and in this way the beginning of a budget was created:

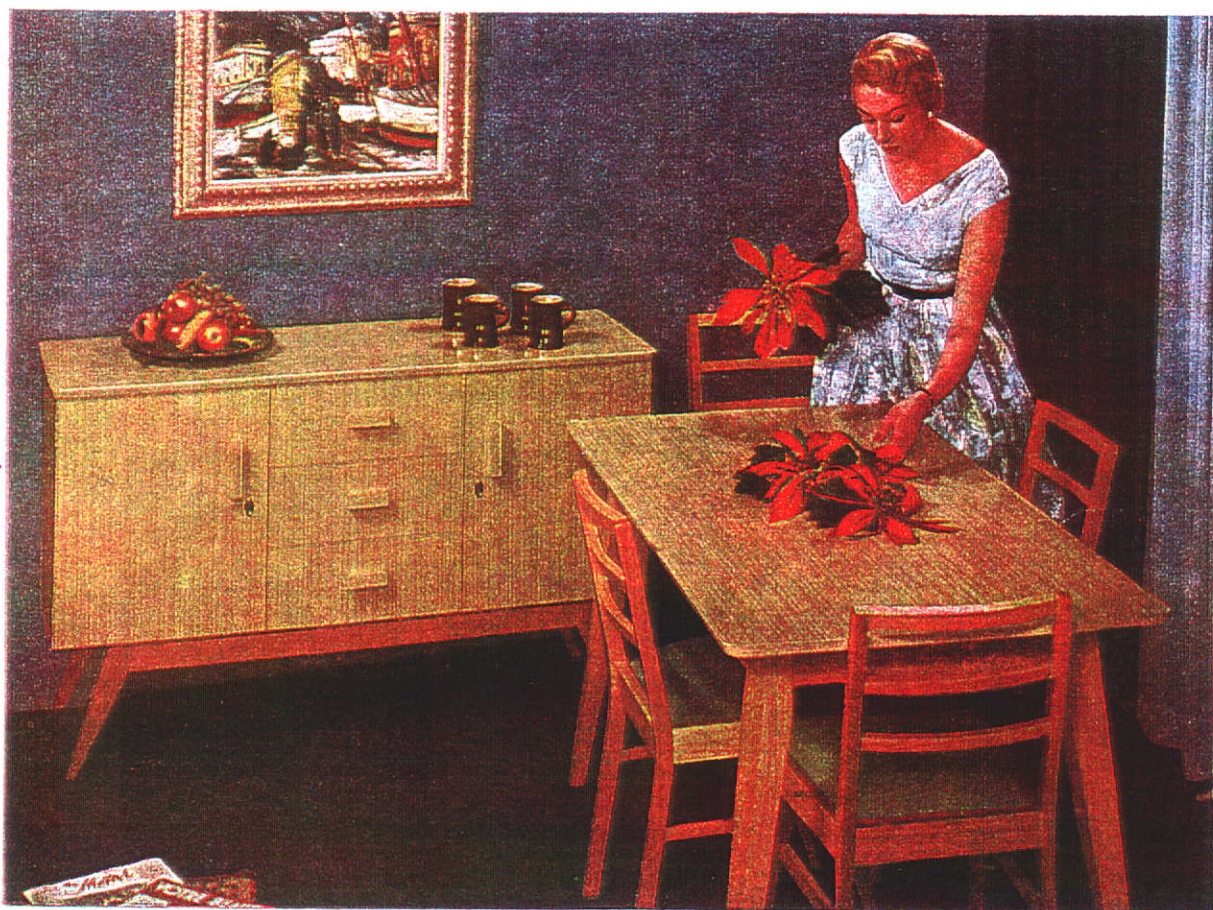
Without a budget we never saved anything, but we were good at paying things off ... But there was no money in our bank until we decided 'right, we [will] buy a block [of land]'. My mother lent me £200 and we didn't buy it, we [used] it for payments. We were good at this because all the furniture we got was on payment, paying off. So once we owed money, we would make sure we would put that money away. So we got this block, a deposit and then we paid it off. I suppose you would call it a budget, but we never had ... 'so much has to be put away', but that's the way it should be really. If you add up what you earn and then how much you eat, and pay for your lodgings if you're renting, should be put away, a certain percentage, which we were never able to do (Helena: Interview 1998).

The women often made budgetary decisions about furniture (and sometimes appliances) without their husbands. Furthermore, these decisions were made 'carefully' believing that what they bought (very often on hire purchase) was going to last for their lifetime. This reasoning also applied to Sylvia when she bought her bedroom suite on hire purchase. She explains:

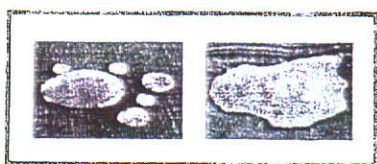
Actually, I picked it out and then I took him along to see if he liked it and I know that I used to go out and look at this bedroom suite every time I went into town to work. I used to go, it was in the Bensky⁹⁰ window and I used to like the pattern on the wood. It was veneer, we've still got the bed to this day, it was all patterned. It was quite expensive, but we thought well, 'we'll only ever have one bedroom suite', so he was quite happy, so we bought that (Sylvia: Interview 1998).

Edna also tells the story of her kitchen table being a 'once off' purchase (which she still uses daily). She purchased several items using hire purchase. She states: "I think hire purchase was the way to go then" (Edna: Interview 1998). The table was purchased in "1956. [It] is the first table we ever bought, [and it still has the] same top. The chairs have had to be changed, because after all those years they deteriorated. But this is the original. Very good laminex. It was a Jason one" (Edna: Interview 1998; see Figure 6.8).

⁹⁰ A furniture shop in Murray Street, Perth.



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Figure 6.8 Laminex table and chairs
 (Australian House and Garden, March 1955)

Hence, hire purchase enabled the women in my study to acquire furniture and appliances and in some instances, even helped them to budget. However, not all women were eager to engage with hire purchase and the emerging consumerism of the 1950s, believing, in line with their 'make do' attitude, that it was better to save first and buy later.

Conclusion

It is possible to see in these stories the embodiment of such discourses of 'making do' and a "burden of prudence" regarding budget decision-making. Even though patriarchal understandings of women's position in the home can be identified, women in my study were not powerless in terms of budget decision-making - there is a multi-layering of decision-making and power evident in their stories.

The emerging consumer society in the 1950s necessitated women, targeted as the new consumers, engage with consumption of appliances and furniture. The impact of new labour-saving devices again saw the women in my study negotiate and renegotiate their identities in terms of their work practices of the kitchen, how they performed them and the changes in discourses such as femininity, in which they were expected to be nurturant as well as seductive. Throughout these changes the women in my study used their skill and knowledge to make financial decisions that ensured the health and prosperity of the family, for example, through meal planning and hire purchase.

The next chapter examines women's practice of cooking.

I'm a graduate in C.A.G.C.*



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Figure 7.0 "Mummy bakes dinner in one oven. I cook cakes in the other".
The socialisation of cooking
(*Australian Home Beautiful*, December 1951)

Chapter Seven

“A circle of studying, learning and doing it”:⁹¹

Foodmaking as a ‘thoughtful practice’

I thought ‘isn’t it [a] lucky person who loves cooking’, you know ... But to me it was pure science ... Now I think it is fun, I think one’s intelligence is such that you can use it in the kitchen ... One has to use one’s intelligence and if you are intelligent you use it in the kitchen as well (Helena: Interview 1998).

Introduction

Heldke (1992a:203) suggests that foodmaking is a ‘thoughtful practice’, where practice and theory converge. Rather than their hierarchical dualistic separation in which theory is privileged over practice, and has burdened traditional western philosophy, the theory and practice of foodmaking is relational: practice is informed by theory which is altered through practice (see Chapter 2). Foodmaking as women’s work is both philosophically significant and meaningful in the ‘everyday’ (Smith 1999; see Chapter 2). Heldke (1992a) argues for a theoretical understanding of foodmaking as a “‘mentally manual’ activity, [or] a ‘theoretically practical’ activity” (Heldke 1992a:203). Rethinking foodmaking in terms that diminish its dualistic hierarchy and in doing so, other dualisms, such as, knowing and doing, mental and manual, ‘head work and hand work’, “acting subject and acted-upon object”, Heldke (1992a) follows John Dewey, in “suggest[ing] that the difference between theory and practice is a difference of degree, not kind; that theorizing is in fact a *kind* of practice” (Heldke 1992a:204).

⁹¹ Renata: Interview 1998. In this one phrase Renata encapsulates “foodmaking as a thoughtful practice” (Heldke 1992a:203). She brings together the theoretical underpinnings of foodmaking with the practice of cooking, and in this way it is possible to see foodmaking as a valued knowledge.

I argue in this chapter that women's understanding and experience of cooking explicitly articulates these theoretical underpinnings of foodmaking (Heldke 1992a). Heldke (1992a) argues that the separation of knowing and doing determines the representation of knowledge, and these preconceptions find their way into everyday life "where they shape and are shaped by attitudes and structures that categorize and oppress people" (Heldke 1992a:204). Further, knowing and doing are gendered in my study because men are regarded as the 'knowers', and women the 'doers' (Narayan 1997:161-62; see Chapter 2). Men are associated with rational, scientific knowledge "producing timeless, unchanging results - known as genuine knowledge", deemed real in the Western philosophical tradition (Heldke 1992a:204; Lloyd 1984; Ortner 1974). Moreover, such knowledge sustains and is sustained by "social prejudices favouring those activities - mathematics, physics, literature, philosophy" which supposedly supports an unchanging knowledge (Heldke 1992a:205). In contrast, knowledge "that ... changes - the physical world in particular - has historically been regarded in some sense as unknowable" and is connected with "activities - cooking, farming, cleaning - that result in transitory products" (Heldke 1992a:204-205). Such knowledge as discussed in Chapter 2 has traditionally been aligned with women and emotion (Lloyd 1984).

The women in my study suggest that like ironing, budgeting and shopping, foodmaking in the kitchen requires skill, thought and planning (see Chapters 4-6). Foodmaking is not just a matter of simply 'doing it', in this sense cooking can be regarded as a thoughtful practice because it requires gaining a certain amount of knowledge and 'training', in a cumulative process. Hence, women's knowledge of foodmaking is expanded and increased each time they cook.

This chapter examines aspects of women's pleasure and perception of achievement encapsulated in being a 'good cook'. I also analyse the women's experience of cooking as a 'natural' ability. I argue that the women's natural ability to cook is linked to the process of their socialisation as girls, during which they gained knowledge in an overlapping way from mothers, grandmothers, fathers and domestic science education. Moreover, knowledge and practice reveals itself as layered in the women's stories, that is, they also discuss knowledge gained from husbands, mothers-in-law and 'trial and error' after marriage in the 1950s. Prior knowledge,

pleasure and ‘natural’ ability become integrated after marriage; the women in my study begin to embody foodmaking as a thoughtful practice - the distinction between subject and object becomes blurred and appears to disappear. Furthermore, the transmission of recipes intergenerationally indicates the reproduction of gendered labour through cultural and social relations. But as with other practices examined in this thesis, women’s foodmaking practice is dynamic and transformative over time: mothers, daughters and granddaughters practise differently. Recipes and cookbooks used in consolidating and extending foodmaking knowledge are important in this analysis because women utilise them to improve their foodmaking practice, but they also gain pleasure from their ‘collection’ (see below).

A Good Cook: Pleasure and perception

In my study there are several different definitions of being a ‘good cook’. Endrijonas (2001) suggests that “(t)he connection between domesticity, cooking in particular, and personal satisfaction for women was common in the postwar period” (Endrijonas 2001:164). Some women like Lina state: “I love cooking and I love food and if you do, you learn that. You don’t need books ... I became a really good cook in a very short time, because [there was] nothing much else to do” (Lina: Interview 1998). Below I examine more closely these links between food, emotion and subjectivity.

The kitchen is a place where the women of my study express their subjectivity, and they often regard these identities as linked emotionally to their foodmaking abilities (Inness 2001:3). The women’s perception of themselves as good cooks is infused with feelings of pleasure and enjoyment. Lupton (1996) contends: “One major emotion that is constantly linked with food is that of love, particularly maternal love, romantic love and wifely concern for the well-being of one’s husband” (Lupton 1996:37). Further, for the women of my study “housework [including cooking] has taken on a new emotional significance which is closely tied to [their] gender identity” (Baxter 1993:35). Through their work in the kitchen women in my study internalise the emotional dimension of foodmaking (see below). Several women like Camella articulated to me her desire and pleasure from cooking as central to her identity: “Yes, I always took a great interest in cooking, it’s just something I love

doing and I still like doing it. *That's a part of me*" (Carmella: Interview 1998, my emphasis).

The importance of preparing, cooking and eating food not only satisfies a physical need but expresses emotional relationship which is also perhaps sexual. This sexual relationship may be expressed in terms of 'the way to a man's heart is through his stomach' (Neuhaus 1999; 2001). The women I interviewed are intimately connected to their families through the preparation of food and cooking, and the emotion it inspires is a sensual experience as they cook and watch their families eat. The women's stories show clearly how their own subjectivity as mothers and wives, and more recently, as grandmothers, is actively shaped. The preparation of food and its consumption is a twofold process. The women of my study define themselves and seem to measure their self-worth and identity through their foodmaking success. In so doing, they gain both a 'selfish' and relational pleasure, measuring their success by their families' enjoyment of food. But as Pamela remarks such pleasure is intertwining and overlapping:

I think so, because when I look at myself I'm very proud of my cooking, I must admit. And when people praise, you know, I invite friends for dinner and they praise what I cook, and they enjoy it, it fills me with satisfaction and happiness, so it must be emotional (Pamela: Interview 1998).

Women's self-confidence (or lack of it) seems directly related to their beliefs in their own foodmaking abilities. Like in paid employment, women's power in the kitchen comes from "self-promotion" and being "self-confident" (Young-Eisendrath 2000:130). As Lina remarks: "I think so, yeah, [that I am a good cook]. I mean without being sort of self-promoting, I think I'm pretty good. Everybody else says so, so I'm starting to believe it [laughing]" (Lina: Interview 1998).

Heldke (1992b:261) suggests that foodmaking is a "*self-reflective* process" and women's ability to cook for their families is evaluated according to their own knowledge about cooking. The women in my study discuss their early 'failures' in cooking but they also recognise and appreciate (and according to them, so do their families) competencies in their foodmaking skills and knowledge. A schism may be produced if women believe they are not 'living up to expectations' of a 'good' wife

and mother through foodmaking. Edna states that “now ... after all these years” she is a ‘good cook’, but she recalls when she first started to cook: “No, it was terrible, because I felt inadequate because of not knowing how. But once I started to learn I have success stories” (Edna: Interview 1998).

As indicated above some women experience pleasure in foodmaking as a ‘selfish’ pursuit. Specifically, women in my study discuss the pleasure they derive from cooking and how this pleasure re/defines their subjectivity. Sylvia’s feelings of pleasure connect with her perception of her identity within the home and the meanings she attaches to her work in the kitchen. For Sylvia cooking is connected to feelings of adequacy and competency in the re/constitution of self. She gained her sense of achievement through being able to cook and ‘create’ food, and she appropriates aspects of the discourses of femininity and domesticity through her successful foodmaking:

Success. The things that are dear in the kitchen, the things that I made whether they were good or whether I ... had some burnt potatoes, but I always felt that I’d achieved something. I think that’s a motto that you carry in life ... It is a goal of what you wanted to do and I think it all boils down to, whether it’s a [success] or whether it’s a failure. And I’ve always [thought] ... if you can make a success of what you’re doing whether it’s cooking a potato or whatever, then it’s achievement, that’s only my way of looking at it and that’s how I went through life and that’s where happiness comes in. If you don’t like doing something, then you become very tired and bored as you say everything, you know, “I can’t be bothered doing that”. I have that ‘up and zoom’ to do it and I enjoy doing it and I love the home, I love the house, it wouldn’t matter what sort of house it was, it’s what you made it. The same in the kitchen, it’s what you made it. That’s how I looked at it, I don’t know. I think everybody’s different at looking at the kitchen (Sylvia: Interview 1998).

Women’s emotional investment in foodmaking produces the selfish and relational pleasure they gain from it. Claudia believes her love of cooking is integral to the production and consumption of good food. She states:

I love cooking, I can be around the stove all day long ... I was a wonderful cook and a wonderful mother ... I said to you, “I’m a good cook because I like good food”. Don’t give me rubbish because I’ll have a piece of bread, olive oil and salt because I’ve been brought up with that ... I don’t like it if pasta is overcooked, it has to be al dente, even the rice, don’t overcook the

rice because I can't eat it. That's who I am, and that's probably because I like cooking, I like my own food (Claudia: Interview 1998).

Similarly, Henrietta encapsulates the intertwining of pleasure and emotional investment:

I think if you do turn out something that's a bit different and nice and people like it, it gives you great pleasure, because it gives them pleasure, well mainly, it's your selfish attitude and it gives you more pleasure than it gives the recipient (Henrietta: Interview 1998).

Thus, pleasure is gained through preparing food for their families, watching them eat and enjoying their food. Louisa discusses this aspect: "It was a pleasure to cook and see them enjoy the meal" (Louisa: Interview 1998). Concetta states: "when you cook properly and everybody says 'oh this is good, this is really good', I think you [do] get pleasure" (Concetta: Interview 1998). By contrast, Patricia indicates that an adverse reaction from her family diminishes her pleasure: "if you have somebody whinging about what you have cooked, you wonder whether it is a good place to be" (Patricia: Interview 1998).

For some women such expression is ambivalent: the family can limit and constrain their lives. "No, I never thought it was a chore, but I didn't, it just came naturally. I don't think I ever thought it a pleasure, but we were definitely more 'home bodies', you know. Like now I think it is a chore to cook, but then, you know, I just [did it]" (Clara: Interview 1998). Lupton (1996) argues foodmaking is:

performed for others ... As such, cooking in the context of the family may be viewed as 'service work' performed for a specialized clientele - those individuals who are directly related to the woman (Murcott 1983: 84-5). The family is therefore a site of ambivalence for many women, for it is a source of emotional satisfaction but also constrains and limits their lives (Lupton 1996:40).

Hence, for many women the desire to cook "pleasing" food for their families is intimately linked to their identity but there is a disjunction which creates ambiguous feelings:

I always feel like a mother is the *second kitchen*, because everybody looks in the the kitchen for you ... At times it was a duty, but you take that on when you marry and have a family, this is your life to look after them in a way, particularly their health and the cooking (Kathleen: Interview 1998, my emphasis).

Thus, while the women gain differing degrees of pleasure through cooking, some like Helena “did not like it at all even when my first child was born” (Helena: Interview 1998). One of the striking aspects of identity formation in my study is the women’s reticence to fully express their cooking abilities in a positive, self-affirming way (see below). This reticence reflects aspects of femininity and sexuality (not just relevant to the 1950s) in which women are supposed to be modest and self-deprecating (Young-Eisendrath 2000:130-132).

An important aspect of pleasure in foodmaking is its status as a gift, particularly as a sign of love and duty to family members, especially husbands. In patriarchal culture women place their husbands’ needs at the centre of family life, primarily because of their position of paid worker (cf discussion labour of love, see Chapter 5). However, I contend such power is also productive because the women gain a sense of achievement from their cooking and their skill and knowledge of foodmaking is expanded and rewarded through a positive reaction from husbands and families. For example, women assume a powerful position because they perform their identity of wife and mother: “I thought that I was responsible for my husband ... It is important how it is cooked and whether my husband liked it or not (Beata: Interview 1998).

Lupton (1996) discusses food in terms of gift-giving:

One way of conceptualizing the importance that food has in the context of the family, and understanding the emotions that gather around food at that site, is the notion of food as a form of gift. As Mauss (1990) pointed out in his discussion of the gift, gift relationships are important in creating and reproducing social relationships among family members and friends ... In the context of the family, the things that people do for each other are considered acts of love and duty rather than based on monetary or utilitarian terms (Carrier, 1990) (Lupton 1996:47).

Such emotionality of food is connected to the women’s perception of themselves as good cooks (as discussed above). It can be argued that women work in the kitchen

with little or no recognition or gratefulness, but as I argue below and above, in cooking women derive pleasure and enjoyment for themselves. Further, Fox (1993) contends “a Gift is not given with any expectation of reciprocity; in the realm of the Gift, those who care do not expect gratefulness or even an acknowledgement of their effort” (Fox 1993:95). Lupton (1996:47) argues that “food as a gift is most often prepared by a woman in the role of wife and mother”, further entrenching the gendered division of domestic labour, particularly the notion of women’s work in the kitchen as a labour of love. Strathern (1988:xii) writing about Melanesian society further contends that gift-giving is gendered - women are the producers and consumers of gifts (see Chapter 6). This argument can be extended to Western culture and in particular to the context of food - “women’s ability to transact with this or that item stems from the power this gendering gives some persons at the expense of others” (Strathern 1988:xii).

The notion of food as gift-giving importantly also develops and maintains links with children. Pamela, a Croatian woman, describes the maintenance of cultural links with her daughters and granddaughters consisting of their knowledge of the dishes and their love of eating them when prepared by her. She explains:

Somehow they [her daughters] are more inclined to be quick with their meals, so those elaborate dishes that you would take all afternoon to prepare they are not keen on, but they love to eat them. They usually come to Mum. Even their children say they love to come to Baba, [grandmother], because she has a table full of food and they can select what they like. [*What about Christmas and Easter food traditions?*] They know very well about what we prepare and they know the names, they know the recipes but they still ... find that they are too busy in their professional lives to involve themselves in such elaborate cooking which by tradition takes sometimes three days before Christmas to ... prepare. They rather invite themselves to my table. I must admit they don’t keep the tradition, they like to keep it in a way, if I keep it, but they [do not] make an effort to do it themselves (Pamela: Interview 1998).

As Lupton (1996) argues “the more preparation involved, the greater the symbolic value of food as gift” (Lupton 1996:48). The time invested in preparing the elaborate dishes both at Christmas and Easter and other everyday meals may be interpreted as Pamela’s love, affection and effort (Lupton 1996:49).

Most women in my study derive pleasure from cooking. Some intimate feelings of ambivalence and ambiguity about their skills and service and most women do not positively self-identify as being good cooks. Such slippage between deriving pleasure, being self-deprecating and being self-promoting shows explicitly the multiple subjectivities that women embody. The journey that the women undertake which enables them to develop their foodmaking practice is explored below.

“I think it’s just natural, you just learn to do things”⁹²

Some women in my study regarded their successful foodmaking practice as derived from natural ability. However, through their stories they *show how they learnt* to cook through a layering of knowledge. As indicated above, the women in my study learnt to cook from mothers, mothers-in-law, grandmothers, sisters, fathers, fathers-in-law, servants, aunts, husbands, friends and neighbours. They augmented this knowledge with domestic science classes in high school and adult education classes in technical college. Some were self-taught before and after marriage through trial and error and reading cookbooks. This interplay between methods of learning how to cook is expressed by Beverley:

Well, I was the eldest of six children. My father had the railway shop in N. which meant my mother helped a lot in the shop, so I quite often had to cook at home and it was just one of those things. I’d seen my mother cook. We did have domestic science at school and I picked up a lot there, but that was another thing, that was almost instinctive. I liked to buy cooking books. I sort of helped myself more or less along that line ... I used to love it. We learned to cook and sew. I loved it (Beverley: Interview 1998).

Most women in my study learnt to cook primarily from their mothers through an interplay between observation, imitation, active participation and instruction. Ability for foodmaking however, may be related to internalisation and socialisation (Bessant & Watts 1999; Sargent 1983). Sargent (1983) suggests that internalisation “is a concept which has made it *seem* that people’s behaviour and thinking are fully determined early in life by processes over which they have no control”, just like other aspects of gender construction (Sargent 1983:53, her emphasis). Moreover,

Sargent (1983) argues that internalisation can be a limitation to people's behaviour: if women of my study cook they are *conforming* to society's expected behaviour for women. Socialisation has also often been theorised as a passive activity in which "individuals passively learn, mainly through their particular family, how to fit into their society, a one-way process" (Sargent 1983:55). An implicit assumption that a woman should know how to cook when she marries further reinforces dominant discourses of domesticity and femininity (Fürst 1997: 442; see Chapter 2). But gender theorists, such as Butler (1999) and Nicholson (1994), offer a more sophisticated analysis of construction of gender identity, arguing for a dynamic understanding of its historical context as multi-layered and complex, whereby gender is socially constructed and biologically ascribed, but often conflated (Nicholson 1994). For many women in my study, work within the kitchen is intimately linked to their identities, which remain unessentialised. Dorothy intimates she did not see herself as a born homemaker (Interview 1998). Gabrielle elaborates: "No I never treated myself as a housewife ... Not that I think a housewife is anything less, definitely not, if she has to do all the work and the children, that is her job, that is a profession too" (Gabrielle: Interview 1998).

Hence, woman=mother=housewife are not connected simply through the "condition of being female" (Mills 1997:43). Henrietta comments: "I didn't have to cook to be a woman!" (Interview 1998). As Bowlby, Gregory & McKie (1997:344) argue: "The meanings and conceptions of the consequent gendered identities are used, reworked, and interrogated in people's everyday experiences of home and family". Though the category of Woman is cross-culturally diverse and must be attended to in feminist theory (Nicholson 1994), there is a similarity in the process of the socialisation of migrant and Australian born women into a feminine discourse. The women in my study are influenced by the social, including patriarchal, historical and cultural context of their foodmaking in Western Australia, such as the war, food rationing, migration, and the lack of culturally specific foods (discussed below).

Some women believe in an 'innate' feminine cooking knowledge. Emmeline suggests cooking is a natural ability that cannot be learned, pleasure and creativity are

⁹² Phyllis: Interview 1998, my emphasis.

naturalised: “It’s just one of those [things], if it is in you, it just comes automatically. If it’s not in you, it doesn’t matter, with all the cookbooks in the world, with all the tuition in the world, you will still never be able to produce a tasteful dish. It’s just one of those things that comes automatically” (Emmeline: Interview 1998).

Mother-daughter relationships (discussed below) are important because they show implicitly and explicitly where the women in my study gained their foodmaking knowledge. But on closer examination even though women ‘believe’ their foodmaking abilities are natural, their stories portray a different reality. Henrietta regarded her mother as a good cook and believes this accounts for her own ‘natural’ ability:

I think it was bred in us, my mother was a very good cook, and my sisters were very good cooks and I think I just picked it up ... Not particularly did I watch them, but I knew what went on. I knew how to make a dinner and I learned a few things afterwards, the sauce (Henrietta: Interview 1998).

Specifically, some women naturalise a process which is learned, shared and developed over time. Beata discusses how she watched her mother and the servant whilst they were cooking, but when I asked her where did she learn to cook, she responded, “I think it comes naturally. It comes as you remember it or you ask people, you have friends, you exchange your experiences, how to cook it, and what to do with it. It wasn’t hard” (Beata: Interview 1998).

Sometimes fathers taught the women in my study to develop their foodmaking practice which disrupts the women’s belief in cooking as a ‘natural ability’. Harriet’s father owned a restaurant and he believed that she could learn by observing. She states:

My father was one of these people who said “you don’t have to ask all the time, always *look* what they put in, *how* they’re cooking, *how* they’re carving, *look*”... he taught me some very good habits. I watched, I watched everything (Harriet: Interview 1998, my emphasis).

The process of observation and imitation in mother-daughter relationships is influential in learning about foodmaking for the women of my study (Oakley

1974/1985:113). Dorothy observed her mother: “Well there was no real attempt with Mother to teach us, but we were in the kitchen and we saw and I mean you just do pick up, you must pick up an awful lot unconsciously, just like you pick up all sorts of attitudes and views” (Dorothy: Interview 1998).

There were other practical reasons why women only observed their mothers. Phyllis remembers her mother would not allow her to have ‘hands on’ experience: “I used to watch. She [mother] didn’t believe in getting dirty fingers in things [laughing]” (Phyllis: Interview 1998). Kitchen design also prohibited participation with many mothers believing that their kitchen was impractical for experiential lessons (see Chapter 4):

The kitchen in my mother’s house was small. It was a galley kitchen. And she said, “out you go”. I said, “why?” She said, “the kitchen is too small for two people”... I couldn’t watch her but I would see her, but we couldn’t stand in the kitchen and watch her (Ruth: Interview 1998).

Observation and imitation were also shaped by historical events. Dorothy remembers watching her mother, but believes that the period in which she grew up (through the Depression) impacted on her ability to help. She states:

We weren’t at all well off and Mother was very careful. She may have been scared that I would waste good food and she really worked very hard and didn’t have too much time for ‘quality time’ with us, although she was a devoted parent (Dorothy: Interview 1998).

Concetta remembers imitating her mother: “When I was a little girl, I used to [play] in the backyard somewhere with the little empty ‘things’ [tins] of polish, and there I was cooking, I do the cooking like [I] see [in the kitchen], I always loved cooking” (Concetta: Interview 1998).

However, there is also a layering of knowledge that the women’s stories intimate. Even though women believe that a ‘natural’ ability is important, they also begin to discuss helping their mothers - for fun or necessity, learning from fathers, servants, grandmothers, mothers-in-law and husbands. Importantly, these tiers of knowledge are also based on active participation. Anna states: “Well, we don’t learn, you pick

[it] up from mother, the mother cooks and we help ... We all had to do chores. Peel the potatoes and things” (Anna: Interview 1998).

Meg watched her mother’s foodmaking practices, but she was expected to work in the kitchen. Every Saturday Meg prepared the “tea [evening meal]”. Meg recalls:

you just grew up I suppose watching it around you, and once again you were expected to do it. You got on and peeled the potatoes the best way you could or you cut the carrots or you pricked the sausages or something. We were only expected to do easy meals, not *cordons bleu*, not that she ever cooked *cordons bleu*, but you know basic stuff. So it wasn’t hard (Meg: Interview 1998).

Some women came from large families and were expected to help their mothers, considered as ‘hands on’ training for future mothers, wives, housewives and homemakers. Nancy states:

From my mother [I learnt to cook]. I came out of a family of eight. And we all had our tasks to do ... Well my mother was a very good cook. So I loved what she cooked. We had to help, all the family, we all alternated, we had to help her and then you saw how she made the things and so on (Nancy: Interview 1998).

As many women grew up during the Second World War, active participation in cooking was not always allowed because of food rationing, that is, families could not afford to ‘waste’ food in cooking lessons:

I grew up in war time in another country, children just had to help Mum. It was as simple as that ... I guess you learned by watching ... Mum always allowed us to do kids things in the kitchen, but in war time children couldn’t quite do what mine did because they didn’t have the food that you could let them play around with I suppose (Myra: Interview 1998).

Some women in my study learnt to cook because they were caring for sick or elderly parents from a young age. They received some instruction and learnt to cook by active participation Carmella’s mother had a stroke so she was expected to ‘help’ care for her eight siblings. She explains how her mother taught her to cook:

because of her stroke ... she was partly in a wheelchair, she could walk a little bit, but not much, she used to make me bring stuff to her, like if she was making crumbed steak, I'd bring everything to her. Dad had made a [table] for her chair and she'd sit there and she'd make me do it in front of her, tell me what to do ... and I would do it and then she would either, from her chair, tell me how to cook it or put it in a pot, and that's how I learnt (Carmella: Interview 1998).

Some women were raised by their grandmothers primarily because their mothers died when they were children. Thus women like Emily was instructed how to cook by her grandmother with whom she lived:

Well I was brought up with grandparents ... and we were not allowed to do any cooking on Sundays in Scotland. We didn't do any work at all on a Sunday, you didn't use a bus because it meant somebody else had to work to drive, so you walked everywhere. Saturday night you did your cooking for Sunday, so grandmother showed me how to make soup that is why I got so good at it. I had to make a soup on a Saturday and it would be a great big pot, sat on a combustion stove and you had to dice everything, we didn't have shredders [laughing] (Emily: Interview 1998).

Women, especially those who had migrated from British-colonised countries (Pakistan, India and Sri Lanka), watched servants cook rather than their mothers and they watched their mothers supervising the servants: "We had servants, but my mother was very particular about everything and she supervised everything, and watching her I learned ... The servants did the cooking" (Louisa: Interview 1998). But in most cases they were not taught how to cook, hence, when Edna migrated with her husband to Western Australia she had to learn to cook. She discusses this process:

When I got here, I didn't know how to cook, so we ate out of tins for about three months until one day my husband said, "I think it is time you learned to cook. This is terrible." Our bin was full of tins. But that's not all. When we first got here I had to light a fire [in the wood stove] and I didn't know how. But before lighting any fires my husband had to chop the wood, and he didn't know how, so it was quite an adventurous experience, learning the hard way ... [*Where did you learn to cook?*] ... Instinct. I just, it was a lot of trial and error of course. Some of the food was terrible, but my husband was very good. He never complained, because he was hungry and just ate what was before him (Edna: Interview 1998).

For some women cooking also reflects aspects of their own culture or the culture of their husband which illuminates patriarchal relations (for example, Shirley, an Australian born woman, learnt how to cook Italian food for her husband) (Fürst 1997; Narayan 1997). Women learnt to cook food from their mothers-in-law that their husbands liked. Sally states she learnt to cook, “Maltese food from my mother and then when I got married, my mother-in-law was a very good cook too, because I lived with them [in Egypt, before we migrated]” (Sally: Interview 1998). Marlene states: “Then my mother-in-law [taught me] ... what I wanted to cook for him, something he liked” (Marlene: Interview 1998). Such knowledge passed onto daughters-in-law is generational and ensures that men remain at the patriarchal centre of the family. Some women show clearly that they often cook the food that their husbands (and children) like and that they may not necessarily like, thus clearly invoking an emotionalisation of cooking as an aspect of housework (Balbo 1987; Burns 1994; Game & Pringle 1983).

When Italian, Yugoslav and Indian husbands showed their Australian, German and Pakistani wives how to cook culturally specific food, they reinforced their own gendered and cultural identity. Shirley’s husband taught her how to cook some Italian food. She states: “Oh he taught me how to make sauces for spaghetti and how to make the salad with oil and vinegar. And oh, the ways of cooking the fish” (Shirley: Interview 1998). Tami, a Pakistani recalls her husband instructed her how to cook Indian food. She states: “my husband being a Bengali, he used to love fish. Although I, from the Punjab, never liked fish, only the fried fish, that was all” (Tami: Interview 1998). Thus women’s and men’s gendered identity became temporarily disrupted (see Chapter 5). Husbands instructed women how to cook food that they liked and then once the women were proficient, the dominant gendered practices of homemaker/breadwinner were again resumed. Once Tami’s husband had shown her how to cook his Indian food he no longer cooked. All cooking became Tami’s duty, she recalls: “Yes, that was it. He didn’t cook it or anything, he used to tell me how to do it, or how the way he does it. He did cook once or twice for me in the very beginning, certain things, but that was it and then he showed me how to do it. So that was it” (Tami: Interview 1998).

Through such re/negotiation of dominant gender identities women reconstituted their own cultural identity (see Chapter 5). Specifically, there is a dynamic interaction between gender, culture and ethnicity - the women's own culture, their husbands' ethnicity and Australian culture is re/negotiated, in turn producing a hybrid identity for the women through their foodmaking (Bhabha 1994; Hage 1997).

Hence, foodmaking can be understood as any other skill/knowledge that is learned, practised and refined over time. Heldke's (1992a) notion of an intertwining subject and object relationship is indicated in women's cooking knowledge gained cumulatively as women manipulate the cooking process, using their practice to inform their embodied knowledge. Specifically, Heldke (1992a) suggests that in foodmaking activities "subject and object meet and touch, and that meeting is central to their nature as activities ... kneading is an essential part of the theoretical-and-practical process of making bread - a part in which subjects' and objects' boundaries necessarily meet, touch, and overlap" (Heldke 1992a:206). Lina exemplifies this process:

Oh you do it, I think if you got it, you got it. If you want to eat nice food, you become a good cook. And if you don't go to work and your husband's working and you have your children coming home ... you have to cook. I mean sometimes you make a mistake, but that's how you learn. I became better and better ... What could I do? I mean I like nice food. When my mother came over [from Italy in the 1970s], she taught me how to do cannelloni, because I could do lasagne but I couldn't do cannelloni and I couldn't do lots of little pieces, she taught me how to do those things (Lina: Interview 1998).

Wood stoves and multiculturalism: Trial, error and..... success

Not all women could remember at the time of interview from whom they learnt to cook, because their initial foodmaking knowledge (gained through observation, imitation, active participation and instruction) became subsequently interwoven with their own post-marriage experience. 'Trial and error' overlayed the 'natural ability' to cook: many women describe this period as one in which they were self-taught and is characterised by most of them as beginning when they became engaged or married and cooked everyday. Their skill, knowledge and proficiency increased exponentially

with practice. Dorothy states she learnt to cook, “When I got married”, but she clarifies her expertise:

I did do a certain amount before I got married. But if we went away say to Rottnest [Island] or something or other, where there was a group of people, I would tend to say “I’ll wash up, I’ll do this”. I didn’t have confidence at all in cooking and so there was always other stuff, cutting up salads or what have you. But no, it was really trial and error. Cookbook clasped in one hand and went ahead! (Dorothy: Interview 1998).

Some women suggest that their trial and error stage was a distinctive period in their lives: “you spoil one thing, then next time you don’t do that thing, you do another thing. There was a circle of studying, learning and doing it. That’s all” (Renata: Interview 1998). Pamela agrees: “too salty, no salt at all, things like that, yes, yes, it was learning on the job, truly” (Pamela: Interview 1998).

Olive recalls her faulty oven compounded her initial ‘trial and error’ period:

Well I just d[id] it by trial and error ... And the first scones I made, I walked for miles to take them to J ... And these scones were just [awful] ... It nearly broke my heart ... I can remember them to this day, and I make good scones now! [laugh]. They sat in the oven, of course, it wasn’t hot enough. He ate them, didn’t say anything ... he was a very good one [husband], it’s been easy really (Olive: Interview 1998).

Amelia explains that her trial and error period did not last long. She discusses a skill that she learnt as she became more proficient in her cooking: “I can’t imagine now how we could put our hand in the oven and think that [the heat] would be OK to cook a cake, but it was something that was built into it [knowing how to cook]” (Amelia: Interview 1998).

Amelia’s judgement of the oven temperature is an exemplar for thoughtful practice about foodmaking.⁹³ Through knowledge and practice of foodmaking, cooking temperatures could be determined. Knowledge of the wood-burning stove including the amount of wood necessary; how much air to admit or let out in the flues, and cooking time was necessary for successful foodmaking. Because wood stoves were

⁹³ My own grandmother did her cooking on a wood stove and it was also done through touch/feel. As a young child it was fascinating to watch her and it is a vivid memory.

often inaccurate in temperature, the ‘sense’ of heat was how women gauged the ‘correct’ cooking temperature. Luxton (1980) provides an example: “If you wanted to cook muffins you stoked up the fire then stuck your hand in and started counting. If you got to eight before it got too hot to stand it, it was right for muffins. Bread was six and pies were ten” (Luxton 1980:134-5 in Silva 2000:616).

Jessie recalls that placing the wood in her stove correctly was essential for correct temperatures:

I had an Australian lady next door that I got friendly with, and I said to her, “I cannot make a cake - it burns”, she said, “you’re not putting the wood right”. She said, “you’ve got to place the wood evenly” and she came and she showed me what to do, so after that I had success. First I burnt so much I said to my husband, “No cakes, I can’t make cakes” (Jessie: Interview 1998).

The women I interviewed cooked on predominantly wood and gas stoves, and to a lesser extent electric stoves. A good, working stove was a necessity. As Parr⁹⁴ (1999:216) suggests, “a stove was more than a stove” and I indicate below that for many women, a stove was not only a functional item that cooked food and provided warmth (in some cases), but importantly, for some women the stove became a symbol for their achievement, not only in cooking but being a ‘good’ housewife and mother. For most of the women in my study the desire to have a well-designed, working stove is primarily an emotional desire. It is my contention that the kitchen is more than a kitchen, it fulfils emotional desires (see Chapter 4). Stoves were important in women’s lives, they stood as metaphors for understanding how many women felt about their kitchens and their identities: Baudrillard (1983) asserts “the real effect of consumption has been to herald ‘the passage from use value to sign value’” [Tomlinson 1990:18-21] (Parr 1999:216). Specifically, consumption relates to status rather than functionality.

⁹⁴ Parr (1999) writes about stove design in Canada in the post-war period as well as other consumer goods.



Figure 7.1 Gas stove, the Early Kooka had exactly the same appearance, but with a Kookaburra sitting on a branch inset in the oven door (O'Callaghan 1993)

Most women had Metters brand wood and gas stoves.⁹⁵ Ivy discusses the physical and emotional aspects of her two gas stoves:

After six years I remember getting a beautiful big stove because I was always cooking. I thought I was absolutely 'home and hosed' [laughter]. [The first gas stove] ... was a Kooka, the Early Kooka and the big [beautiful] one was Metters ... It was gas. With a glass door so you could watch. [We bought the big beautiful stove] in 1957-58. And that was just wonderful (Ivy: Interview 1998; see Figure 7.2).

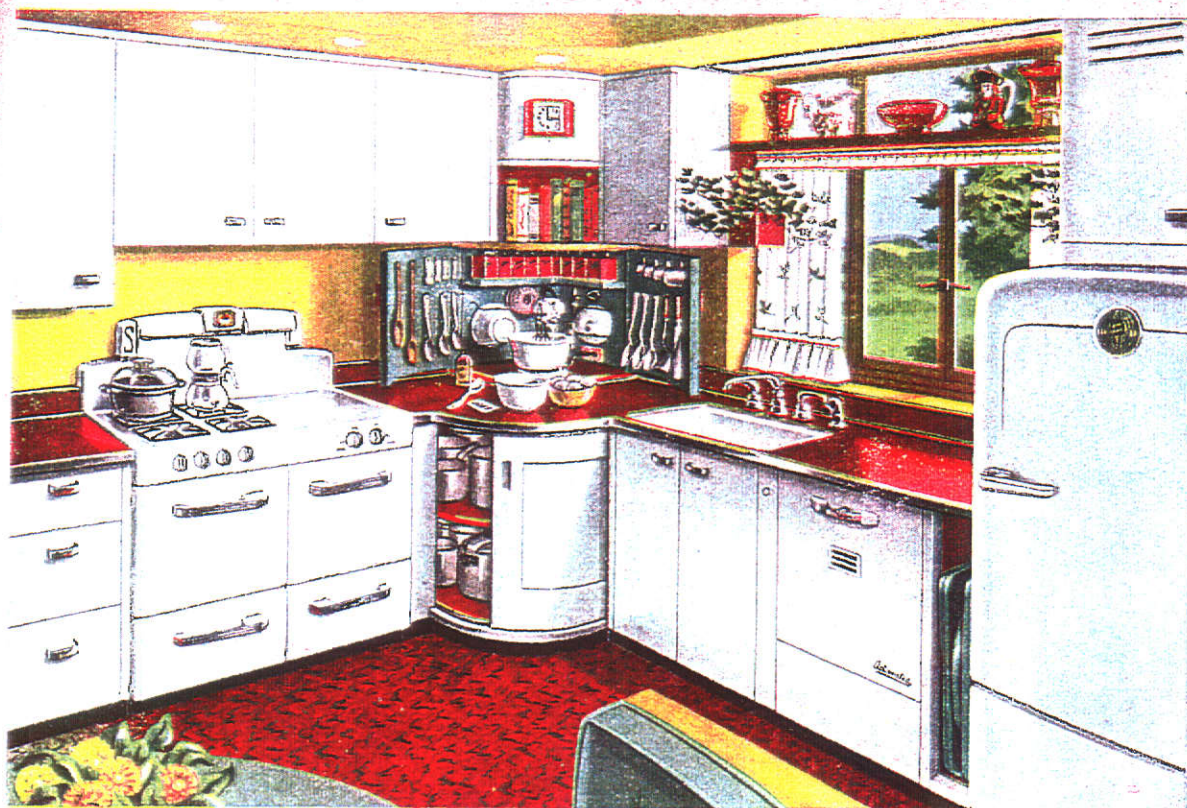
Ivy's gas stove held out a promise of an easier life because she no longer had to chop wood, bring the wood inside, stoke the fire and clean the stove everyday - cooking would be easier.

Some women wanted both wood stove and gas stoves in their kitchens, but could not afford both. Dorothy discusses why she wanted both: "It is a strange thing to say, but wood stoves cook things beautifully, something to do with the distribution of heat" (Dorothy: Interview 1998). For many women wood stoves hold a nostalgic place in their memories of the 1950s kitchen. While discussing the pitfalls of a wood stove in summer in Western Australia, Emily laments its loss:

In summer time you had to light your stove because it was the only means of cooking. But I cried when I lost my wood stove because I think it was marvellous, once you mastered it, they were marvellous things to use (Emily: Interview 1998).

However, this nostalgic remembrance should be juxtaposed with the reality of the hard work necessary to maintain a wood stove and the ability to cook well.

⁹⁵ Early Kooka gas stoves tended to be mottled green or mottled blue with cream oven doors (see Figure 7.1).



"Mixing Corner Kitchen" . . . with all the "tools" for easy taking in one central spot. But even more important, this latest "New Freedom Gas Kitchen" makes short work of four big kitchen jobs! 1. *Food storage is more convenient* with a new silent Gas refrigerator that stores a week's groceries, plus 60 packages of frozen foods. 2. *Cleaning's a cinch* thanks to a special

ventilating system that catches greasy vapors and un-wanted cooking odors at their source. 3. *Dishwashing's almost fun* now that an automatic Gas water-heater supplies plenty of hot water for a do-everything dishwasher. 4. *As for cooking*, just read about this new automatic Gas range built to "CP" standards. Order one for the first step toward your "New Freedom Gas Kitchen" — today!

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Here it is! Your beautiful ultra-modern new Gas range that gives you the best in cooking results, with no odd time cooking rates.

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No guesswork — automatic thermostat sets and keeps any oven temperature from 250° to 500°.

No "flame-baked" cakes, soups or vegetables — that heat circulates evenly in every level.

No "stove" drips — a Gas broiler really broils — flame-cooks both sides.

No lingering afterheat — under top of stove, cook by with the flame that's out the second you turn it off.

No "burning" sound — top burner ignites instantly light to high heat.



No messy cleaning — burners won't clog from hammers... pan buttons stay brighter.

And remember! The one sure way to get all these advantages of modern Gas cookery is to look for the "CP" seal before you buy!



P.S. For a complete guide to kitchen planning — send 10¢ in coin or stamps for 4-color booklet "New Freedom Gas Kitchens" by AMERICAN GAS ASSOCIATION, 420 Lexington Ave., New York 17, N.Y.



The Wonder Flame that Cools as well as Heats

Copyright 1947, American Gas Association

Figure 7.2 Gas range, similar to Ivy's modern, "beautiful" stove (The American Home, March 1947)

Though, many women had an emotional attachment to their stoves, there were practical reasons of design, that were also important. Dorothy remembers her gas stove with a raised oven, she states: “I wanted - and got - a stove on legs where the oven was beside the stove jets, so I didn’t have to bend down to lift things in and out of the oven as I had in the rented house” (Dorothy: Interview 1998; see Chapter 2). Dorothy’s desire for a raised oven beside the ‘stove jets’ rather than under them for ease of use, was a common request from women, one, that Parr (1999) argues, was not heeded by stove designers:

(W)omen wanted the form of the stoves manufacturers made, changed in a fundamental way. They wanted the ovens raised above, in their own terms, waist level, in designers’ terms, counter level. ‘Why, oh why’, wrote Mrs R.F. Legget of Ottawa, ‘do manufacturers persist in placing on the market stoves that are beautiful to look at, with the chromium glistening enamel, but back-breaking to use?’ This was a long-standing complaint among women in Ontario ... [Furthermore] ‘(h)ousewives find that stooping over to attend to baking is an unwelcome form of exercise’ (Parr 1999:212-213).

In this example, from the women’s point of view, form does not follow function (see Chapters 2 and 4). The functionality of the stove (and hence women’s functionality) would be greatly improved they suggested, if the oven was at bench height and adjacent to the cooktop.

Using wood stoves required skill and precision for Australian born and migrant women. Many migrant women however faced additional barriers to cooking. Grace, like Edna above, did not know how to cook when she migrated to Australia from Austria. She discusses how she learnt to cook:

So when I came over here, I took one of those cooking books with me [from Austria]. It was lying here and I had to look the recipes up. That was how I learned to cook. Everything was turning out quite okay ... I think slowly I did not use the book any more. Then I just was doing things, you know, like learned it myself ... So it was just the first few months or year, that it was not working out always (Grace: Interview 1998).

Louisa remembers her first effort at cooking Sri Lankan food, “My first attempt at boiling rice was a little lump on each plate ... I did curry and rice too, I got quite

expert after a while” (Louisa: Interview 1998). Ruth from Holland remembers the first day she cooked spinach:

I never forget that, I had this big tub with spinach, and I put my pot on and I thought ‘this needs a bit of salt’, so I put nearly a handful of salt in it, but by the time [it was cooked] I had a handful of spinach left with salt in it ... But I mean, you learn right (Ruth: Interview 1998).

However, soon her cooking gained notoriety within the country town that she lived:

The shearers were so happy [with] the food I cooked because I was still cooking the Dutch way. And that is richer, it’s nice, it is really nice ... But they all said, “oh beautiful dishes”, but they had to have three cooked meals a day, so I was forever at the wood stove and it was hot. It was hot! But it was also nice because the blokes were very nice. They were really, and it was company. So the farmer came after a few days and he said, “what are you doing to the shearers?” I said, “what am I doing?” He said, “yes you’re cooking too well for them”. And I said “what is too well?” He said, “you shouldn’t give them that and that and that”. And I said, “why not? We have that too”. “Yeah but you don’t cook for the shearers what you do for yourself”. I said “why not?” “They’re only the shearers”, he said, “they don’t [deserve it]”. I said, “look if I cook, I cook for them and for my family the same way and I’m not changing”, and he said, “no wonder you’ve been talked about in the village, everybody says ... on the farm there is somebody there that can cook”. And you know it was just that I cooked, and that was the only thing I could do well there because there was nothing else to do (Ruth: Interview 1998).

A re/negotiation of cultural identity is seen explicitly through foodmaking. Clara’s experience was gained from watching other women with whom she shared rented accommodation when she first arrived in Western Australia (see Chapter 4). These women were of varying nationalities, such as, German and Austrian and their husbands were Yugoslav and Albanian. The knowledge and practice Clara gained is a type of multiculturalism based on the exclusion of the dominant culture: Clara did not initially learn how to cook Australian food, but her cross-cultural (German, Austrian, Albanian, Yugoslav) cuisine knowledge was extensive:

Well really, I couldn’t cook when I got married. It just comes along as you go and then, like my friend L. was a very good cook and through her I learnt a bit. I think G. is a very good cook and E. ... But I was ‘green’ in cooking, I had to learn the hard way. But I did and we cooked a lot of, my husband

being Yugoslav, he liked beans and quite simple meals (Clara: Interview 1998).

Tami was instructed by her Australian neighbour, in particular, how to cook food for her children:

I was taught by my 'Australian mother' that, those days you couldn't buy tin foods for the kids, see you had to do the vegies yourself, so she showed me how to boil them and mash them with a bit of butter and this and that, so she taught me about what you do for the kids (Tami: Interview 1998).

Australian born women and migrant women began to exchange ideas on how to cook and consequently learnt aspects of the other's culture, with the women becoming "cultural brokers" (Theophano 2001). Sheridan (2000a) suggests that perhaps this cultural exchange was more one-sided, with migrant women learning aspects of Australian food culture.

Swapping recipes is also important to women's knowledge of cooking. Carla, an Italian woman, states: "you find some friends and swap recipes with each other. They give nice recipe to you, I give nice recipe to her" (Interview 1998). Nancy also swapped recipes with Australian women who taught her how to make cakes: "I learnt that from Australians, yes, you don't do that in Holland" (Nancy: Interview 1998). Ruth, a Dutch woman,

also had things that I asked the [Australian] neighbour. I've got cauliflower, how long does that have to boil? Because that's ... how I learned to make white sauce, which is very important to us over cauliflower and broccoli and broad beans. You have to have white sauce on those too, yes you do, and I make it the way it is in the cookery book here. With butter, and then the flour and then the milk (Ruth: Interview 1998).

Long-term friendships developed through these initial foodmaking exchanges. However, Hage (1997) suggests that an interplay between cultures has opened up the possibility of multiculturalism, that is, the women interweave their knowledge with each others' cultures and produce an "interactive culinary multiculturalism" (Hage 1997:114). Hage (1997:114) argues that such multiculturalism is based on "interaction between different cultural subjects" with relations of power existing

between the subjects. Peters (2001) shows clearly such power relations and the negotiation and renegotiation of culture (see Chapter 5):

Assimilation ideology can be held responsible for the 'Australianization' of prominent life events by the children of some ethnic groups. Although this initially caused parents and children a great deal of anxiety, over time ... traditions on both sides have typically been transformed. These heretofore immigrant children, who in the intervening years acquired Australian spouses, in-laws, friends and workmates, have, consciously and unconsciously, taken on aspects of the culture of 'mateship', meat pies, football and Holden cars.⁹⁶

Conversely, the postwar newcomers are also held responsible for transforming the urban Australian diet. The once frowned upon 'soured milk' that immigrants drank surreptitiously in the migrant camps is now commercially produced, enthusiastically promoted, consumed widely and known by its correct name - yoghurt (Peters 2001:278).

Hence, while some women discuss the need to maintain a cultural identity through food, interestingly ethnic subjectivity shows a reciprocal relationship between country of origin and Australia, expressed as "a complex, on-going negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities" (Bhabha 1994:2; see Chapter 4). Such reciprocity can be defined as cultures shaping each other producing an interweaving of cultures. As such this type of subjectivity is "interstitial ... between fixed identification [which] opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy" (Bhabha 1994:4; see Chapters 4 and 6). Ruth explains such a hybrid subjectivity:

I took one of my daughters to Holland last year, and she was eating at my sister's place and she said "Oh Mum, it's the same as you make". My sister said, "Do you still cook [that way]?" I said, "I cook that the Dutch way". But there is also the roast, I love a roast. And in Holland, a roast, they say "what's that?" They never do that like we do it here, and I love it, I love the sweet potatoes and the pumpkin and all that goes in it. Beautiful. And the crackle, we fight about it, the crackle - and in Holland they say, "Do you eat that?" And I said, "Yes we do". And years ago, I was in Holland and I loved my corn on the cob. I loved to eat it, I love to have it with a little bit of butter. In Holland they said, "that's pig food, chicken food". I said, "Hey wait a minute, that's beautiful". Now, I was in Holland and what are they eating, corn on the cob. So there we are, they learn something (Ruth: Interview 1998).

⁹⁶ Peters (2001:319) makes note that these aspects of culture are regarded as masculine and that women have been excluded in examples of becoming Australianised (see Chapter 1).

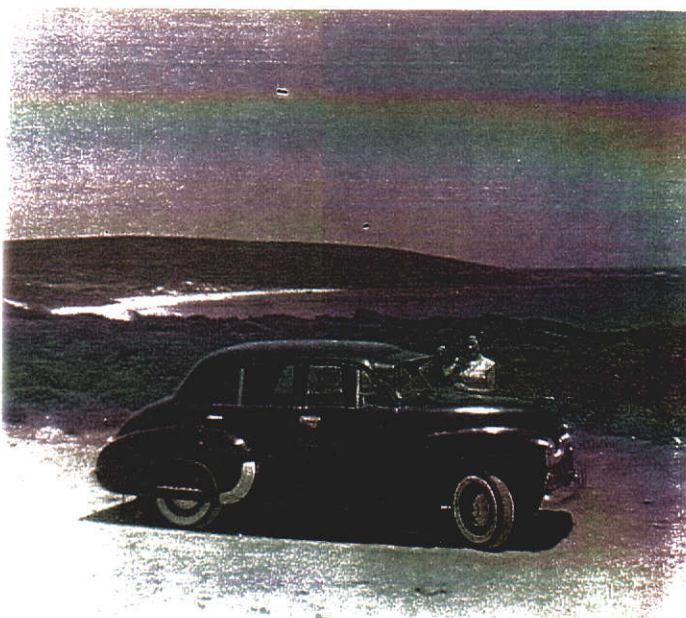


Figure 7.3 Meg's Holden - the family car
(Courtesy: Meg)

Hence, Ruth's subjectivity is constituted by the interplay between her 'Dutchness' and her 'Australianness', thus she enters what Bhabha (1994:1) describes as the "in-between spaces". These spaces, "think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and ... focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences" (Bhabha 1994:1). Further, such spaces "provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood ... that initiate new signs of identity" (Bhabha 1994:1). Such 'in-between' spaces also allow women to renegotiate their own cultural and gendered identity.

Domestic Science and Cooking classes at Perth Technical College

Reiger (1985) argues that the proponents of the domestic science movement who also embodied the 'natural ability' discourse believed that cooking (and other household management tasks) should not be left up to - "instincts [which] were not enough for the modern world: household management and cookery must become part of the school curriculum for girls" (Reiger 1985:56). Endrijonas (2001) asks a similar question: "Why, if the culture informed women that their 'natural' role was to be wives and mothers, did they appear to be so inadequately prepared?" (Endrijonas 2001:165). Women attribute some of their foodmaking knowledge to domestic science classes in high school. As discussed in Chapters 5 and 6 the discourses of domestic science and the professionalisation of housewives were part of the discursive knowledge that the women in my study used in their everyday lives (Reiger 1985). The provision of cooking classes at a Technical college indicates a professionalisation of household knowledge and is an extension of Domestic Science classes compulsory for girls in secondary school (Reiger 1985:56).

The professionalisation of household knowledge, as an aspect of modernity, was cross-cultural (Neuhaus 1999; see Chapter 2): "[Pamela] was educated with nuns in Croatia in a private college and they made the point to teach us girls how to sew, how to cook, how to clean, how to manage a home, economics and things" (Pamela: Interview 1998). Florence recalls that the domestic science class that she attended

in Australia had the use of a 'house' where girls could 'practise' their skills and be shown the correct way of maintaining a house. She states:

I learnt that [how to cook and clean] at ... Girls School ... I took a domestic science course because I wanted to be a dressmaker so we ... had to do cooking as well and we spent ... three hours, and ... we had to do well at school, the ordinary education as well, but we spent a bit more time than others in the 'house'. They [the school] had a house that you had to clean and do daily chores of the house ... and it had beds, it had everything, we learned to make beds, to polish floors, to wash floors, launder ... We learned such a lot of cooking and everything ... So we really had a domestic science course to learn how to cook and house keeping and all that sort of thing (Florence: Interview 1998).

Some women attended cooking classes for diverse reasons. Amelia states: "I did do a Tech. course in cooking, partly because my husband was still going to tech ... and it was much nicer to go and do something with him rather than go home by myself" (Amelia: Interview 1998). Meg wanted to become more proficient in specific areas of cooking and she attended classes for a number of years after her marriage: "For 20 years, off and on, Chinese and dinner things, and all sorts" (Meg: Interview 1998). When I asked Meg if there was a reason why she attended cooking classes (and dressmaking classes) she replied: "(B)ecause in those days, there was a lot of expectation on women to be everything to all people and that is very different to the world today (Interview 1998; see Endrijonas 2001; Neuhaus 1999).

Helena's reasons for attending classes affirm Meg's assumptions. Helena relates a story about her lack of cooking skills (which might also have been because as a child she moved from refugee camp to refugee camp to escape the war):

I said, "I can't cook", and when we were engaged, he said, "there is a course going, Mrs S. is having a course, I'll enrol you in that". He paid for my course ... I couldn't even cook an egg ... But I stuck with it and I've still got the recipes ... she taught us the basic things ... it was a good thing [to go to the class] (Helena: Interview 1998).

A central element of the domestic science movement was the discourse of nutrition. It was already pervading the women's cooking practices in the 1950s (for example, cookbooks stressed the importance of having balanced meals and explained the nutritional value of particular foods, such as meat, *Golden Wattle Cookery Book*,

1926; *A Good Housekeeping Cookery Compendium*, 1952; Neuhaus 1999). Reiger (1985) suggests that in the modernising of the kitchen emphasis was placed on “the health and diet of children ... in particular, it was the principles of ‘hygienic, scientific’ cooking that were put forward from the 1890s on” (Reiger 1985:74). For Meg: “all the meals had to be highly nutritional and all the right foods and fruits. I didn’t like to cook, but I did and I did it to the best of my ability” (Meg: Interview 1998)

Nutrition, ethnicity and gender were interrelated (Fürst 1997). Australian born Elizabeth’s concern is evident in her words: “I think the meals were pretty regular, like roast dinner, chops and steak. We ate a lot of meat in those days which we don’t do anymore. I think that was a regular occurrence and it was always meat and three veg sort of thing” (Elizabeth: Interview 1998). A Polish woman, Beata discusses the importance of her husband receiving the correct foods and that it was her responsibility to ensure that he did. Beata varied her husband’s diet because according to Polish folklore her husband did not like certain foods because of his birth date: “He was born in October, October people don’t like vegetables. Thanks to me, he always ate vegetables, we were never without them and he lived up to 89 years old” (Beata: Interview 1998).

The importance of meat in many cultures can also be related to a gendering of food, specifically, meat is regarded as a masculine food (Neuhaus 1999). Neuhaus (1999) argues particular post-war cookbooks in the United States “asserted gender norms in ... overt ways, by connecting women to a certain limited set of food consumption behaviours and men to another set. In these texts, women were to Jell-O salad as men were to meat” (Neuhaus 1999:11). Further, Endrijonas (1966:180 in Neuhaus 1999:26) suggests, “Plain meat ... was considered heavy, masculine fare”. Such gendered assumptions particularly, for meat can be asserted from the women’s stories. Emily discusses explicitly a gendering of food:

The foods [in Western Australia] were as I said, in abundance because there was no rationing, with all the rich foods and things like that which we weren’t used to. During the war [in Scotland] we were on strict rationing, we had two ounces of meat per week per person. Women very rarely got any because it went to the men because they had to work. Of course we had

meat every night [in Australia] and as much as we wanted (Emily: Interview 1998).

But some migrant women believed the Australian diet was inadequate. Jadzia, a Polish woman, considered Australian cooking very bland and it “was [a] very, sort of poor diet”, because she thought it lacked diversity. Reiger (1985) comments that in the period up to the 1940s proponents of domestic science and the professionalisation of housewives, particularly those in the media, “complained of the monotony and blandness of the Australian diet, [and] exhort[ed] housewives to vary menus, serve foods more attractively and shop with more routine” (Reiger 1985:74-75). Jadzia states:

Plain yes. And some of it, I’m not saying as you know, in terms of nutrition, doesn’t matter if you eat offal or the best steak, nutritionally it’s still valid, unless you sort of overcook it or whatever. But it was plain but it’s not that I had [that] against it, just that it didn’t have variety to me, it didn’t have any excitement. I love food, to me how could you eat day in, day out, the same sort of roast until it’s finished (Jadzia: Interview 1998).

Hence, a woman’s subjectivity, in terms of her gender and culture, and achievement is closely linked to her foodmaking ability and importantly as the women became proficient in their cooking skills they began to draw on a repertoire of recipes and cookbooks.

“Secret books”⁹⁷ - the allure of cookbooks

The skill and knowledge that women gained from their mothers, grandmothers, friends, neighbours, fathers, husbands and from school and technical college enabled them to cook for their families. These recipes as indicated above were learnt by heart, written down and reproduced through generations from mother to daughter (or grandmother to granddaughter). Knowledge was also gained through reading cookbooks for pleasure, a hobby that many women engaged in. Women in my study make a distinction between everyday cooking, in which they do not need recipes and specialty cooking such as, cakes, pastries and biscuits where recipes were used.

⁹⁷ Emily’s granddaughter (Interview 1998).

Those women who are self-professed good cooks improvised or altered recipes and used foodmaking as a creative activity. Other women strictly adhered to recipe rules. The majority of women in my study however eventually cooked their everyday meals by memory - they no longer consulted recipes to ensure they were doing the right thing. These variety of methods will be discussed below.

Cooking can be regarded as a process and as such when mastery is achieved, the need to follow recipes (either from cookbooks or written down) in some cases, is lessened. Recipes were more often used to ensure correct measurements when cakes or desserts were being prepared. Furthermore, each woman had 'special' recipes for main course meals and cakes and desserts that could be regarded as 'family favourites' (such as "Aunty Ethel's melting moments, see below). For migrant women these 'special' recipes were often the traditional foods of their countries of origin.

Writers such as Coward (1984) and Duruz (1999a) have written about women's relationship to cookbooks. Coward (1984) argues that women often go to 'bed with a good cookbook' to read. Women in my study also discuss a fascination with cookbooks, buying them for only one recipe and having a collection of cookbooks that are not used very often (see below). Duruz (1999a) examines the mythology surrounding 1950s and 1960s cookbooks viewed from the present. She argues that such cookbooks (that engage with nostalgia) provide a view of the "Fifties Woman" as a "mythical figure resonant of particular foods, and encouraging particular narratives of nurturing" (Duruz 1999a:233). However, as Duruz (1999a) argues there are alternative stories and memories which disrupt the mythology (and nostalgia) of women's foodmaking in the 1950s - as the women of my study testify.

Many recipes were written down, came from cookbooks and were also collected and placed in scrapbooks. Most Australian born women relied on well-known Western Australian cookbooks such as the *Country Women's Association Cookbook (CWA)* of Western Australia (1956) and the *Golden Wattle Cookery Book* (1926),⁹⁸ uniquely Australian cookbooks which feature what is regarded as 'traditional' Australian food.

⁹⁸ The *CWA* and *Golden Wattle* cookbooks are regularly reprinted. The *Golden Wattle* has been reprinted 27 times with the first edition published in 1926. The *CWA* has been reprinted 48 times.

Other cookbooks, included *Margarete's Cookbook*, *Whitcombes Everyday Cookery with Mealtime Planning in Wartime*, and many migrating women brought cookbooks with them and some purchased cookbooks in Australia in Polish - *Cooking Polska*, Croatian, Dutch, Italian and German language. Other important points of collection of recipes were swapping with friends, magazines, particularly *The Australian Women's Weekly*, and the *The West Australian* newspaper. The *Golden Wattle* was written by five women who were "Officers of the Education Department, Western Australia" (1984). It had four main objectives which enforced adherence to a discourse of scientific management in relation to cooking (within Domestic Science classes):

To place before young students a record of methods of cookery taught at school; supplementing lessons ... and generally increasing their knowledge of the subject.

To enable girls who have left school to maintain their interest in cookery, and to have in their possession a book of dependable recipes which may stimulate a desire to venture further in the culinary art.

To give, in a concise and simple form, information on food values and the cooking of food.

To set before those taking up life in rural districts of the State [Western Australia] simple directions for bread-making, jam and jelly making and fruit preserving, which will secure success at the outset (*Golden Wattle* 1984:5).

Many women relied upon the *Golden Wattle* (Norma: Interview 1998). Meg discusses the importance of the *Golden Wattle* to her cooking practice (in the 1950s and now):

I used to use the *Golden Wattle Cookery Book* like everybody did in those days, because once again you couldn't afford these 'you beaut' cookery books that are around now. And that once again was a 'pipe dream'. And I got some [recipes] out of magazines and other places ... I still use it, if I make a Margarete Steam Pudding, I would use the *Golden Wattle* cookery book now today. If I make pikelets I would use it. So there are things I still use out of that book (Meg: Interview 1998).

Most women in my study mentioned popular cookbooks which were used regularly and many women stated that they still used them today. Myra discusses the importance of the *CWA Cookbook*: "I think I had one cookery book in those days [which] was every woman's home Bible with all the hints at the back of it" (Myra:

Interview 1998). It was not only Australian born women who used the *CWA Cookbook*, Jessie, an Anglo-Indian woman also purchased it: “Yes, I bought the *CWA Cookbook*, and I used that because I found that was really good, there were a lot of recipes I used” (Jessie: Interview 1998).

Spending money on cooking books however was regarded as a luxury in the 1950s. As stated above, women during their trial and error period believed that they had to be careful with what they cooked because they could not afford to waste either food or money. All women in my study had grown up in a time of frugality and were watchful of their limited resources - for most women this was a trait that guided their lives when they had families of their own (see Chapter 5). For example, Beverley’s purchase of her cookbook published by Whitcombes & Toombs, *Whitcombes Everyday Cookery with Mealtime Planning in Wartime*, exemplified this rationale: she paid “3 and 6 pence which would be 35 cents today” (Beverley: Interview 1998).

Some migrant women brought treasured cookbooks with them when they migrated. Gabrielle’s cookbook was one that she admired as a young girl and as a ‘rite of passage’ the cookbook was given to her when she married, she explains:

I had a very nice book which I got from my mother which is now very old, because it is from 1927 and I was still a little girl. I can still remember there were beautiful pictures in there, and I said “I would like that book”, and my mother said “well, when you get married you can get it”, which I did. And so I still have it, so that is what helped me a lot in the beginning. I can remember what she was doing and then I just had to look up [for the ingredients] (Gabrielle: Interview 1998).

Even though Pamela cooks most recipes from memory there are some special recipes that she still consults the cookbook she brought with her from Croatia:

Oh those everyday dishes I never look at the recipes, but I brought some recipe books from the area of my home district which were written by one of the teachers, [a] very renowned teacher in cooking economics. I always check on the recipe book, ‘oh you should see the book, it looks haggard’. For all the dishes, a lot more elaborate dishes I have to [check the recipe] ... cabbage in brine, salt sardines, to make a torte for a birthday party, that has everything in it, that book (Pamela: Interview 1998).

Some women purchased cookbooks in their own language when they arrived to Western Australia. Beata, bought a Polish cookbook from “a Polish bookshop [which opened] in Perth immediately in 1950 or earlier” (Beata: Interview 1998). Carla, an Italian woman, also purchased an Italian cookbook in Melbourne “for 60 cents. I still have the book, it is really old [laughing]” (Carla: Interview 1998). For Helena, a Polish woman the reconnection with her family in Poland provided the opportunity for her to have a Polish language cookbook, she states:

The book was a very big necessity for me and when I found my family in Poland, my extended family, my father’s family ... the first thing they sent me was a Polish book. *Cooking Polska* and it was very old, I have since subsequently got new ones, but I still love this old book. Pages are very frail, in the Communist times, the paper was fairly poor quality, but I’ve still got it (Helena: Interview 1998).

Through cooking and cookbooks migrant women kept links with their mothers and some lament that it is a tradition that perhaps will not last: “Yes, I still have my German cookbooks, later my Mum sent me German cookbooks and I still bake after German cookbooks. After me it will be gone, probably” (Marlene: Interview 1998).

Many women used cookbooks as inspiration for their cooking:

I have a hobby of buying cookbooks and if I see anything, only a couple of weeks ago, and don’t ask me why I bought it because I’m sure I will never use it, but I saw all these soups and things and I thought ‘that’d be a good idea, I’ll buy it’ and I bought it. Come home and sit down and read it in my bean bag, I’d be reading it and then I’d put it away and I may not pick it up again, but that’s just me, that’s what I do ... I take out a recipe book, ‘right I’ll do that and I’ll do that and do that’, then I’d read [a small part of the method] and I think ‘oh yeah’, and I’ll know what I’ve gotta do and I might put a little extra, but it’ll never be the same as the recipe (Carmella: Interview 1998).

For some women cookbooks inspired not only their cooking, but the presentation of food:

I wouldn’t mind picking up a recipe book, because what fascinated me in a recipe book were the pictures, you know, how they have the colour pictures and the presentation and that, and you could always look at it with an eye

and say “gee that looks good” and what you tend to do is copy the presentation. I’d read through the recipes and see what was involved in that and then you’d go off and do your own things (Emmeline: Interview 1998).

I love cookery books, I just love reading cooking books, I have a lot of them – and when I have guests I think, ‘What am I to cook? What am I to do?’ I look through the pictures, especially, to get an inspiration, then I close the book and do what I always do. [*So you don’t actually follow the recipe?*] It inspires me to cook, I hardly ever follow it (Beata: Interview 1998).

Hence collecting recipes and cookbooks becomes a ‘hobby’ (Coward 1984; Probyn 2000). Tami, a Pakistani woman again reiterates many women’s desire to have a wide variety of recipes, but states that she does not use them. It is my contention that the women like to have a variety of recipes because it increases their foodmaking knowledge, even though they may never use the recipes, the knowledge gained from reading recipe ‘methods’ or ingredients lists, enable women to practice their foodmaking skills in a broader manner:

Yes, I do like recipes up to this day, I like recipes. You should see my collection, do you think I use them? [laughing] I only use one or two recipes that I keep on using. The rest is always sitting there, books and books and cuttings and cuttings! I’m very fond of that, I read every recipe, I’ll cut it, I’ll put it in the book, do you think I make them? [laughing] (Tami: Interview 1998).

Many women created their own recipe scrapbooks. Dorothy states that her recipes were written down and that she had a collection of recipes she used for ‘inspiration’, but more often she relied on recipes that she could competently cook. She states:

Yes, I always wrote them [recipes] down and if they worked out all right I put them into my recipe notebook. Also I’ve always been a sucker for recipe books and I collect them and would have to weed them out periodically. But in spite of all that I would often quietly cook some stewed apple or something in the end [laugh]. Yes (Dorothy: Interview 1998).

For some women though, who collected recipes and placed them in scrapbooks and wrote them in exercise books, this became a means of connecting them with other family members and a link between generations - Emily’s “granddaughter says ‘Nan, I’m going to get all your little secret books when you go’ [laughter]” (Emily: Interview 1998). Such a method of scrapbooking becomes a symbol of family and

cultural knowledge, and in this instance is exemplified in the loss of knowledge of how to make a certain type of cake. As Dorothy explains:

We always mourn that Mother had a thick exercise book with recipes written in it and when she died it disappeared and I think - you know, Dad wouldn't realise, bless his heart, he probably thought, 'This old thing!' because he never cooked, so I guess he threw it out. And we still mourn that book. There were certain things Mother made. She made a very good light fruit cake and my sister and I mourned over that light fruit cake because we never really achieved it. Not in the way Mother made it. And we don't know exactly what she did. So I think it's important to pass those on and I'm always going to do it [laugh]. Mother was a reasonably practical cook but not a devoted cook. My sister is the same, she once said, "If I never had to cook again I wouldn't care". But I love to cook, I am very contented cooking (Dorothy: Interview 1998).

It is interesting that many women regard recipes as 'rules' and not following the recipe is presumably 'breaking the rules'. Endrijonas (2001) argues that many post-war cookbooks required women to follow the recipe strictly: "True to the nature of the culture at this time, women were expected to follow the directions given; thus their creativity and experimentation had an element of control to it" (Endrijonas 2001:161). I am suggesting that the women presume that there is some unwritten law about recipes - that they should be strictly followed. Myra states that she followed the recipe quite strictly:

I have them written down from day one ... Generally I'm not a very adventurous cook, so generally I would follow a recipe. I'm not saying that I don't embellish every now and then, overall I tend to stick to the rules (Myra: Interview 1998).

In my study, the women who did embellish recipes and initiated variations were those women who considered themselves good cooks or regarded cooking as a creative activity. Heldke (1992b) argues that, "(t)he way you treat written recipes often reflects your degree of skill and confidence as a cook, your spirit of adventure, your knack for imagining what foods might taste good together ... And it requires the expertise to know when enough is enough: when a rule cannot be broken or bent" (Heldke 1992b:257). Concetta, an Italian self-professed "good" cook suggests that a recipe is just a guide: "Oh sometimes [I follow the recipe], but I do not like recipes, I just do what is convenient. Sometimes you just do what you think is better"

(Concetta: Interview 1998). Kathleen suggests that once she learnt to cook she became more adventurous and tried other recipes that were not from her mother and aunt (inferring that these were ‘foolproof’ recipes) (Kathleen: Interview 1998). She states:

I tried those, then I think you break away and you try something more adventurous and you try something yourself, so I still have a couple of mother’s recipes of biscuits and slices, that kind of thing. And they just sort of come all the way through [the years] ... I had to follow the book first and then you get to remember. And there are some recipes that I use now, one in particular, and it’s a tablespoon full of whatever, and I think to myself, sometimes I wonder, what this is in measurement [metric] ... I’m not a very specific person in this regard. I’m not an outstanding cook or anything. I’m just a very basic cook. So what gets by, does (Kathleen: Interview 1998).

“Aunty Ethel’s Melting Moments”:⁹⁹ Reproduction of skills and knowledge

Unlike the previous sections on learning how to cook, this section examines intergenerational knowledge gained and passed on. The generational link between family members serves to reinforce the notions of family as well as food - the link extends from before the 1950s from the women’s mothers to their daughters, sons and granddaughters and includes aunts, mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law. Most women acknowledge the importance of passing recipes down to their children and attributing the receipt of recipes from their mothers. The passing down of recipes maps a genealogy and reflects cultural traditions. Important in this reproduction of culture, skills and knowledge is the historical context of the women’s practice - that is, they reproduce this foodmaking knowledge and practice in a way that is different (and similar) to the previous generation, consequently, there is also a layering of knowledge that is intergenerational. Furthermore, for all women maintaining family recipes like the foodmaking process itself is highly emotional.

The passing down of recipes reinforced the notion of family: “I think it keeps a family together, if you can do things for them and they like those things. I think I

⁹⁹ Myra: Interview 1998

can remember some of the things Mum did. Yes, I think it's part of family bonding really" (Amelia: Interview 1998). Giving food and importantly recipes evokes family memories and this adds further to the emotionality of food and the reproduction of knowledge. For example, Myra recalls the importance of "Aunty Ethel's Melting Moments" to her daughters:

Obviously the kids remember it, it is a happy memory for them because they were nice, and they did get to meet Aunty Ethel even though she was an elderly Aunt, and because she was a nice warm cuddly person, they associate nice biscuits with nice Aunty Ethel. Or even my mother's recipes, something that my Mum made. And I guess in our case, cooking is very much a thing that draws us together. Because my girls both like, perhaps it's subconscious, perhaps it's because I always liked cooking and I was always happy in my kitchen, they absorb some of that because they are likewise. So I guess the recipes are all part of it (Myra: Interview 1998).

In contrast, Sally has written her recipes down but her daughters do not cook Maltese food. She states: "I wrote them down in my book in case they want to do them one day when I'm gone. I[']ve just got them in a book" (Sally: Interview 1998). Lina also expresses the importance of passing down recipes and other skills, "Definitely, because [what]ever you teach your kids, they can teach their kids although now everybody wants to go out for dinner, you know" (Lina: Interview 1998).

Gabrielle discusses her adult son's food preferences, which as Lupton (1996) contends, links with childhood experiences. Gabrielle explains:

Well, my son of course, he still prefers my kitchen. He cooks a few things. ... And also I thought I am never going to spoil my son as I did my husband. Yes definitely, his taste goes more to European food, and now, like everybody else. [*Is this link important?*] I think so, without just always thinking of food only. I think it is a very important part (Gabrielle: Interview 1998).

Hence, "the smell or taste or even thought of certain foods, if connected to happy or idealized childhood memories, may elicit nostalgia to the extent that they shape preferences for food in adult life" (Lupton 1996:49). Grace's sons have asked her "how to do this and how to do that" and she believes it is important "perhaps because more or less [it] brings you close as a family" (Grace: Interview 1998).

Sometimes, as discussed above, daughters showed a lack of interest in cooking traditional¹⁰⁰ cuisines of their mothers, but interestingly if daughters did not take up cooking or an interest in the traditional recipes of the family, it was often acquired by the grandchildren, or granddaughters in particular: “Even the grandchildren ring up and ask for some of the favourite recipes. How to make self-raising flour and plain flour” (Ivy: Interview 1998). A love of cooking is another reason the women in my study emphasise the reproduction of skills: “I’ve got one of my ... granddaughter’s, she really loves cooking, she rings me up, she asks what do I put there, how much you know, things like that, because she loves cooking” (Lina: Interview 1998).

Renata’s granddaughter has acquired the traditional Christmas and Easter recipes from the Ukraine. Her reasons for not insisting that her children continue the tradition are explained in reference to concerns about integration to Australian culture. She explains:

They don’t want it ... Only on Christmas Eve, we celebrate and cook all Ukrainian food. [*Did you pass these recipes down?*] They don’t want to learn, and I don’t teach them. [*Do you think it is important to pass them down?*] ... If they want to learn that’s okay, if they don’t want to learn, that’s up to them. When we came to Australia, I wanted them to be Australian. I don’t care what people think or say, because I saw in Europe many things which went wrong ... When I came to Australia, I thought I wanted them to be Australian, if they want to speak my language, that’s okay, if they don’t want to, that’s okay, I didn’t force them (Renata: Interview 1998).

Gabrielle also insisted that her son ‘integrate’ into Australian culture: “It is very important that you bring up your child in such a way that he fits in with society, and [because] he was born here in Western Australia he should be brought up as such, but he should not forget his background, it is very important” (Gabrielle: Interview 1998).

Hence, cultural identity is renegotiated in the children of migrant women. Jadzia passes Polish recipes on to her Australian born daughter, and importantly

¹⁰⁰ I am using the term ‘traditional’ to indicate culturally specific food, for example, Sally discusses making felafel. Often traditional food is cooked to celebrate specific occasions such as Christmas and Easter, but it also represents everyday food that may be cooked by migrant women but which is not cooked by Australian born women who also have their own traditional food.

reconstructs her Polish-Australian identity and illustrates the continuum of negotiating and renegotiating cultural and gendered identity:

I think [the kitchen is] in some ways the centre you know, apart from other things, the language and everything, but eating is one of the cultural things and not just to keep up being Poles, but it's to keep up with the tradition you know, in one's family, I think. It is sort of the link that continues like a trail. That's how it is (Jadzia: Interview 1998).

Further, Renata, a Ukrainian woman, tells a story of reading a recipe for Ukrainian food in *The Australian Women's Weekly* in the 1950s: "(S)ometimes I cooked like it said how to cook Ukrainian food, and I nearly died from it. That's what they say to use, vinegar, parsley, celery and capsicum, you never do this with that stuff [laughing]" (Renata: Interview 1998). Importantly, Renata's story shows clearly the impact migrants were having on Australian culture. However, as Sheridan (2000) argues in her article discussing *The Australian Women's Weekly* and 'her Migrant Others' the relationship between migrants, food, and Anglo-Australians was contradictory. At one level the haute cuisine of countries such as Greece, Italy and Germany was readily accepted, however, the migrants' dislike of the food they were expected to eat in the migrant camps and their desire to eat their own foods was not understood (Sheridan 2000:127; see Chapter 4). Such a contradiction shows again that assimilation was not expected to alter Australian society dramatically -

(i)t is as if non-Anglophone migrants ... are merely instrumental in providing some cultural enrichment, their presence indicated only by stylistic traces in food. In such a 'discourse of enrichment', what is notable is who has the power to deploy it, who has the power to value - not the migrants themselves, but the Anglo-Celtic subjects of Australianness (Hage 1998:121 in Sheridan 2000:128).

But an intergenerational power relation exists for all women, for migrant women, especially those who have Australian born daughters-in-law, the power relation is also cross-cultural based on exclusion and inclusion - the Australian born daughters-in-law may be culturally excluded because they do not or can not cook culturally specific food.

When your son marries an Australian girl you can't really say, "you have to learn that", but if she asks me, like when they come I always make

something that they like, like beef olives [German dish] ... And when my children come and my daughter-in-law says “how do you do them?” [beef olives] ... I’m not sort of a fanatic to pass it on. Because my son he still likes white beans, his wife doesn’t cook it, so I cook and he comes and picks up a pot just for him. His girls wouldn’t eat that. It has paprika in, it’s pretty sharp ... He still loves it (Clara: Interview 1998).

Our Australian daughters [tried but] can’t cook [Dutch food] ... It is understandable, they just don’t have that taste. Especially the eldest one because she lived in Germany for a few years she was with the diplomatic corps, and she tried hard, but nobody is near it [laugh] (Nancy: Interview 1998).

In contrast, Mariola’s Australian daughter-in-law can cook typical Ukrainian dishes, such as, borscht and cabbage rolls. She believes this is important “because that’s like everything ... [I] passed to them, you know, and that’s very important that they know something about [our culture]” (Mariola: Interview 1998).

However, the reproduction of food preparation and domestic labours from mother to daughter was not always desired by the women in my study. Meg, an Australian born woman, states that even though she thought it important to have a link through food and the sharing of recipes, the actual work of the house and preparation of meals that she had to undertake as a girl child was not something that she wanted for her own daughters: she wanted her daughters to be University educated and professional workers, hence, their identity would be more than wife, mother, housewife, homemaker. She explains:

Yes I do [think it is important to have a generational link], but when they were younger, because I didn’t want them having to go through those hassles, I actually didn’t insist that they did [house]work ... I didn’t put the pressure on them that I had put on me. So the girls: M. couldn’t boil water when she left home, and S. wasn’t much better ... Which wasn’t good either probably but because it was always such a thing [in my family], I was determined that they didn’t have to do it [at] all (Meg: Interview 1998).

Concluding comments - A thoughtful practice

The connection between recipes (theory) and memory (practice) discussed above is multi-layered and nuanced. The women use memories from watching their mothers (servants, fathers, et cetera) in the kitchen. They also begin to rely on their own practice in the kitchen - trial and error and recipes. The intergenerational link with mothers and grandmothers also serves to reinforce foodmaking traditions within families. Overlapping this is new knowledge and practice gained from reading cookbooks, swapping recipes with friends and importantly the everydayness of their cooking. Everyday cooking is remembered, and as a skill, because it is practised consistently, becomes 'second nature' or instinctual. Hence, everyday meals elicit foodmaking practices that are intuitive. It is here where subject and object becomes blurred. The practice of cooking is part of their embodied knowledge of being women (Heldke 1992a:206). Subject and object are imbricated and intertwined in particular activities in my informants' foodmaking, for example, kneading bread dough - "kneading is an essential part of the theoretical-and-practical process of making bread - a part in which subjects' and objects' boundaries necessarily meet, touch and overlap" (Heldke 1992a:206). In breadmaking,

the dough responds to your warm hands' kneading action, and you learn to respond to it, to know when you've kneaded it long enough, and when to add more flour. It's an activity that depends upon a connection between bread maker and bread dough. This relationship takes time to develop ... Reciprocal responses characterize things that exist in relation to each other, that can affect and be affected by each other (Heldke 1992b:263-64).

For the women in my study, foodmaking relies not only on theory but also an embodied practice - the women remember the 'theory' of cooking particular recipes. Meg states: "Well once I got going, I could do it by memory" (Meg: Interview 1998). Anna's experience was similar: "Oh the first time I looked at the recipe. Once you do it, you get used to it" (Interview 1998). Beverley also agrees, and again links women's identity with a natural ability to cook: "A lot of things I did from memory. I wasn't one to be always measuring things, I guess it becomes second nature after a while" (Beverley: Interview 1998).

Some women recall consulting recipes for the ingredients but the method was remembered from initially watching their mother's practice:

No, I did follow the recipe and from memory as well, you know the way you do it is more from memory which helped me a lot. I mean if you had a recipe and you don't know how to do it, it's harder isn't it? You have to experiment for a long time but I saved that because I could remember, when my mother was making this or that you know, and so I just had to look up what you put in there, which didn't always work either because I couldn't get everything. So that was the way I learned (Gabrielle: Interview 1998).

Ruth's practice was similar: "My sister used to send a Dutch book weekly and they have lovely recipes in them, and I took a lot out of there and saved them, I've still got them, but you learn [from them and then], you prepare them from memory" (Interview 1998). Thus, there is a pattern that emerges for the women. They use the recipes as a guide, but they apply their learned skills to make the food. For Gabrielle, she uses the memory of her mother's practice as a guide to 'know' what the food should look like, and for Ruth she uses the recipes and pictures in a similar way, but she embellishes the recipes to create her own version of the recipe. Perhaps in this way the women begin to transgress and use the recipes and food as a way of subverting the discourse, that is the recipes are used in way that was not intended because the women infuse their own practice. Their foodmaking knowledge is transformative - it also indicates a level of competence and confidence that is only gained with practice. Heldke (1992b) suggests that such knowledge and skill is "time consuming to obtain. It's also extremely rewarding and useful, for it allows you to create wonderful foods, and it enables you to be flexible in the face of a nearly empty refrigerator" (Heldke 1992b:257).

Some women have attained a high level of proficiency in cooking and believe that cooking is a process by which knowledge is gained by further practice:

Well it's not a recipe, I mean I don't even have recipes now, I mean you use your judgement, if you become a good cook, you don't need the precise dosage for some particular thing, you know how much, I never try it. When I put salt or pepper or onions, I never try any food when I cook, ever. I'm not one of those people that's licking all the time, no never. Because you know. *I know*. You just cook, you learn and you keep it in your mind. I[*'m*] making some brioche now. These things you just do. This morning I

was doing four eggs, one cup sugar, one cup oil and the flour, it was done, that's it. Bit of sultanas and that's it, I've been doing that for years (Lina: Interview 1998, my emphasis).

Hence, some women discuss their contemporary cooking as intuitive. Heldke (1992a) suggests that such skill is a "bodily knowledge" and blurs the distinction between subject and object, just as learning by 'feel' if the wood stove is the correct temperature for cooking:

To know food - to know how to cook food well - does not require an abstracted, measurement-conscious knowledge (a kind of knowledge which imitates the allegedly disembodied nature of scientific, theoretical knowledge), but rather a knowledge in the eyes and hands. You have to be able to 'finger' a ball of pie dough to tell if it needs a bit more ice water ... Bodily knowledge is acquired through embodied experience (Heldke 1992a:219).

Such knowledge is evident in Jadzia's mother's foodmaking practice. She states:

A lot of them are from my mother's memory. Unfortunately when people try it they say, "give me the recipe", she doesn't know it, she sort of knows *by the feeling*, you know. And people think she doesn't want to give it to them. And I sometimes don't know really. [I know] just by looking, you get so used to doing it (Jadzia: Interview 1998, my emphasis).

Emily states that her proficiency in cooking has allowed her to rely on her judgement:

There were always the apple tarts and as I said, the fruit cake, there was always the basics, lemon meringue pie. After you've done [it so many times], and when you do it every week, you don't even think about it. You know, basic things (Emily: Interview 1998).

Further, what some women classify as 'basic' cooking, such as Lina's brioche and Emily's lemon meringue pie, most other women would consider quite difficult. Many women in my study would consider these dishes as involving a high level of skill and knowledge, for example, of correct rising times (brioche contains yeast, therefore the rising times are important) and egg beating techniques (there has to be enough 'air' in the eggs for the meringue to be 'wavy'). Emily and Lina have acquired a high level of skill that precludes the use of recipes.

Through gaining proficiency, foodmaking can be regarded as valuable knowledge and philosophically significant. Traditional Western philosophers have devalued women's work, such as cooking and have "defined [it] out of existence, rendered [it] invisible, described [it] through their silence" (Heldke 1992b:255). But the women's stories manifest a type of knowledge that bridges the gap between knowing and doing, and forms an interrelationship that is both circular and unified.

Conclusion

Many women in my study enjoy cooking and gain pleasure from it. Foodmaking is an emotional investment in the women's identities and families. Some women perceive themselves as good cooks and others believe cooking was a necessary part of their identities as wives, mothers, housewives and homemakers. Hence, it is possible to discern in their stories disruption of their expected identities and their re/negotiation of these cultural and gendered identities in their everyday cooking practice (Bhabha 1994; Fürst 1997; Hage 1997, 1998; Smith 1999).

Furthermore, analysis of women's natural ability in foodmaking shows that their knowledge and practice is layered. They used a variety of methods to learn to cook, but were also influenced by their socialisation. Such a process is reliant on imitation and internalisation of identities.

Moreover, the interweaving of knowledge and practice provides a disjuncture in dualistic knowledge, the women have to know, to be able to do. As with all the women in my study, Helena's story (opening quote) connects knowledge and practice. Her understanding of foodmaking as a "science" shows clearly a level of frustration that many women experience when they first learn to cook. She also expresses the knowledge that comes from practice, if she does not have an ingredient she now has the skills and knowledge to improvise. Such an ability exemplifies Heldke's (1992a) assertion that foodmaking is a thoughtful practice.

The following chapter discusses the conclusions of the thesis.

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FORMICA IS A REGISTERED TRADEMARK OF FORMICA CORPORATION, MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN, U.S.A.

Figure 8.0

Formica - for kitchen benchtops, tables and chairs
(*Australian House and Garden*, December 1954)

Chapter Eight

Conclusion

This thesis has used feminist poststructuralist theory foregrounding women's knowledge to explicate a valued position for women in society. Insight to women's privileged knowledge of the kitchen was gained through developing a feminist poststructuralist oral history: contemporary women's voices tell the stories of their actual, daily lives in the 1950s kitchen.

Throughout this thesis I have argued that the kitchen is a place of power for the women. They engage with the discourses of femininity, domesticity and efficiency producing different levels of conformity, resistance and subversion. All women in my study discuss kitchen practices often both as chores, and as 'creative' pursuits. The kitchen is the site of the performance of the identities of wife, mother, housewife and homemaker, which are not a simple subjugation to the discourses of femininity, domesticity and efficiency. Many women state that their identities remain unessentialised: they do not perform kitchen practices because they are women. The kitchen as an architecturally designed space reinforces women's position within the home and society, but through their spatial practices women disrupt gendered dualistic knowledge. Even though women in my study embraced the identities of wife, mother, housewife and homemaker, in a space that was traditionally regarded as theirs, the way they worked in the kitchen, how they used the space and the ways in which they consumed products and ideas was dynamic and contested.

Feminist poststructuralism and standpoint theory, as opposed to other feminisms, offers focus on local, historical and cultural identities of women which attend to the differences and similarities between women in terms of class, race, ethnicity and age (Gibson-Graham 2000; Gibson-Graham, Resnick & Wolff 2000; Sawicki 1991; Smith 1999; Weedon 1987). Such a theoretical framework allows critiques of the discourses of femininity, domesticity and efficiency as embodied by the women of

this study to emerge. By showing women's multiple subjectivity it has been possible to breakdown binarised knowledge that limits women's perceived identities in the kitchen. Feminist poststructuralism, particularly deconstruction, acknowledges that women's identities are defined within patriarchal discourse, but women self-fashion their identities of wife, mother, housewife and homemaker (Grosz 1994; 1995; McNay 1992) producing a unique relationship with the discourses of domesticity, femininity and efficiency. Feminist poststructuralism produces a different analysis to liberal and Marxist feminists, and non-feminist accounts of women's knowledge and position in society, by attending to the actualities of women's lives, addressing differences and similarities. As such it has been possible to articulate subjectivities of women that are multiple and fluid. As opposed to other feminist and non-feminist theories which do not always address the minutiae of women's lives and further reinforces women's invisibility in Australian society, feminist poststructuralism makes women's lives visible through acknowledging and valuing their kitchen lives.

Feminist poststructuralism and standpoint theory have provided a framework to analyse women's differences and similarities. Hence, the binarised knowledge of self and 'other', Australian born and migrant women, is also diffused in this research. By embracing aspects of the 'other', both Australian born and migrant women have engaged in celebrating their 'otherness' as women. Specifically, rather than concentrating on their dominated existence as women, I have sought to articulate a place for women in this research that allows for diversity, difference and plurality. In this sense, the women in my study have used their 'otherness' as an expression of empowerment, rather than as an expression of oppression.

A feminist poststructuralist oral history used in this thesis allows women to tell their stories 'on their own terms'. Women's authoring of their kitchen lives is important in this thesis because they elaborate their own significant experiences (Anderson et.al 1990; Oakley 1981). In this way the theory that emerges is woman-centred, valuing women's experiences of the kitchen. Importantly, women validate their knowledge and skills of the private sphere, but they are articulated in the public sphere of this doctoral thesis. Hence, a feminist poststructuralist oral history informed by feminist epistemology seeks to foreground women's experiences of the 1950s kitchen and in doing so, produces connections between 1950s and 21st century Australia (Duruz

1994c, 1999a, 1999b; Stanley & Wise 1990; see below). By seeking out and naming women's experiences a feminist poststructuralist oral history illuminates women's diverse practices. Moreover, such methodology acknowledges that there are multiple histories and multiple interpretations that define particular 'stories' at particular times. Hence, women's stories through feminist poststructuralist oral history give voice to their lives in the 1950s kitchen, paying attention to those practices that define women and empower them.

The making of home for women in my study is physical and emotional and multilayered - they make home in a strange culture; they learn a new language, and improvise with available ingredients to cook food that reminds them of 'home' (Ioannou 1999:71). Hence, in this way they re/negotiate their culture of origin and Australian culture and create hybrid identities (Bhabha 1994; Hage 1997). For Australian born women and migrant women, making home fulfils the 'Australian dream' of owning their own homes. Migrant and Australian born women show in their interactions with each other, through cooking and making home, that dominant Australian culture is reworked. The binarised knowledge of self/other is reinterpreted through the practice of cultural brokerage (Theophano 2001). Migrant women teach Australian born women how to use olive oil and make pasta; Australian born women swap recipes and teach migrant women how to use wood stoves and bake cakes. Therefore, the women in my study articulate a reciprocity of culture that finds expression in the practice of 'making' home.

I have used the 1950s kitchen as a means of illustrating women's empowered position within the kitchen and Australian society. Feminist architectural theorists and design historians (Agrest 1991; Attfield 1989; 1995; Boys 1990; Buckley 1999a; Partington 1989; Weisman 1992) show how women have been marginalised in dominant architecture and design discourses. Importantly, through using feminist poststructuralism, such theorists as above have also found spaces where women have re-interpreted and reappropriated dominant discourse to make it empowering for women. In the same way, I have shown that the 1950s kitchen was claimed by the women in my study as their space.

The kitchen is the centre of the emotional, and very often, the physical home. Women in my study actively engage with architectural and design discourse through decoration and design of their kitchens. The gendered design process in the kitchen becomes blurred when the women begin to tell their stories of what *actually* happened in the building and designing of their kitchens. For many women the construction of identity as homemaker is enacted through the choice of design and colours, including defining 'modern' - a style that many women aspired to achieve. The embodiment of dominant discourses of femininity, domesticity and efficiency, that is, to be a 'good' wife and housewife, is evidenced through commitment to functional design, hygiene, nutrition and scientific management of the kitchen which are overlaid by modernist discourses of the same. But the effects of efficiency and scientific management in the kitchen were contradictory. Women had smaller kitchens, but still used them as their main socialising place. Streamlining of cupboards and work patterns, namely the work triangle, produced 'ideal' working conditions, but women used the space according to their own definitions of efficiency. Hence, the women's understanding of efficiency was dynamic. Even though, through their work practices of the kitchen, women embody their identities they use the discourses of femininity, domesticity and efficiency to design and decorate their kitchens in ways that disrupt the dominant understandings of these discourses.

For the women in my study there is an embodiment of a dominant socially prescribed 'feminine' identity (wife, mother, housewife, homemaker) which remained unquestioned - it formed part of the women's socialisation process from girls to Womanhood; it was expected of them to negotiate these identities. Significantly the women embodied the socially prescribed identities for women in the 1950s, and renegotiated their own subjectivities in order to exercise power within the kitchen. Through each of the practices examined in this thesis women exercise power through their knowledge and skill, and articulate resistance, conformity and subversion of the discourses of femininity, domesticity and efficiency. The women in this research show that static theories that try to account for women's position in the kitchen, such as liberal and Marxist feminism, which instead concentrate on women's unequal representation in society and economic oppression, do not take into account women's daily lived experience. Importantly, women articulate valued positions for

themselves within their identities in the kitchen. They manipulate dominant discourses and embody multiple, rather than singular identities.

Feminist poststructuralism and standpoint theory construct the theoretical framework in all chapters of this thesis allowing 'spaces' for women to articulate multiple subjectivity. As such, household practices such as, ironing, dishwashing and shopping were sometimes chores for 'married' women and mothers, yet it was considered their duty to perform these practices. Significantly, women's performance highlights their unique relationship with the discourses of femininity, domesticity and efficiency. Women undertake these practices as fulfilling their identities as wives, mothers, housewives and homemakers, but they do so in ways that were not always prescribed by the dominant discourses of the kitchen (Goodall 1990). Women (and men's) relationship to kitchen practice is circumscribed by both their socialisation and their self-conscious understanding of their identities. Hence, feminist poststructuralism and standpoint theory attends to the differences between women and enables such differences to be highlighted within women's actual lived experience.

In the budgeting domain, women articulate power in financial decision-making through managing the weekly household budget and many have equality with husbands in major financial decisions. However, there are women in my study who maintain strict gendered divisions with husbands who maintain power in all financial decisions. Importantly, the power women exercise in budgeting is fluid and heterogeneous and they engage with the 'new' consumer society on their own terms, but always with a 'make do' and thriftiness philosophy underpinning their decisions.

As the kitchen is the 'heart of the home', examination of the practice of cooking is the 'heart' of this thesis. Cooking is women's most creative practice, but as with other kitchen practices within this thesis women have an ambiguous relationship with it. Some women are self-professed good cooks and gain pleasure from their culinary pursuits, others find cooking a 'science' and a necessary part of their identity as wife, mother, housewife and homemaker. Many women believe they have a natural ability for foodmaking, but through allowing women to tell their stories of learning to cook (by using feminist poststructuralist oral history) it becomes obvious that there is a

layering of knowledge - they *learnt* how to cook from mothers, grandmothers, husbands, fathers, neighbours and domestic science classes. Importantly, women re/negotiate their cultural traditions through food and introduce their children and grandchildren to cooking. Some however also suggest that socialisation of their daughters did not include teaching kitchen practices, including foodmaking. Thus, the practice of foodmaking contests the untenable distinction between theory and practice (Heldke 1992a). I have argued that the women in my study show clearly that foodmaking is a thoughtful practice, it links dualistic halves - theory/practice, mind/body and shows the falsity of the Cartesian dualism, and as such women's foodmaking and kitchen knowledge is revalued.

Just as foodmaking and other kitchen practices are regarded as cyclical and cumulative, I return now to one of the aims of my thesis - to unsettle dualistic knowledge. A feminist poststructuralist theory emphasises that dualistic oppositional halves are present in their other (Gibson-Graham 2000). I have shown in this thesis that women actively participate in constructing their identities despite the limitations placed upon them by patriarchal discourses. Women in this study actively designed their kitchens, they engaged with technology in unintended ways, and their gendered positioning within the home was fluid - they shopped, cleaned, ironed, cooked, budgeted and decorated, in ways that were not always prescribed by the dominant discourses of the kitchen. The women in my study resisted and challenged dominant discourses and created "alternative forms of cultural capital" (Lury 1996:132), because they often did not invest the same meanings, that is, uses or understandings into the ideas and goods they consumed as had been envisaged by designers, domestic science educators, popular discourse, government policy or husbands. Thus, I suggest that women in the 1950s kitchen participated in a self-fashioning of subjectivity that does not rely on dominant notions of Womanhood.

Finally, this thesis joins those of other theorists, historians, sociologists and designers in examining the 1950s in Australia, a period of study which has become more prominent in the last 15 years (Duruz 1994c, 1999a, 1999b; Murphy 1995a, 1995b; Murphy & Smart 1997; Sheridan 2002). The resurgence of interest in the 1950s is significant in terms of design, architecture and social and political attitudes. Socially, as discussed in Chapter 1, men were placed at the centre of Australian life,

especially in the 1950s kitchen. This study, by researching women's perception of daily life in 1950s Western Australia, has sought to redress the bias that favours men, without merely reversing the dualisms to favour women. Politically, recent events concerning refugees has once again shown that Australia can be an insular and parochial country just as it was when faced with mass-migration in the 1950s. Prime Minister John Howard has also played a role in romanticising the 1950s as a period of political, social and sexual stability - he suggests women's place is in the home, and like Menzies, the Howard government has introduced a number of policies¹⁰¹ that focus on women performing their traditional role as mothers, wives, housewives and homemakers.

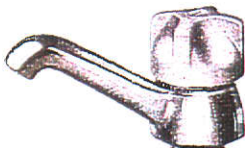
In design and architecture, 'retro' styling, including furnishings and appliances is evident in many popular home magazines (*Belle; The Australian Home Beautiful*). The minimalism and clean lines of the 1950s are also popular in housing, but importantly the kitchen is once again the centre and heart of the home. It has returned to its pre-war large proportions and the housewife is no longer separated from the rest of the family. However, it is my contention that even though the kitchen was reduced to a one-worker space in 1950s modernism it always remained a privileged space for women - it was their domain and they claimed it as such.

This thesis acknowledges women's identities of wife, mother, housewife and homemaker as central to their lives in the kitchen in 1950s Western Australia. It foregrounds the kitchen as a central social and cultural space in Australian society. Women use the designed space of the kitchen as the site of family and societal relations, they decorate it according to their budgets and it reflects their personalities. They undertake practices in the kitchen which affirm who they are in the world and cook food as a 'labour of love' for their families. Hence, I contend that the kitchen is a prominent societal space of power for women.

¹⁰¹ Mostly tax benefits to the main income earner and thereby privileges families where women do not engage in paid labour.



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The sink in this modern Crane Kitchen is the Stewardess—styled to today's taste and designed to bring a new conception of beauty and efficiency to the kitchen. The one-piece, 42-inch top does away with joints, and the deep basin with depressed drainboard assures maximum conveniences in the small room. The surface—gleaming white acid-resisting porcelain enamel on cast iron—is easily cleaned.

A swinging chromium-plated mixing faucet with control handles of Cranelon is mounted on a pedestal—out of the way yet within easy

reach. *Dial-ese* controls do away with stubborn, hard-to-close faucets and help prevent annoying dripping.

The Stewardess is typical of the Crane line of plumbing now in production. This line includes plumbing to meet every taste as well as every building budget. Even with the vast production of Crane factories, demand still exceeds supply but we hope the time is not far off when anyone can step into his Crane Dealer's store, choose the plumbing he wants, and have it installed by that dealer's skilled craftsmen.



To help home planners, Crane has prepared two books—one on Bathrooms and Kitchens, the other on Heating. Copies will be sent to those interested as long as the supply lasts.

Figure 9.0 Streamlined kitchen
(*The American Home*, March 1947)

Appendices

Appendix 1: Selected photos of women's houses

Appendix 1.1 Sylvia's 1950s house
(Courtesy: Sylvia)



Appendix 1.2

Gabrielle's 1950s house

(Courtesy: Gabrielle)



Appendix 1.3

Gretel's original 'shed' house and frontage in 1999
They lived in while their house was being completed
(Supski 1999)



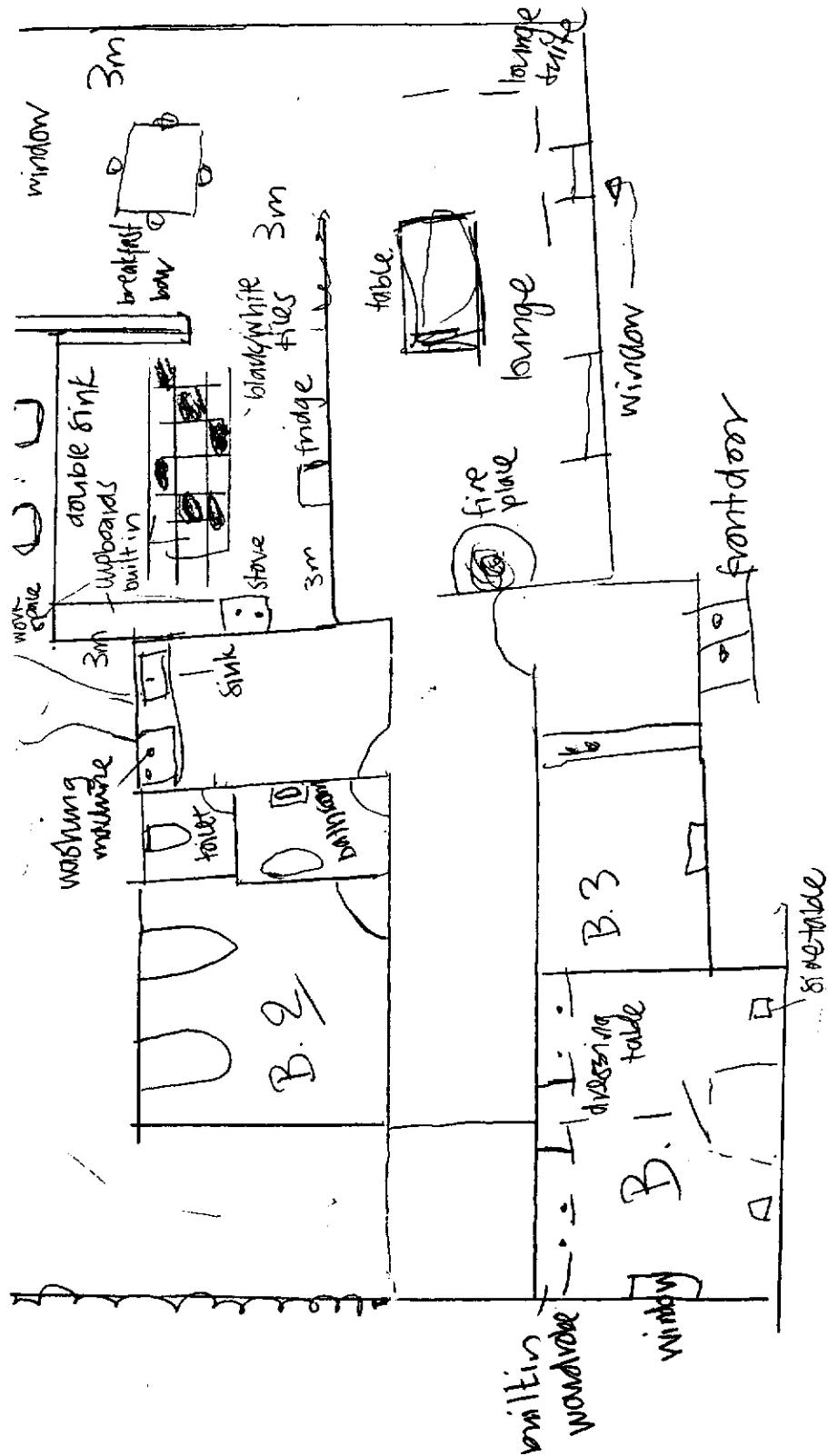
Appendix 1.4

Clara's house as it appears in 1999, see Figure 4.4
(Supski 1999)



Appendix 2: Selected hand-drawn kitchen plans

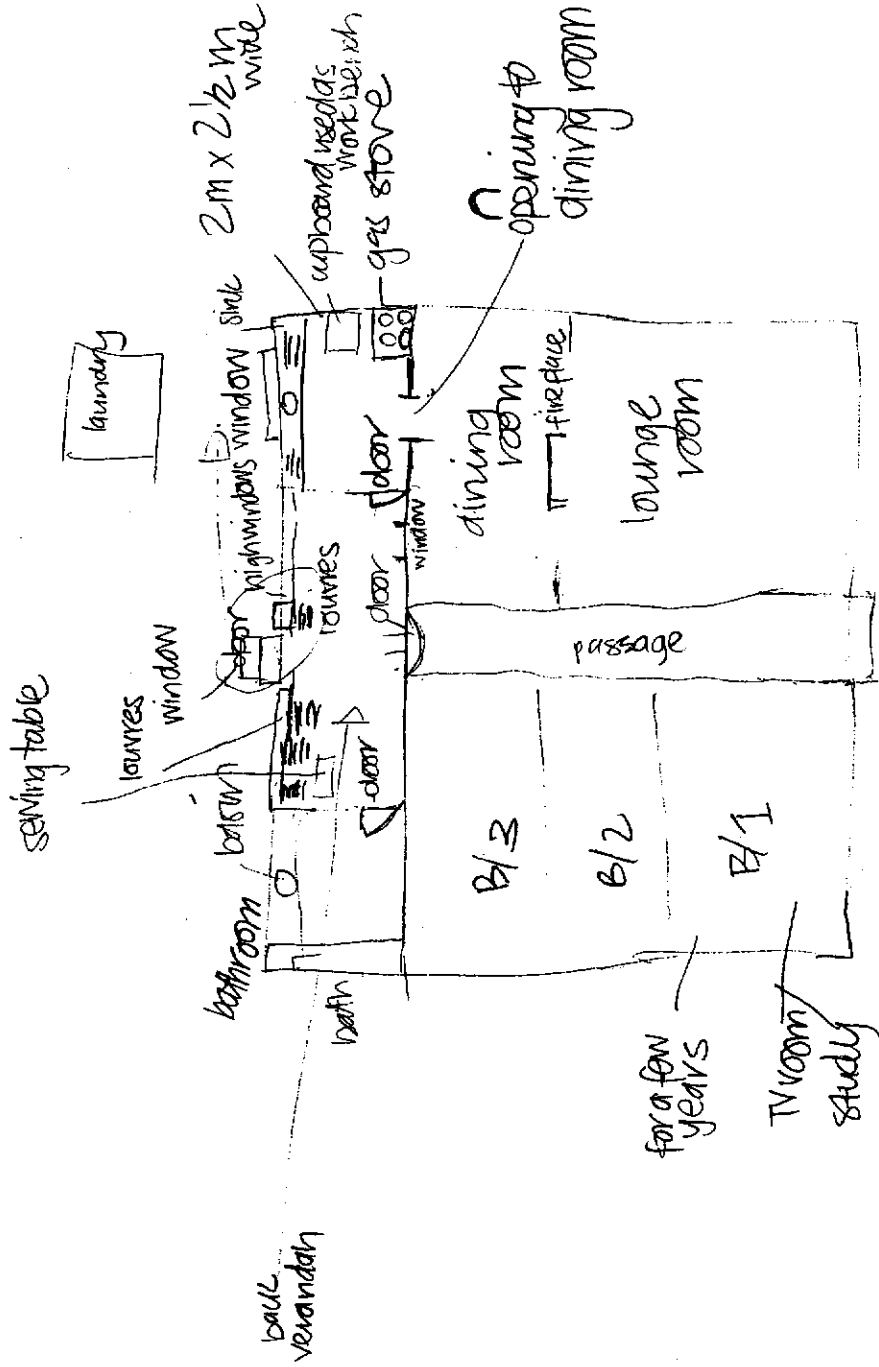
Appendix 2.1 Lina's kitchen



Albany Hwy

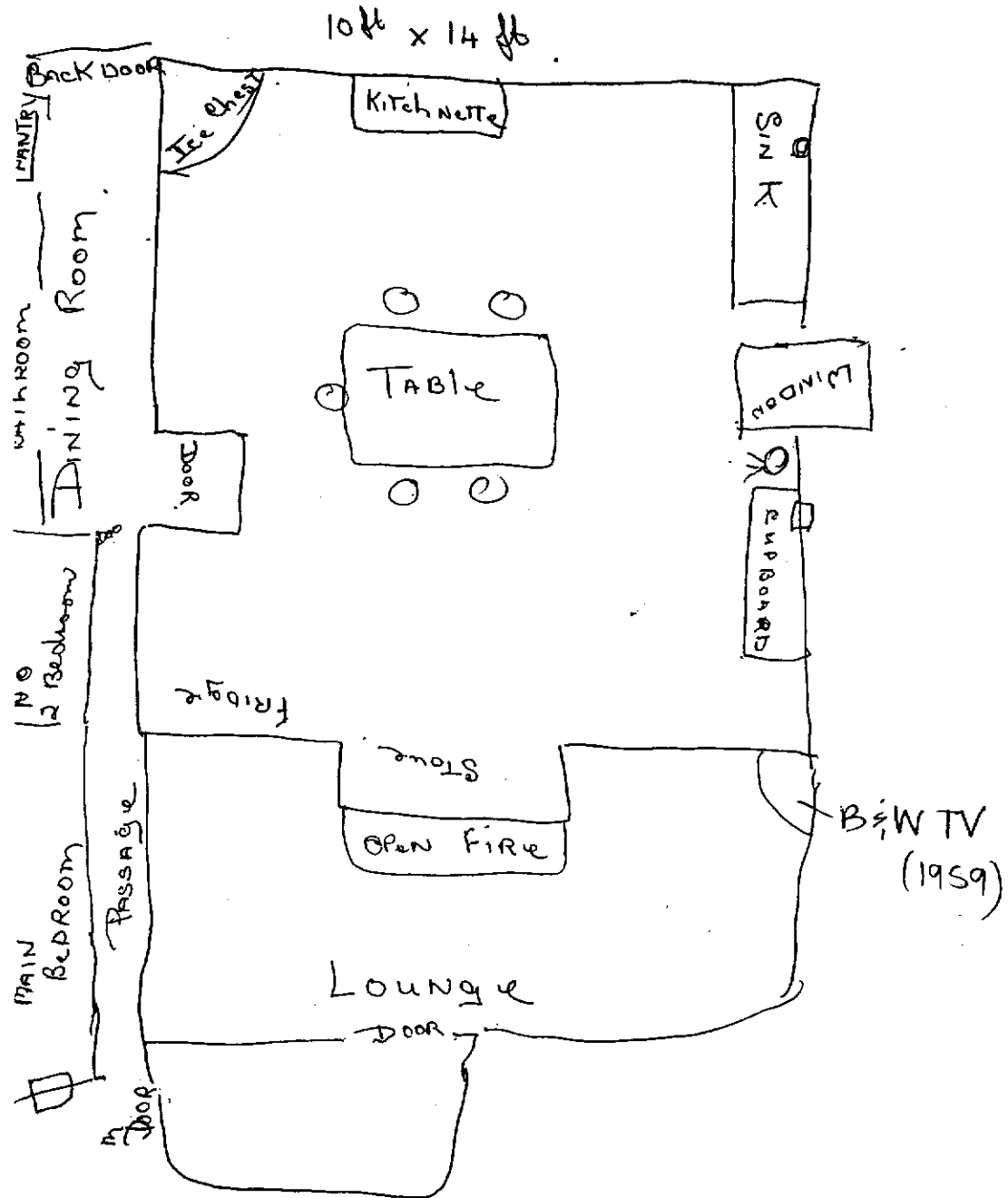
Appendix 2.2

Beata's kitchen



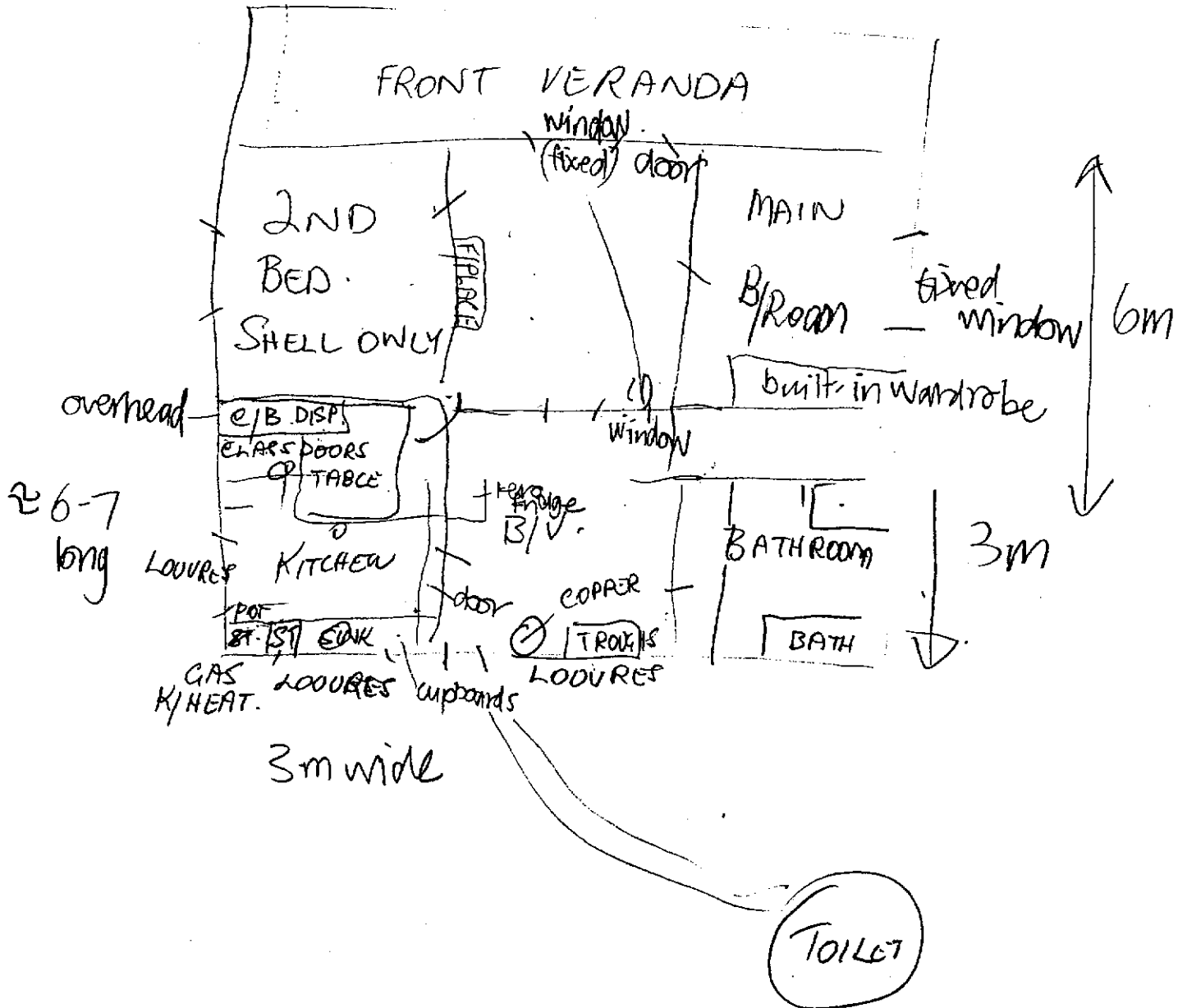
Appendix 2.3

Sylvia's kitchen

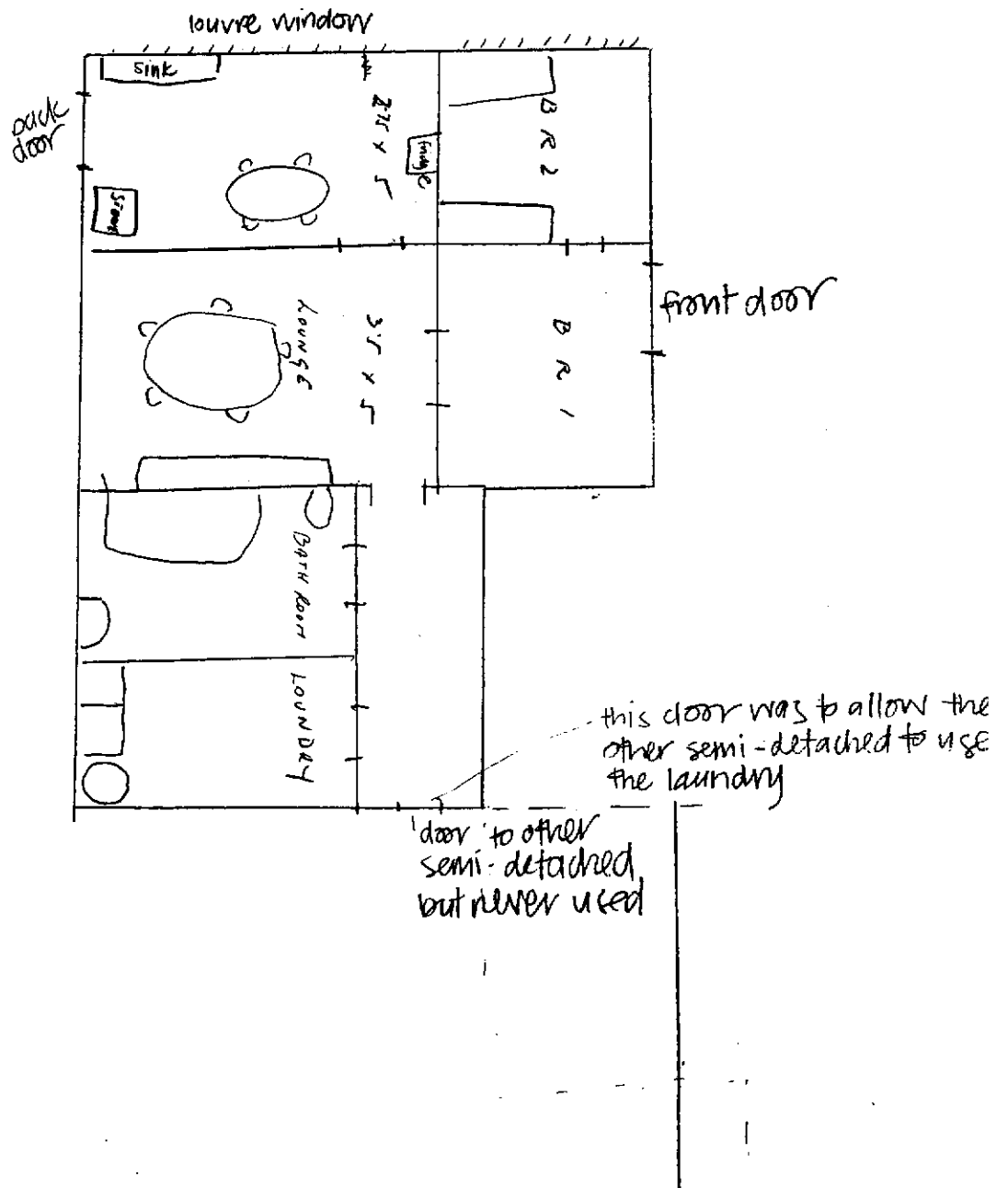


Appendix 2.4

Myra's kitchen

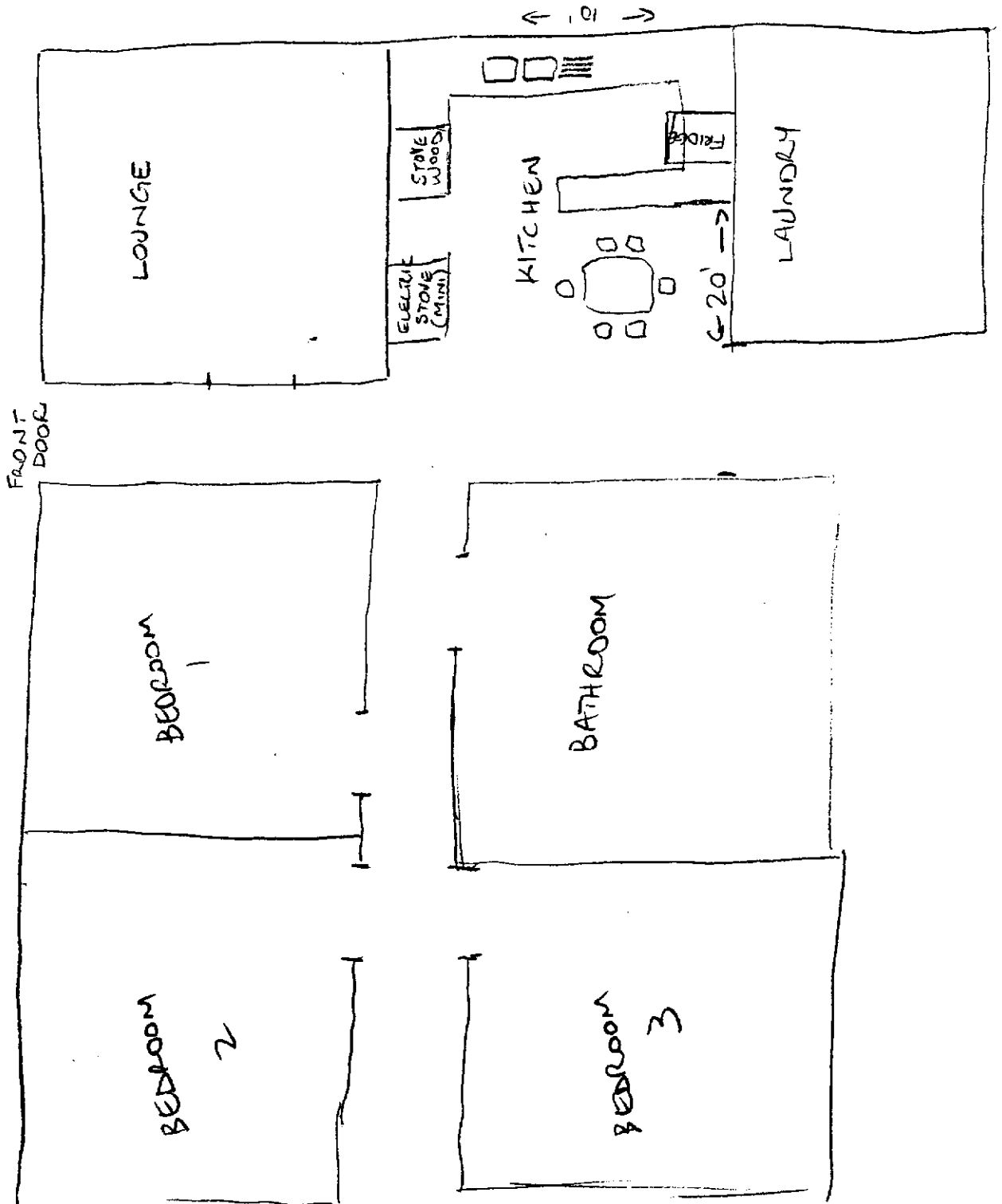


Appendix 2.5 Pamela's kitchen



Appendix 2.6

Claudia's kitchen



Appendix 3: Interview prompts/questions

These questions were used as a guide and were not always asked in the order presented below.

Migrant women

Why did you decide to leave your country of origin? When? When did you arrive in Western Australia?

Why did you decide to come to Western Australia?

Did you have assisted passage? or did someone sponsor you? or unassisted?

Could you speak English before you came to Australia?

Did you migrate alone or with family or friends? (Were you married when you migrated? Did you have any children?)

What were your impressions of Western Australia when you first arrived? (food, climate, housing)

Where did you live when you first arrived in Western Australia (arrival camps: how long did you stay there?), hostel? house?

How did you find your first accommodation? (family, friends, real estate agent). What was it like? What was the kitchen like?

Did you own your own home in the 1950s – when did you buy it? What suburb was it in? Was it important for you to own your own home? Why?

Did you have friends/family living close by?

Did you cook traditional foods from your country? Was it hard to find all the ingredients?

Did you like Australian food?

Did you ever hear the saying ‘the Australian way of life’? What did it mean to you?

Work in the kitchen

Can you tell me what sort of role you undertook in the kitchen? (For example, mother, cook, cleaner, carer, entertainer, teacher, wife.) Were some of these roles more important to you than others? Why? Did each role have a particular meaning to you?

Did you have a job outside the home (were you in paid employment)? If so, were you still responsible for the kitchen activities – cooking, cleaning, etc?

Approximately how many hours a day did you work in the kitchen? What did you spend your time on in the kitchen?

Did anybody else in the family help with the work in the kitchen – husband, children, girls/boys? Did your husband/children (girls or boys) work in the kitchen? Was there ever a time when you had paid help in the house?

Where did you learn the lessons of the kitchen? That is, how to cook, clean? Did you learn from your mother or was it more trial and error when you became a wife/housewife/mother yourself?

Activities

What kind of activities occurred in your kitchen? For example, cooking, eating, reading, writing, talking, storytelling, socializing – did friends sit in your kitchen when visiting; children – playing, drawing, eating; a gathering place, sewing, listening to the radio. Why did these activities take place here and not somewhere else in the house?

When people came to visit you and your family – was the kitchen the central place of gathering? Why?

How did you feel about people gathering, socializing in your kitchen?

Food

Did rationing have any effect on what foods you prepared?

Who did the grocery shopping? (If not wife – why not?) How many times a week did you shop? How long did it take you to do the shopping? How important was this in terms of time spent on preparing meals? (planning weekly meals)

Did you have a local butcher, grocer? Did you have your groceries delivered?

Did you have a budget? How was it organized?

Were there foods that you produced yourself? (jams, preserves, bread, cakes, chickens, vegetables). Was there a reason why you did this? Did you look after the chickens and do the vegetable gardening or was this chore the responsibility of someone else?

Were there special recipes you had? Did you write them down or did you prepare them from memory? Were these recipes given to you by your mother/aunts, etc? Have you passed them on to your children? Do you think it is important to have this generational link, that is, from grandmother-mother-daughter or sons? Why?

Space

Was the kitchen the only space in the house that was regarded as truly yours? Or did you have another space (as in a retreat, somewhere to relax)?

Did you feel when you were in the kitchen that it was your place (or space), where you had control, that is, where you had a degree of power (for example, over what the family ate, that you had the final word when the family was in the space of the kitchen)?

Feelings

How important was the kitchen in your life – did you see it as central? Why?

Did you link the kitchen and your role there as central to your identity as a mother, wife, housewife?

Did you ever feel isolated at home – in the kitchen? Did the design of the kitchen isolate you from the rest of the family/social life?

How did you feel about your kitchen? Did you gain pleasure from your work there, for example, cooking; or was it a place of drudgery?

Did you consider yourself to be a good cook, house manager?

Did you read the popular magazines such as *New Idea*, *Australian Women's Weekly* (what did you read?) Did they influence you and your opinions about what you should be doing in the kitchen? (ie in terms of what types of food you should be feeding your family, importance of nutrition). Radio, newspapers?

Did you feel any pressure that perhaps you weren't fulfilling the expectations set out by the magazines? (about what your role should be).

History/Politics

Do you remember listening to or reading about the policies of Robert Menzies? Did they affect your family life or you in particular? Is there anything that stays in your mind about Menzies?

House design

Did you build your own house? *or* was it an already established house? Did you do any renovations? *Or* did you rent? (Were you affected by the housing shortage in the early 1950s?) If you built, who was mainly involved in doing this? (husband, yourself, others). Why did you choose to build your own home?

What sort of accommodation was it? (freestanding house, terrace, flat) Do you know what year it was built? How many rooms were there? What material was your house built from? (brick, wood, stone)

How long did you live in the house for?

Do you have any photos?

Limitations/Restrictions

If you built your house, were you affected by the housing material shortages of the 1950s? If so, did this impact on the type of kitchen you had? That is, did it reduce the size of your kitchen? Or affect the type of kitchen cabinets you had, for example, with/without laminex? Were there other restrictions or limits on the design of your kitchen because of the materials shortages?

Kitchen

Where was your kitchen located in regards to the rest of the house, that is, front or back of house? (internal or external?)

Can you describe your kitchen? Were you happy with it – in terms of design, comfort, size? Would you have arranged it differently, if you could? Why?

Can you draw (roughly) the arrangement of furniture – cupboards, doors, windows, major appliances that were in your kitchen (photos).

Do you think your kitchen was modern? That is, did it incorporate the latest trends in housing (as seen in women's, home/house magazines)?

What was the colour of your cupboards? What were the cupboards like – were they freestanding (as in a dresser, kitchenette, built-in), did they have leadlights, were they decorated?

Did you have laminex? (table, benchtops)

What type of floorcovering did you have – for example, linoleum, floorboards, tiles?

Did you have a table in the kitchen? (as a workbench, eating meals, sewing). What was it made from? (for example, pine)

Where was your sink positioned? (under a window, could you see the children playing?)

Efficiency

Do you think your kitchen was efficient? (use of work triangle). That is, were there particular things that you would have changed if given the opportunity?

What types of labour-saving appliances did you have, acquire in the 1950s? Can you tell me about when you first got them? Did anyone else you know have them?

Heating/Cooling

What methods of heating/cooling did you have? Hot water?

What type of cooking facilities were in your home? (Metters wood stove, Early Kooka gas stove)

Did you have a refrigerator – what year did you get it? If not, did you have an ice chest, meat safe, kerosene fridge (how often did you get ice delivered?)

Bottling Fruit in the Lounge?



FOWLERS VACOLA ELECTRIC BOTTLING OUTFIT

If you own a Fowlers Vacola ELECTRIC Bottling Outfit, you can do your bottling in the lounge. or, indeed, in *any* room which has a power-point. YOU ARE NO LONGER TIED TO THE KITCHEN. You relax happy in the knowledge that your bottling is going on.

After preparing the fruit for bottling, take the

steriliser to any room with a power-point, plug it in and then nothing more is required other than an occasional glance at the thermometer.

Soon you will have a delicious supply of fruit which has been SCIENTIFICALLY STERILISED and preserved in the famous VACOLA VACUUM SELF-SEALING BOTTLES.

Place your order with any of the leading stores throughout Australia.

FOWLERS VACOLA MANUFACTURING COMPANY LIMITED
 HAWTHORN VICTORIA — ROSEBERY N. S. W.

Figure 10.0 'Bottling Fruit in the Lounge?'

Such advertising indicates that housework was not considered work, but leisure.

(*Australian Home Beautiful*, December 1951)

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