1 Introduction: cultures of relatedness

Janet Carsten

In recent years new life has been breathed into the anthropological study of kinship. This volume brings together some of the sources of the new vitality by exploring local cultures of relatedness in comparative context. The authors describe what ‘being related’ does for particular people living in specific localities in Africa, China, India, Madagascar, Alaska, and Europe. Rather than taking the content of ‘kinship’ for granted, they build from first principles a picture of the implications and the lived experience of relatedness in local contexts. It is a truism that people are always conscious of connections to other people. It is equally a truism that some of these connections carry particular weight – socially, materially, affectively. And, often but not always, these connections can be described in genealogical terms, but they can also be described in other ways.

Consider, for example, the Nuer, who constitute a paradigm of a lineage-based society and, as such, a classic case in the anthropological literature. Nuer are revealed here in very different terms from those in which generations of students have come to understand them (notwithstanding the complexities of Evans-Pritchard’s (1940, 1951) original ethnography). In this volume Hutchinson describes how, under the conditions of profound social and political upheaval experienced in southern Sudan, the connections and disconnections of Nuer relatedness have come to be understood not only in terms of blood and cattle but also through the media of money, paper, and guns. That these media are potentially convertible into each other, and that food is convertible into blood, and blood into milk and semen, lends an extraordinary degree of transformability to Nuer idioms of relatedness. This ‘unboundedness’ not only provides a strong contrast to the classic understandings of Nuer kinship in terms of descent groups, but has important implications for how we consider idioms of relatedness more generally.

Likewise, if we consider Inupiaq relatedness as described here by Bodenhorn, much anthropological wisdom about what constitutes
kinship is called into question. Placing a high value on individual autonomy, Ifiupiat strongly deny that ties deriving from procreation exert any overriding moral force. Whereas claims based on different contributions to productive work are described as permanent, ‘biology’ does not constitute an immutable basis for relations. One of the purposes of this volume is precisely to interrogate the role of biology in local statements and practices of relatedness. In this introductory chapter I situate local practices in a broader comparative context. For the Ifiupiat, it is clear that a rejection of biology as constituting the moral bedrock to kinship does not mean that relatedness, as locally constituted, is irrelevant – on the contrary, Bodenhorn makes clear that Ifiupiat constantly seek to acquire more ties through naming practices, adoption, and marriage. Crucially, however, these ties are seen as optative rather than given.

The aim of describing relatedness in indigenous terms appears deceptively simple. But it is of course part of a more ambitious project. That project involves assessing where the anthropological study of kinship finds itself at the beginning of the twenty-first century, and where its future might lie. The study of kinship was the very heart of anthropology for nearly a century. In the North American, European, and British schools, from Morgan to Schneider, Durkheim to Lévi-Strauss, Rivers and Malinowski to Radcliffe-Brown and Fortes, the major theorists of anthropology made their mark in the study of kinship (cf. Parkin 1997: 135). It seemed more or less impossible to imagine what anthropology would look like without kinship. And yet from the 1970s on, the position of kinship as a field of study within anthropology has been under question. ‘Under question’ is something of an understatement. For most anthropologists confronted with the question ‘Whatever happened to kinship?’, one might say quite simply, as David Schneider did in an interview published shortly before his death, ‘the kinds of problems changed’ (1995: 193–4).

In Schneider’s view, the shift away from kinship was part of a general shift in anthropological understanding from structure to practice, and from practice to discourse. Kinship lost ground – most obviously to gender. But this was part of a wider recasting of the nature of social and cultural life which involved the breaking down of the discrete domains of economics, politics, religion, and kinship which had defined anthropology. This recasting occurred alongside what Schneider termed a ‘democratisation of the intellectual enterprise’ (1995: 197) in which concerns about social justice, from feminism and the civil rights movement, were crucial. Schneider’s view was shaped, of course, by events inside and outside the North American academy. It was more generally
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true, however, that social stability was no longer the central issue in 
anthropology. And in one way or another, the study of kinship - whether 
in evolutionary, functionalist, or structuralist guise - had been bound up 
with explanations of social stability. 

But Schneider also noted that, perhaps surprisingly, kinship in the 
1990s had 'risen from its ashes' (1995: 193) - a fact which he attributed 
to feminist work, to studies of gay and lesbian kinship, and to Marilyn 
Strathern's *After Nature* (1992). If it is true that kinship has undergone a 
rebirth, there is no doubt that the 'new kinship' looks rather different 
from its old-style forebears. It has become standard, in works on kinship 
published since the 1980s, for gender, the body, and personhood to 
feature prominently in the analysis, while relationship terminologies are 
barely referred to, and kinship diagrams scarcely make an appearance. 
'The kinds of problems changed.' This volume is one attempt to under-
stand in what ways the problems changed, and how kinship might look 
as a result. 

The present collection is intended as both a new departure and a 
return to comparative roots. It begins to explore how the issues under-
lying recent work on kinship in Euro-American cultures, on new repro-
ductive technologies, on gender, and on the social construction of 
science in the West impinge on the study of relatedness cross-culturally. 

Much of this recent work has been concerned with a set of issues about 
'nature' or 'biology' in Euro-American cultures. 

A central theme running through this volume is the relationship 
between the 'biological' and the 'social'. If 'biology' or 'nature' has been 
the grounding for the 'social' in the West, and this relationship now 
appears to have been 'destabilised', can we put our understanding of 
this process of destabilisation to work in studies of non-Western cul-
tures? What kind of relevance does this breaching of our foundational 
certainties have for how we understand and compare relatedness cross-
culturally? Rather than beginning with a domain of kinship already 
marked out, the authors in this volume describe relatedness in terms of 
indigenous statements and practices - some of which may seem to fall 
quite outside what anthropologists have conventionally understood as 
kinship. The chapters which follow suggest not only that biology does 
not everywhere have the kind of foundational function it has in the West, 
but that the boundaries between the biological and the social which, as 
Schneider demonstrated, have been so crucial in the study of kinship are 
in many cases distinctly blurred, if they are visible at all. These new 
understandings may force us to conclude that kinship needs to be 
reinvented in a post-modern, or - to use Bruno Latour's (1993) term - 
'non-modern' spirit.

**Introduction: cultures of relatedness**
A note on ‘relatedness’

It should be clear from the outset that this is a book with a particular mission. That mission is to bring together two trends in recent anthropology. One trend involves the investigation not just of kinship, but of ‘nature’ and wider knowledge practices in the West. The other, taking a broad and imaginative view of what might be included under the rubric ‘kinship’, describes the ethnographic particularities of being related in a specific cultural context. The authors collected here have all worked on one or both sets of problems.

The particular aim I have sketched necessarily involves constructing a selective version of anthropological history. In this introduction I highlight a set of issues revolving around the separation of biological and social aspects of kinship in anthropology, and I trace one particular thread of continuity in recent work. If in places the argument appears dismissive of previous renditions of kinship, this is unintended. I take it for granted that in order to say something differently one constructs rather partial versions of what went before (I have made this explicit at various points below). But of course the new relies and builds on the old, and I make my full acknowledgement here to the insights and inspiration provided by the scholars I cite as well as many that I do not.

The version of anthropological history which I give below leans heavily on the work of David Schneider and employs a concept of culture which may seem more foreign to British readers than to those trained in the American anthropological tradition. British students (we like to think) have been accustomed to think of kinship in terms of the social – as in social rules, social organisation, social practice (see Bouquet, this volume). American cultural anthropology focuses on meaning. But my sense is that there has for a long time been an implicit rapprochement between these schools which can be attributed as much to the influence of Lévi-Strauss and Dumont as to the writings of American cultural anthropologists.

Particular versions of history sometimes demand different terms. The authors in this volume use the term ‘relatedness’ in opposition to, or alongside, ‘kinship’ in order to signal an openness to indigenous idioms of being related rather than a reliance on pre-given definitions or previous versions. In this introduction I have also used ‘relatedness’ in a more specific way in order to suspend a particular set of assumptions about what is entailed by the terms social and biological. I use ‘relatedness’ to convey, however unsatisfactorily, a move away from a pre-given analytic opposition between the biological and the social on which much anthropological study of kinship has rested. As a term, it is of course
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The history which I give below leaves hmeider and employs a concept of sign to British readers, rather than to those of the British tradition. British students (we d to think of kinship in terms of the organisation, social practice, and cultural anthropology focuses on has for a long time been an implicit: ools which can be attributed as much and Dumont as to the writings of sometimes demand different terms. The term ‘relatedness’ in opposition to, or al an openness to indigenous idioms reliance on pre-given definitions or ion I have also used ‘relatedness’ in a pendent particular set of assumptions: s social and biological. I use ‘relatedness’ as an alternative, a move away from a pre-given biological and the social on which much has rested. As a term, it is of course open to criticisms—many of which apply equally to ‘kinship’. The obvious problem with relatedness is that either it is used in a restricted sense to convey relations in some way founded on genealogical connection, in which case it is open to similar problems as kinship, or it is used in a more general sense to encompass other kinds of social relations, in which case it becomes so broad that it is in danger of ‘becoming analytically vacuous’ (Holy 1996: 168). Readers will perceive that ‘relatedness’ offers no neat solutions for the comparative endeavour merely that its use has enabled me to suspend one set of assumptions, and to bracket off a particular nexus of problems, in order to frame the questions differently. ‘Relatedness’ makes possible comparisons between Ifupiat and English or Nuer ways of being related without relying on an arbitrary distinction between biology and culture, and without presupposing what constitutes kinship.

Issues about the natural and the social are of course central to two other areas to which anthropologists have recently given much attention: the body and gender (see, for example, Broch-Due, Rudie, and Bleie 1993; Lambek and Strathern 1998). As I discuss below, the parallel is hardly coincidental. But the study of the body and of gender in anthropology can be seen as part of a shift away from kinship in anthropology. One purpose of this volume is to confront these issues head on within the frame of kinship, rather than taking a more circuitous route via gender or the body. The volume thus reiterates in a new way a very old text of anthropology—the centrality of kinship.

This collection also reiterates an ambitious commitment to the comparative study of kinship in the face of an increasing emphasis on cultural particularism. The reluctance to engage in generalisation is one effect of the sustained attack on the concept of kinship and the increasing attention given by anthropologists to the diversity of the meanings of kinship (cf. Holy 1996: 172–3) —although, as Schneider noted, ‘symbols and meanings can be compared just as easily as modes of family organisation, the roles of seniors to juniors, or the methods of agriculture’ (1972: 48; cited in Marshall 1977: 656). And, as Andrew Strathern and Michael Lambek (1998: 23) remind us, ethnographic work is always at least implicitly comparative in that the society of the anthropologist is inescapably present. In this volume the analytic language of kinship, as well as certain Euro-American everyday practices and discourses of kinship, explicitly fall within the comparative frame.

It is noteworthy that there has been almost no prominent collection of essays devoted to the cross-cultural comparison of kinship since the publication of Jack Goody’s edited volume The Character of Kinship in 1973. There have of course been many innovative studies since. But
these have either focused on kinship in a local or regional ethnographic context, or have made something else - gender, personhood, houses, bodies, death, procreation - the main object of comparison, with kinship emerging as a prominent subsidiary theme. I address the reasons for this long gap in what follows. But, if nothing else, it may be timely to attempt a fresh look at kinship in comparative perspective.

My introduction is thus clearly not intended to provide a history of the anthropological study of kinship since the nineteenth century. That task has been undertaken by others (e.g. Kuper 1988). Nor do I offer either a new introductory textbook (e.g. Barnard and Good 1984; Holy 1996; Parkin 1997) or a comprehensive survey of the various trends in kinship studies since the 1970s (e.g. Peletz 1995). Instead, I attempt a particular take on 'whatever happened to kinship?' - a take in which David Schneider has a pivotal role, poised as he was, in a unique way, between the old-style kinship and the new.

Whatever happened to kinship?

Schneider is a key figure for a number of reasons. Although he was at one time part of the formalist tradition of kinship studies (see, for example, "Matrilineal Kinship" (1961), which he co-edited with Kathleen Gough), his later work was highly innovative. His "American Kinship: A Cultural Account," which was first published in 1968 and reprinted in a second edition in 1980, was highly influential for later culturalist analyses of kinship - a point which I take up below. A crucial aspect of Schneider's influence is the role played in his writings by 'nature' or 'biology' and its separation from law, which is itself encompassed by 'culture'. The significance of biology in his writings is often highly contradictory (cf. J. A. Barnes 1973: 63–5), but these contradictions are at the heart of understandings of kinship and of wider knowledge practices in Euro-American cultures. The distinction between the biological and the social is also central to the analyses of local cultures of relatedness presented in this volume, and it is for this reason that I dwell on it at some length here.

Schneider's "A Critique of the Study of Kinship" (1984) can be read as a commentary on his earlier monograph "American Kinship: A Cultural Account" (1980). In the first book he outlined American kinship as a cultural system, explicating its symbolic logic. This was in many ways a path-breaking work, exemplifying a symbolic approach to culture. Schneider argued that sexual reproduction was a core symbol of kinship in a system which was defined by two dominant orders, that of nature, or substance, and that of law, or code. The sexual union of two
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The introduction of 'Cluniflacts' within science which are true and which are separate from the cultural constructions of them. (1997: 55; original italics)
A similar problem underlies Schneider's later work, *A Critique of the Study of Kinship* (1984; see Carsten 1995a). Here Schneider subjected the history of the study of kinship to the same kind of analytic scrutiny he had previously applied to American kinship, and demonstrated how sexual procreation was central to anthropological definitions of kinship in this respect his argument reiterated one that had already been made by Needham (1971a). Schneider showed that this was an indigenous assumption in Euro-American folk beliefs about kinship which had been imported into anthropological analysis. It was hardly news, however, that sexual procreation was not necessarily central to local idioms of relatedness – notably in the famous example of the Trobrianders, or in the case of the Yapes whom Schneider himself studied, where the link between coitus and procreation in humans was reportedly not made (see Malinowski 1929; Leach 1967; Sprio 1968; Schneider 1984; Delaney 1986; Franklin 1997). If 'kinship' was not the same thing in different cultures, then the comparative endeavour of anthropology failed, because like was quite simply not being compared with like. Schneider, like Needham before him, concluded that 'there is no such thing as kinship' (Needham 1971a: 5), and that the discrete domains into which anthropologists divided up the world – kinship, economics, politics, and religion – had to be abandoned. His argument thus had particular relevance for the comparative study of kinship.

Although Schneider took the discussion about the role of biology in the anthropological study of kinship rather further than he had in *American Kinship*, he still seemed to hold back from abandoning the very separation which he was investigating – that between culture and biology:

[(T)he point remains that culture, even were it to do no more than recognize biological facts, still adds something to those facts. The problem remains of just what the sociocultural aspects are, of what meaning is added, of where and how that meaning, as a meaning rather than as biological fact, articulates with other meanings. (1984: 199)]

Schneider's *Critique* was very successful in demonstrating the Eurocentric assumptions at the heart of the anthropological study of kinship. This was undoubtedly one of the many nails in the coffin of kinship, and contributed to the shift away from the study of kinship in the 1970s. It was somewhat paradoxical therefore that his earlier work on American kinship, flawed as it was, provided a highly fertile model for later culturalist accounts of kinship, one to which Strathern (1992a: xviii) and others have made clear their debt. Schneider is a pivotal figure in the study of kinship precisely because of the link between these two projects – and this provides a crucial distinction from Needham's
neider’s later work, A Critique of the in 1995a). Here Schneider subjected to the same kind of analytic scrutiny icaniship, and demonstrated how anthropological definitions of kinship — one that had already been made showed that this was an indigenous beliefs about kinship which had been alysis. It was hardly news, however, necessary central to local idioms of is example of the Trobrianders, or in ie the himself studied, where the link humans was reportedly not made (see pro 1968; Schneider 1984; Delaney was not the same thing in different endeavour of anthropology failed, being compared with like. Schneider, ed that ‘there is no such thing as that the discrete domains into which l — kinship, economics, politics, and His argument thus had particular of kinship, 5 discussion about the role of biology in ship rather further than he had in hold back from abandoning the very gating — that between culture and n were it to do no more than recognize those facts. The problem remains of just what meaning is added, of where and how n as biological fact, articulates with other successful in demonstrating the Euro — the anthropological study of kinship. nally nails in the coffin of kinship, and the study of kinship in the 1970s. It re that his earlier work on American led a highly fertile model for later x to which Strathern (1992a: xvii) de ded. Schneider is a pivotal figure in cause of the link between these two crucial distinction from Needham’s wrightings. Perhaps it is not surprising in retrospect that Schneider’s stronger position, which focused on the ‘meanings’ of kinship rather than on formal properties, seems to have offered greater possibilities for the future study of kinship. By illuminating the role of nature or biology in American folk versions of kinship and in anthropological analyses of kinship, and by beginning to explore the connections between these two strands, Schneider left a particularly fruitful avenue for later scholars to pursue.

Marilyn Strathern claimed David Schneider as ‘anthropological father’ to After Nature (1992a: xviii), and this link is reiterated in Schneider’s own comment on his American Kinship — one which might almost be taken as the epigraph for Strathern’s book:

Nor did I notice until almost after it was all done how much the Euro-American notion of knowledge depended on the proposition that knowledge is discovered, not invented, and that knowledge comes when the ‘facts’ of nature which are hidden from us mostly, are finally revealed. Thus, for example, kinship was thought to be the social recognition of the actual facts of biological relatedness... The idea that culture, and knowledge, is mostly a direct reflection of nature is still very much with us, however inadequate that view is. (1995: 222; original italics).

The central point of Strathern’s argument is that nature can no longer be taken for granted in late-twentieth-century English culture. In Thatcherite Britain, the effects of technological developments — particularly the new reproductive technologies — and the extension of consumer choice to domains in which such choice had not previously applied, have resulted in a destabilisation of nature.

Nature, at once intrinsic characteristic and external environment, constituted both the given facts of the world and the world as context for facts... Although it could be made into a metaphor or seen to be the object of human activity, it also had the status of a prior fact, a condition for existence. Nature was thus a condition for knowledge. It crucially controlled, we might say, a relational view between whatever was taken as internal (nature) and as external (nature). (1992a: 194)

What Strathern calls the ‘modern cycle’ involved a new conceptualisation of the ground for knowledge. In this new conceptualisation, nature does not disappear — in fact it becomes more evident — but its ‘grounding function’ is lost through being made explicit. If, for example, one considers the effects of the new reproductive technologies, which are often claimed to be merely ‘assisting nature’, then kin relationships, which in the past would have been seen as having their basis in nature, and could then be socially recognised — or not — may now be seen as either socially constructed or as natural relations which are assisted by
technology. As Strathern (1992a: 195–6; 1992b) makes clear, the significant shift is that what was taken to be natural has become a matter for choice; nature has been, as she puts it, 'enterprised-up'. The more nature is assisted by technology, and the more the social recognition of parenthood is circumscribed by legislation, the more difficult it becomes to think of nature as independent of social intervention (1992b: 30). It follows from this that knowledge itself, which previously was seen as 'a direct reflection of nature', as Schneider put it, no longer has such a grounding in nature. It is not just nature, then, but knowledge itself which has been destabilised.

Kinship has a critical role in these shifts in knowledge practices precisely because, in the English view, kinship is defined as being the meeting place of nature and culture (Strathern 1992a: 87). Kinship facts can be seen as simultaneously part of nature and part of culture. Kinship performed a kind of dual function - it was based in a nature that was itself regarded as the grounding for culture, and it also provided an image of the relation between culture and nature (ibid. 198).

Strathern explores the cultural effects of 'the demise of the reproductive model of the modern epoch', where individuals can no longer be placed simultaneously in different contexts as social constructions and as biologically given (1992a: 193). Future technological developments, such as the mapping of the human genome, suggest that the shift from nature to choice will further destabilise the reproductive model. In the endless proliferation of a highly politicised discourse about consumer preference, new reproductive technologies, and gene therapies, it becomes possible to imagine 'a cultural future that will need no base in ideas about human reproduction' (p. 198).

Strathern's conclusion highlights once again the centrality of pre-given biological facts to Western knowledge practices and kinship relations. The cultural construction of a scientific realm of 'natural facts' has, of course, itself been made the subject of study by historians of science. Thus, for example, Haraway's (1989, 1991) work on primatology demonstrates how the boundaries between nature and culture are much more permeable than either biological or social scientists might suppose. The 'traffic between nature and culture' (1989: 15), which she illustrates through particular histories of the relationships between primates and those who studied them, puts into question the role of 'biological facts' as a domain separate from culture. Here scientific facts are shown not simply as 'pure truths', placidly awaiting discovery in a natural world, but as actively constructed by scientists whose work practices, gendered identities, and career paths situated them in particular historical and cultural milieus.
The view that scientific facts are as much made as they are discovered has radical implications because it runs directly counter to Western assumptions about the 'natural world'. As Franklin observes, the fact that the science of biology itself admits no distinction between physical phenomena and the study of these phenomena marks a telling difference from social sciences such as anthropology.

The conflation of the object to be known with the discipline of its observation and description ... performs the collapsing of knowledge with its object distinctive of modern Western scientific ways of knowing. Indeed, that is the definitively scientific 'collapse': that objective knowledge in the sciences is so transparent it is isomorphic with the reality it describes (1997: 56).

Franklin argues that in the West the 'facts' of biology symbolise not just certain kinds of relationships called kinship ties, but the 'possession of a particular form of knowledge which offers a particular access to truth' (p. 208). There is a crucial link between a category of relations which is regarded as particularly powerful (and whose power is derived from biological reproduction) and the power of science to determine the facts of this reproduction. It is significant that Franklin situates her study of women's experience of IVF (in vitro fertilisation) treatment in two British infertility clinics in the late 1980s in the context of the debate around the 'social' construction of 'natural' facts in the anthropological literature, particularly the discussion of procreation beliefs. Hers is one among a number of recent works to explore the cultural implications of reproductive medicine and the new technologies of reproduction (see, for example, Edwards et al. 1993; Franklin and Ragoné 1998a; Ginsburg and Rapp 1991, 1995; Martin 1987, 1991; Ragoné 1994). At the centre of these studies is a project of 'defamiliarising' the natural basis of human procreation and reproduction (Franklin and Ragoné 1998b: 4), which, of course, has been closely linked to the emergence of a distinctive feminist anthropology. Schneider had already demonstrated that the status of the 'natural' in the anthropological literature on kinship was open to question. It could now be shown to be equally 'displaced' in English and American social life (see Franklin 1997: ch. 1).

Franklin illuminates the same kind of shifts in knowledge practices as those discussed by Strathern. The significant effect of the new reproductive technologies in terms of how knowledge is understood is that nature and technology become mutually substitutable. Technology is described in the literature provided to patients as giving nature a 'helping hand'; this capacity of technology is 'just like' nature (Franklin 1997: 209–10). Biology, in the sense of scientific knowledge, has its own generative power, and this is evidenced in the new technologies. Simultaneously,
reproductive biology is denaturalised—it can be assisted by technology. Instead of a naturally given sequence of events, reproduction becomes an ‘achievement’ (Franklin 1998: 103). Science can no longer be viewed as extra-cultural; kinship is no longer defined against ‘natural’, ‘biological’ facts; it is no longer ‘given’ (Franklin 1997: 210–13).

Recent investigations of the articulation of biology and kinship in Euro-American contexts have not only focused on reproductive technologies. The place of biology and procreation has also been at the centre of studies of gay and lesbian kinship in America. Weston (1991, 1995) discusses coming-out stories which reveal that ‘blood ties’ are described as temporary and uncertain in the light of the disjunctions to, and severance of, kinship ties experienced by gay who declare their homosexuality to their families. Meanwhile ‘chosen families’ of friends are invested with certainty, depth, and permanence, and spoken about in an idiom of kinship by those whose experience of biological kin has been thoroughly disrupted. This implies a view of kinship which, by displacing biology, turns the conventional understandings on their head—although Strathern underscores how the critique of gay kinship actually consists of making explicit ‘the fact that there was always a choice as to whether or not biology is made the foundation of relationships’ (1993: 196; cited in Hayden 1995: 45).

Investigating procreation in the context of lesbian relations, Hayden (1995) argues that, far from being displaced as a symbol, biology is here mobilised in myriad new ways. She outlines various strategies employed by lesbian co-mothers in order to equalise their claims and legitimate their relations to the child. These include giving the child the names of the co-parents in hyphenated form, emphasising the co-parents’ joint decision to bring up the child, and the partner performing the insemination of the birth mother. Hayden discusses how lesbian co-mothers in these ways appropriate generative powers. She shows how other strategies suggest an abstraction of biogenetic substance from the identity of the donor, and a dispersal of biological connectedness. These strategies include both partners bearing a child through the use of the same donor, careful selection of the donor in order to produce a child who will physically resemble the co-mother, or the use of the brother of the non-biological parent as donor. Hayden’s exposition vividly conveys how, in her words, ‘lesbian families’ explicit mobilisation of biological ties challenges the notion of biology as a singular category through which kin ties are reckoned’ (1995: 45; original italics). Strathern claims that it is by rendering biology, or nature, explicit that its grounding function disappears. The disruptions which have occurred when biology is deployed to legitimate the claims of co-mothers seem to substantiate
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self-evident symbol. Instead, the meanings of blood ties, biogenetic

substance, paternity, and generation, and their relation to each other,

become contingent and variable (Hayden 1995: 56).

The writings I have discussed so far focus on how nature, or biology,

and by implication kinship (which, in the indigenous view, could itself

be read off from biology), are deployed in the West, and thus extend one

part of Schneider's project. They are less directly concerned, however,

with the questions raised in A Critique of the Study of Kinship about

the future of the anthropological study of kinship and with specifically

comparative studies. I have suggested that Schneider's work is crucial

precisely because he demonstrated the links between these two sets of

problems.

The 'denaturalisation' of kinship has been taken up by Yanagisako

and Delaney (1995a), who explore the specificities of different natures

and the implications of questioning 'nature' as a universal base. Most of

the chapters in their collection focus on North America, and analyse

how the discourses and practices of kinship, gender, ethnicity, and

nationalism involve the naturalisation of identity and difference. In

illuminating the naturalising force of Western kinship discourse, the

authors of this volume once again explicitly acknowledge their debt to

Schneider. They take the symbolic analysis of kinship considerably

further than Schneider in demonstrating how the plural meanings of

kinship are themselves embedded in hierarchies of power, which these

meanings also serve to naturalise. If kinship, after Schneider, could no

longer be seen as the cultural elaboration of biological facts, and if the

discrete domains of kinship, economics, politics, and religion no longer

held, then what would kinship look like when grown of its foundational

assumptions (Yanagisako and Delaney 1995b: 11)? Once again they

highlight the significance of Western hierarchies of knowledge which

mark off science as a 'sacred domain' where truths residing in the

natural world 'transcend agency' and are 'discovered by humans'

(p. 13). The separation of science from culture serves to naturalise a

particular hierarchy of knowledge and to prevent 'reading across

domains' (ibid.).

A recognition that the boundaries that separate off domains, such as

'science', 'kinship', 'politics', 'economics', and 'religion', are cultural

constructions offers the possibility of asking 'how culturally-specific

domains have been dialectically formed and transformed in relation

with other cultural domains, how meanings migrate across domain

boundaries, and how specific actions are multiply constituted' (ibid.).

These authors show that it is possible to abandon the foundational
assumptions that have defined analytic domains, such as kinship, without abandoning ‘the study of the meanings and relations previously confined to those domains’ (Yanagisako and Delaney 1995b: 11). Indeed, the holistic project which anthropology has conventionally set for the study of ‘other’ cultures has involved just such a tracing of phenomena through the myriad contexts in which they occur - the most famous example being Mauss’s (1966) argument that the gift constituted a ‘total social phenomenon’ which was at once political, religious, and economic.

In the remainder of this introduction I explore some of the interconnections among the chapters which follow, returning in the concluding sections to the implications of the work I have discussed so far for the study of relatedness in non-Western cultures. Although the chapters focus on different local contexts of relatedness, many of the themes which emerge are held in common. I highlight these as ‘processual aspects of kinship’, ‘everyday practice’, ‘gender’, ‘substance’, the ‘social and the biological’, and ‘kinship as academic discourse’. The headings are intended as a means to explore the possibilities of a post-Schneiderian comparative study of relatedness.

The process of kinship

An increasing dissatisfaction with the formalism of much of the literature on kinship was one cause of the move away from kinship as a field of study from the 1970s onwards. Formalist approaches omitted not only some of the crucial experiential dimensions of kinship, including its emotional aspects but also its creative and dynamic potential. As Malinowski had famously put it,

The average anthropologist . . . has his doubts whether the effort needed to master the bastard algebra of kinship is really worth while. He feels that, after all, kinship is a matter of flesh and blood, the result of sexual passion, and maternal affection, of long intimate daily life, and of a host of personal intimate interests. (1930: 19)

What is striking, however, is how taken for granted formalist assumptions have been (e.g. Needham 1971a, b). The authors in this collection reject a highly formal analysis, emphasising local practices and discourses of relatedness, and demonstrating how these impinge on and transform each other.

The accounts of Stafford, Lambert, and Hutchinson show how different the ‘patrilineal’ systems of Chinese, Rajasthani, and Nuer kinship are from the classical accounts. Stafford demonstrates how the division between lineage and family in classic studies of Chinese kinship,
Introduction: cultures of relatedness

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family in classic studies of Chinese kinship,
and the exclusion of domestic ties from patrilineal kinship, has limited
understanding of Chinese relatedness, particularly by obscuring the
importance of ties between women and their children. Instead, Stafford
discusses the importance of two cycles of reciprocity in the construc-
tion of relatedness. The cycle of yang connotes the mutual obligation
between parents and children, and crucially includes not just birth
children but also foster children – in other words, yang is not just about
patrilineal descent, for this cycle can exist in the absence of descent,
while a failure of yang may terminate descent. As Stafford emphasises,
this cycle consists of small everyday interactions involving women, and
is essential to the lived experience of relatedness; it is comparable to
more obviously processual aspects of relatedness documented else-
where in this volume. The second cycle is the cycle of laiwang, which involves
reciprocal ceremonial transactions between those who do not consider
themselves genealogical kin. Here Stafford uses the term 'relatedness' to
include any kind of relation – including, for example, ties between
neighbours or co-villagers which would not normally be considered as
kinship. As Stafford points out, the justification for using relatedness in
this very broad sense is that the boundaries between different forms
of relatedness may in fact be more malleable than might be assumed, and
here he highlights parallels with the Nuer and Rajasthan cases consid-
ered by Hutchinson and Lambert. The inclusion of these two over-
lapping cycles of reciprocity, and a recognition of the importance of
'non-kinship' ties in an understanding of Chinese relatedness, modifies
the traditional restriction of Chinese kinship to a lineage paradigm. It
demonstrates that women are not just considered as non-persons, out-
siders to the system, and allows a much more dynamic understanding of
Chinese relatedness.

Stafford also shows how the use of a broader concept of relatedness
may facilitate comparisons between supposedly more 'fixed', descent-
based kinship, such as the Chinese case, with examples of bilateral
kinship which have long been considered inherently 'fluid'. He rejects
the contrast between a 'fixed' unilineal model and a 'fluid' bilateral one,
which he shows to be more a product of a distinct type of kinship
analysis than of the actual dynamics of relatedness. The point that
restricting the analytic frame for kinship also restricts the scope of the
comparative endeavour is also made by Lambert in this volume.
Showing us that, in the Chinese case, very little is in fact 'given by birth'
iluminates similarities with 'non-unilinear kinship'. The contributions
of Bodenham and Edwards and Strathern make clear how 'bilat-
eral kinship' is amenable to a process of adding on or lopping off kinship
connections – indeed, both processes are a necessary part of this kind of

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which anthropology has conventionally set-
tures has involved just such a tracing of
iad contexts in which they occur – the most
ss's (1966) argument that the gift consti-
tion' which was at once political, religious,
relatedness. Both Iñupiaq and English relatedness involve a continuous process of becoming connected to people, in the former case through naming, adoption, and marital relations, in the latter through a complex process of interweaving social and biological idioms of being related.

This dynamic quality is captured most vividly by Astuti in her description of Vezo relatedness. Here we are shown, through the eyes of an old Vezo man, how relatedness can only be understood as a dynamic process. As a young man, Dadilahy is part of a network of bilateral kin, a kindred, which can be imaged using the Iban metaphor of the concentric circles spreading out from a pebble thrown into water. The ripples gradually diminish until they merge with the background in the same way as one's recognition of kin gradually fades as kin become more distantly connected. As an old man, Dadilahy sees himself as the apex of a pyramid of ties to his children and grandchildren stretching through his daughters and sons and their spouses—and Astuti recalls another image from the Iban, that of a cone-shaped casting-net with Dadilahy at the top (cf. Freeman 1970:68–9). Here Dadilahy sees himself as the source of numerous ties which he himself has created and which include men and women, affines and kin. In death, the image of relatedness changes again, for the Vezo are divided after death into rasa, 'kinds', or patrilineal groups, which are buried together in the tomb. Astuti shows how the process of relatedness involves a transformation from 'kindred' to 'cognatic descent group' to 'patrilineal descent group' which accompanies the process of moving from youth to old age to death for particular Vezo women and men. Her account demonstrates the partialness of trying to understand Vezo kinship as either simply bilateral or simply unilineal. Indeed, it is the subtle transformation of one into the other, or the articulation of these different modes, which is not only particularly intriguing but also captures the essential dynamic of Vezo relatedness and its interconnections with personhood.

It is not accidental that a view of relatedness as essentially processual should also highlight the importance of children, who not only 'represent continuity' (in the classic formulation), but who may be said to embody processes of growth, regeneration, and transformation. Both Stafford and Astuti describe the importance of having children in Chinese and Vezo relatedness, while Bodenhorn discusses how Iñupiat continually 'add on' ties to children through adoption (which does not necessarily preclude maintaining ties between a child and her birth parents). As Bodenhorn emphasises, children are not merely passive recipients of these processes but themselves initiate them. What the Iñupiat see as crucial to the creation and viability of such ties is love—implying perhaps that parents who lose their children, because the
English relatedness involve a continuous flow to people, in the former case through relations, in the latter through a complex of biological idioms of being related, captured most vividly by Astuti in her section on children. Here we are shown, through the eyes of the narrator, the intimate details of the Iban metaphor of the concentric silt thrown into water. The ripples merge with the background in the same manner as kin become more distant. Dadilahy sees himself as the apex of this and grandchildren stretching through his spouses—and Astuti recalls another one-shaped casting-net with Dadilahy at its center. Here Dadilahy sees himself as the person who has created and which includes in. In death, the image of relatedness divided after death into rasa, ‘kinds’, or ried together in the tomb. Astuti shows that this transformation from ‘kindred’ to a single descent group which arises from youth to old age to death for her account demonstrates the partial nature of kinship as either simply bilateral or the subtle transformation of one into the other, in different modes, which is not only captures the essential dynamic of Vezone with personhood.

The importance of having children in a horticultural society is highlighted by Bodenhorn in his section on children. He shows how the Inupiat view of children is not merely passive, but initiates them. What the action and viability of such ties is love—parents, have a limited capacity to love.

Constructing relatedness through everyday practice

There is a further dimension to the omission of women and children from the analytic frame, and this connects with Stafford’s point about how the lack of participatory fieldwork in China has crucially affected the view we have of Chinese kinship. The formalisation of kinship as a field of study involved the separation of what Fortes termed the ‘domestic domain’ from the ‘polity-socio-jural domain’ (1953, 1954). Both Malinowski and Fortes saw the nuclear family as a universal social institution which was necessary to fulfil the functions of producing and rearing children (see Malinowski 1930; Fortes 1949). They both had a keen interest in domestic family arrangements, which may in part be attributed to the influence of Freudian psychology (see Fortes 1974, 1977). Fortes also saw kinship as ‘an irreducible principle’, the source of social identity (1949: 346; 1969). His study The Web of Kinship among the Tallensi (1949) devoted considerable space to relations between parents and children, sibling relations, and domestic family arrangements. The separation which he himself had introduced between two domains of kinship could, however, be taken to imply that the social context in which the nuclear family was set—in other words, wider kinship arrangements—carried greater analytic significance. The political domain of kinship—public roles or offices ordered by wider kinship relations, and the political and religious aspects of kinship—were described analytically as the source of cohesion in the societies anthropologists studied, and hence what rendered kinship of interest for anthropology (see e.g. Radcliffe-Brown 1950).

It is thus perhaps unsurprising that the comparative study of kinship could devote relatively little attention to intimate domestic arrangements and the behaviour and emotions associated with them. These were assumed to be of little significance, but a matter for psychological rather than anthropological study. If one considers Fortes’s meticulous ethnography, it is quite paradoxical that the very data which documented in detail the small everyday acts of constructing relatedness between women, or between women and children, might be more or less excluded from the frame if his more general injunctions were taken seriously. Stafford makes a similar point with reference to scholars of China, who very early on noted the problems and omissions involved in operating with a descent-based paradigm for Chinese kinship.
However they are transmitted, these omissions may have important implications, as Stafford and Lambert both indicate, leading to a rather lopsided view of what kinship is ‘about’ – lineages in the Chinese case, marriage and descent in the Indian one. For Ifiupiat, as Bodenham emphasises, personal autonomy and the rejection of pre-given ties of dependence mean that relatedness is continuously ‘under construction’ through precisely these kinds of everyday acts. Here it is difficult to see what relatedness would be about at all without the everyday activities of women and men as they engage in the labour process. In a similar way, I have shown elsewhere (Carsten 1995a, 1997) how Malay relatedness is created both by ties of procreation and through everyday acts of feeding and living together in the house. Both procreative ties and shared feeding create shared substance or blood in a community largely made up of migrants. Here the small acts of hospitality and feeding, together with longer-term sharing of food and living space which fostering and marriage involve, create kinship where it did not previously exist. Women and houses may be said to be central both to the ‘domestic’ process of creating relatedness inside houses, and to the larger ‘political’ process of integrating newcomers and the establishment and reproduction of whole communities.

Thus a focus on what I have called the ‘everyday’ – small, seemingly trivial, or taken-for-granted acts like sharing a meal, giving a dish of cooked food to a neighbour, dropping in to a nearby house for a quiet chat, a coffee, and a betel quid – has provoked a careful examination of the symbolic and social significance of the house (see Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995) as well as a reappraisal of what constitutes ‘the domestic’ and the boundary between the domestic and the political (see also Moore 1988, Strathern 1984; Yanagisako 1979, 1987).

**Gender and kinship**

This volume was intended to address the question ‘Where is the study of kinship at the end of the 1990s going?’ rather than explicitly to focus on gender. There is a sense, however, in which all the contributors have implicitly or explicitly taken account of recent work on gender, and indeed would argue that the terms of studying kinship or relatedness are necessarily reformulated by that work (see Collier and Yanagisako 1987; Howell and Melhuus 1993; Yanagisako and Collier 1987).

The central concern of much recent work on the cross-cultural study of gender has been the extent to which gender identity is performative rather than biologically given (see Astuti 1998; Broch-Due et al. 1993; Butler 1990, 1993; Errington 1990; Moore 1988, 1993, 1994; Morris...
ted, these omissions may have important implications. Lambert both indicate, leading to a rather surprising conclusion. For Ifugui, as Bodenbont notes, the rejection of pre-given ties of kinship is continuously 'under construction' of everyday acts. Here it is difficult to see how the everyday activities of ritual and through everyday acts of feeding. Both procreative ties and shared blood or food in a community largely made up of hospitality and feeding, together with the living space which fosters and identifies the house (see Carsten and a reappraisal of what constitutes the everyday - small, seemingly everyday acts like sharing a meal, giving a dish of food, dropping in to a nearby house for a quiet chat - has provoked a careful examination of the status of kinship (see Carsten and 1979, 1987).

Addressing the question 'Where is the study of everyday life going?' rather than explicitly to focus on gender, and the rejection of pre-given ties of kinship is continuously 'under construction' of everyday acts. Here it is difficult to see how the everyday activities of ritual and through everyday acts of feeding. Both procreative ties and shared blood or food in a community largely made up of hospitality and feeding, together with the living space which fosters and identifies the house (see Carsten and 1979, 1987).

Recent work on the cross-cultural study of gender identity is performative in nature (see Astuti 1998; Broch-Due et al. 1993; 1995; 1997; 1999; 2000; Moore 1988, 1993, 1994; Morris 1995; Strathern 1988). This discussion is highly relevant to an analysis of kinship partly because it in many ways replicates an analogous discussion on the nature of kinship which focuses on the articulation of social and biological aspects of kinship. And this only underlines the extent to which the anthropological study of gender in the 1970s and 80s in many respects encompassed the study of kinship (see Yanagisako and Collier 1987). The distinction between what is 'made' and what is 'given', and the degree to which kinship is necessarily predicated on the 'biological facts' of procreation, are discussed in the chapters by Bodenbont, Bouquet, Edwards and Strathern, and Lambert in this volume. The starting point of Middleton's chapter on Karembola notions of relatedness makes clear the interconnections between these two strands of recent scholarship.

Middleton notes how the issue of maternity and the bond between mother and child have been neglected in anthropological studies of both gender and kinship. In part, this absence may be regarded as an effect of the explicit exclusion of the domestic, intimate world of women and children from the study of kinship which I discussed above. In part, as Middleton notes, it is linked to the way motherhood has been construed by anthropologists as having an apparently direct and obvious relation with the natural world (see J. A. Barnes 1979). For the Karembola, the image of motherhood is central to relatedness, and is also the key idiom of rank and power, but it is not restricted to women. This of course immediately problematises the status of motherhood as intrinsically 'biological' or 'domestic'. To be powerful, men imagine themselves as the mothers of other men. Middleton discusses what is meant when Karembola men describe themselves, or are described by others, as 'mothers' or 'mother people'. Noting in what ways such statements can be characterised as metaphorical, and what is left out by such a depiction, she asks how Karembola men are mothers - by what performative acts do they construct male motherhood? Paradoxically, however, men's performance of motherhood can only be made manifest by reference to the sexual bodies of livestock or women. Although male motherhood must be performed to become manifest, this performance aims to elicit what already lies hidden within men - here Middleton makes comparative use of Indonesian and Melanesian idioms of source and display. For the Karembola, she argues, men and women are really different kinds of people, and their difference is rooted in their bodies. Middleton discusses how rank for the Karembola rests on the articulation of two kinds of marriage, asymmetric alliance and patrilateral parallel cousin marriage (another example of the way in which new anthropological descriptions simultaneously refigure and encapsulate
Karembola notions of relatedness, like those of the other Malagasy people described in this volume, can be described as both cognatic and patrilineal, 'unkinded' and 'kinded'. In this case, however, patrilineality is not banished to the world of the tomb but is part of the experience of relatedness for the living. Patrilateral parallel cousin marriage keeps together male and female agnates people thought of as of the same kind; asymmetric alliance divides people of the same kind. Here wife-givers are thought of as superior to wife-receivers, and the idiom of cross-cousin marriage is used to construct an image of a ranked social order in which the image of mothering is central. Karembola kindedness, although in their view intrinsic, has to be performed, and as with male motherhood, the performance aims to elicit what lies within. During confinement and after giving birth to a first child, a Karembola woman is fed and nurtured in her father's house. In these and other nurturant acts, fathers and brothers materially demonstrate their kindedness with sisters and daughters, just as they demonstrate that they are the source and root of the child. For subsequent births, the child's father rivals his wife's agnates' claims to be the source of the child by taking on 'women's work' in rituals of couvade which, likewise, have meaning only in relation to the intermediate term of the mother's sexed body giving birth. Thus the performance of male motherhood, Middleton argues, focuses on the sexed body of women who give birth to children. It relies on the consubstantiality and the sexed difference of brother and sister. Men cannot substitute for women, because it is women who have to give birth, just as, when a man gives gifts of cattle to his sister and her children, the cattle must be female, because only cows give birth.

In her subtle exposition of Karembola ethnography, Middleton demonstrates how, for the Karembola, the performance of gender as well as the construction of the imagined polity rests on what she calls 'the natural capacities of the female body'. She also makes clear, however, that fertility is not an intrinsic value of women per se; women are not everywhere accorded this value. Rather, in the particular context of the Karembola ritual economy, women's value is linked to work which only female bodies can perform. For Karembola, properties of women and men are rooted in their bodies rather than being the product of relations. And this suggests a refinement to a rather crude division between the social constructionist view of gender and a biological determinist position. This refinement allows for performance while also admitting a place for material bodies; it reminds us of a not very surprising fact—that the construction of gendered difference may invoke or rest on what particular people take to be the intrinsic 'natural capacities' of male or female bodies.
Introduction: cultures of relatedness

Substance and relatedness

I suggested above that there are parallels between the discussion about the extent to which gender is either biologically given or socially constructed and the debate about whether kinship is necessarily rooted in the biological facts of procreation. The articulation of the 'social' and the 'biological' is central to the way both gender and kinship have been constructed as academic domains. While these terms may in themselves seem quite unproblematic, precisely what is meant by them is not always clear. The possibility that the boundaries between the social and the biological are more permeable in people's discourse than might be presumed emerges from some of the statements made about shared substance which are examined in this volume.

A simplistic opposition between social and biological ties is rendered problematic by the Rajasthan practices and discourse analysed by Lambert. Lambert demonstrates the importance of various types of relatedness which are not based on procreative links. First, she discusses ties of 'village kinship' between those who originate from the same village and who, after marriage, move to the same locality; and she discusses ties to the mother's natal village, which are maintained regardless of caste. Secondly, Lambert describes formal ties of adoption which provide a woman with a set of honorary agnates in her conjugal village. These relations are considered permanent, and they extend for at least one generation. Significantly, this kind of relatedness is actually described — at least in some contexts — as superior to and purer than reproductive kinship, because it does not originate in the procreation of sexual intercourse. It is also significant that the adoptive household must be one from which the adopted daughter can drink water: commensality is an essential part of this relationship. The local view is that the impossibility of sharing substance with certain people limits the possibility of establishing relatedness with them. However, Lambert's argument also suggests an implicit inference — that the process of sharing substance may create relatedness. A third kind of non-procreative relatedness is constituted by a less formal, more individual, and voluntaristic form of adoption. Finally, Lambert notes the existence of another type of formal adoptive relation which is initiated in order to secure a male heir.

While birthing practices emphasize the tie between a child and its locality, and the link with the lineage of the child's father, children are also held to share substance with their mother and siblings through ingestion of the mother's blood before birth, and breast milk after birth. These bodily substances are themselves described as transformed
food. 'Consanguinity' is described locally in various ways. In its broadest sense, it includes not just shared blood but shared qualities and affects transmitted through bodily substances and the local micro-environment. While the milk of a mother establishes future relatedness, the milk of livestock belonging to the household is important in establishing and maintaining ties to lineage ancestors. In the case of those who die young, offerings of 'house milk' can create ancestral ties. In this sense, Lambert suggests, milk expresses the 'historical depth' of relatedness.

Although Indian kinship has often been seen largely in terms of affinal relations, it is significant here that the food-sharing which is so central to adoptive relations, and to the mother-child bond, is described as creating consanguineal rather than affinal ties. It is also significant that 'consanguinity' and affection are, in local terms, mutually constituted - feeding expresses degrees of relatedness and marks bonds of affection. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the affective component of affinal relations is here considerably devalued, in contrast to that of 'consanguineal' (including adoptive) ties.

What emerges from this analysis is that there is a combination of sentiment, substance, and nurturance as grounds for relatedness. Instead of attributing relatedness to a single indigenous, 'substantialist' model, Lambert shows how affection, shared substance, and nurturance underlie all forms of relatedness, whether genealogically based or not. The different forms of relatedness she discusses form a continuum based on the varying presence of these different elements. At various points, however, we can also perceive cleavages within this continuum. Thus 'affinal' ties can be contrasted to 'consanguineal' ones (here taken to include ties of substance and a shared local micro-environment) in terms of their affective content. But it is also possible to juxtapose 'procreative kinship', comprising a narrowly conceived consanguineal and affective element, to a more broadly based 'consanguineal' relatedness. Here Lambert suggests that the explicitly superior valuation of non-genealogical ties should alert us to their creative potential.

This exposition thus goes beyond a simple opposition between substance and code, or an equally simple assertion of their inseparability in the Indian context. And this is where the omissions in previous accounts of lineage-based kinship, which Lambert and Stafford both allude to, become significant. It is not that the principles implicit in lineages or marriage are unimportant, but that they leave a lot out. Lambert demonstrates how oversimplified opposites, like 'substance' and 'code', 'real' and 'fictive' kinship, 'biological' and 'social', may constrain our understanding of indigenous practices, which in certain contexts allow
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convertibility from one form of relatedness into another, or the creation of new ties.

Hutchinson’s rendering of Nuer relatedness bears some striking parallels to the Rajasthani case, but with different emphases in the area of convertibility or ‘unboundedness’. She describes first the importance of blood to Nuer idioms of relatedness and vitality, and how not only milk, semen, and sweat are described as forms of blood, but so too is a newborn child. The birth of a child implies the fusion of parental blood. Blood is convertible to food (in the form of milk), and food is converted to blood in the human body. Food is nutritionally assessed in terms of its blood content – milk being the most perfect food in these terms. Blood-relatedness is created through the sharing of food. Ultimately, food and blood are destined to meet and mix in the soil. Hutchinson goes on to show how cattle and blood are complementary – cattle are the ‘symbolic counters’ for human blood. The vitality of cattle is equated to that of humans, and cattle can be used as mediators in human relations and can create new relations. Cattle sacrifices and exchanges ensure flows of human blood, for example at marriages, funerals, difficult births, or various kinds of purificatory rites. It is the blood of cattle which ensures movement in Nuer society, taking away pollution and creating new relations. Both cattle and people are similarly capable of extending their reproductive vitality.

The analysis of how blood, food, and cattle are connected in Nuer idioms of relatedness is in many ways reminiscent of the emphasis on processual aspects of kinship in other cultures which is documented elsewhere in this volume. Hutchinson’s departure is to expand the analytic frame to include other ‘substantive vectors’ which move between people and create or sever social relations – money, guns, and paper. By doing so, she is able to connect practices and discourses of relatedness to wider socioeconomic circumstances and to explore the effects of prolonged political upheaval on Nuer kinship. Hutchinson demonstrates how Nuer oppose money to blood as sterile and implying transitory ties. This makes it an ideal medium with which to sever ties and to break connections which are seen to be negative and polluting. In contrast to their attitudes to money, Nuer liken paper to blood and cattle. Like blood, paper is a substance linked to superhuman powers – in this case the state. Hutchinson describes how paper has become a fetishised object in the absence of schools or educational institutions, symbolising Nuer estrangement from the state, embodying a potential to tap government powers, and signifying political allegiance.

Hutchinson’s discussion of the impact of the state on idioms of relatedness has, of course, a wider relevance, as does her observation
that for Nuer not all 'enduring social bonds' are positive or desirable. Her depiction of the impact of violent deaths in feuding and warfare, and her inclusion of infant mortality, infertility, and adultery in a consideration of relatedness, are pointed reminders of the negative underside of kinship. Although anthropological analyses have tended to privilege its positive and harmonious aspects, kinship is also about disconnection and disjunction — a point taken up by Edwards and Srather in this volume.

Perhaps the most challenging aspect of Hutchinson's analysis is the inclusion of guns in a discussion of relatedness. Here we are confronted with Nuer glorification and fetishisation of guns, which are linked to male potency, beauty, and strength, an aesthetic which she links to their lack of power *vis-à-vis* the state. She shows how the disconnections created by guns are contrasted to deaths by spear. While the power of a spear issues directly from the bone of the person throwing it, and is internal to the person, guns are seen as external and impersonal. Death by spear creates a blood link between slayer and slain, and there is no doubt about the responsibility of the slayer. The precise source of death from a gun is likely to be more uncertain, and this has consequences in terms of the pollution risks, and hence the bonds of moral obligation, involved. However, guns do not only sever human relations, for in a surprising twist which demonstrates an extraordinary capacity to turn weapons of destruction into ideological sources of regeneration, guns are now widely used instead of cattle in bridewealth payments. Hutchinson describes how guns which are collectively owned by groups of brothers may thus reinforce bonds of dependence between kin.

There could hardly be a more striking case than this of the unpredictability of idioms of relatedness. Nuer use of not only blood and other bodily substances but also food, soil, cattle, paper, money, and guns to invoke and to rupture bonds of relatedness vividly demonstrates the central thesis of this volume — that indigenous statements and practices of relatedness are infinitely more dynamic and creative (or destructive) than an analysis of kinship predicated on a straightforward division between biological and social domains would imply. The conversion and transformability of types of substance demonstrate the permeability of boundaries between objects, persons, and types of relations. They suggest that narrowly defined analytic spheres of 'biological' and 'social' aspects of kinship are inadequate to describe or analyse cultures of relatedness.
Introduction: cultures of relatedness

‘Biological’ and ‘social’ kinship

I have highlighted a single theme running through the chapters in this volume – the distinction between social and biological aspects of kinship, and the ‘articulation’ of these with each other. The discussion of how such a distinction might operate in any particular culture has forced us to consider what we as anthropologists might mean when we employ these terms. These issues are directly confronted by Bodenhorn in her discussion of Inupiaq relatedness, by Edwards and Strathern on English relatedness in Alltown, and by Bouquet in her discussion of a particular kind of intellectual discourse in the academic and museum world in Europe. But as I have shown, there is a clear sense in which these themes underlie other chapters in this volume too. The cycles of zam and laiowag, and their articulation with patrilineal ideology, discussed by Stafford; the critique of a performative view of gender offered by Middleton; statements and practices relating blood, food, and bodily substance analyzed by Lambert and Hutchinson; Astuti’s depiction of the articulation of cognatic and patrilineal versions of relatedness among the Vezo – all of these can be understood as dealing to a greater or lesser extent with these same issues.

To understand why these issues seem so central to an understanding of local cultures of relatedness, it may be helpful to return to Schneider’s *Critique of the Study of Kinship*. I have suggested that this marked a watershed in kinship studies. After its publication, it was impossible to take for granted the centrality of kinship to anthropology. Schneider had comprehensively undermined the analytic foundations on which kinship as a domain of academic theorising rested. He had done so by showing that kinship was quite simply not understood in all cultures to be the same thing. The comparative endeavour of anthropologists was therefore invalid. But in a curious way, Schneider’s critique both rested on, and simultaneously took for granted, a division into the ‘social’ and the ‘biological’ aspects of kinship. He did not explicitly challenge the value or validity of this distinction.

Schneider’s central point was that kinship did not everywhere arise from the so-called natural facts of procreation. In some cultures sexual procreation was not described as the basis of kinship. Such a proposition, however, only undermines the foundations of the study of kinship if a prior analytic distinction – between the ‘social’ and the ‘biological’ – is held in place. And this brings me to the central question of this introduction: What is kinship? Can we define it in such a way as to leave scope for the inclusion of a broad range of relations and behaviour, while yet taking account of Schneider’s critique? Anthropologists generally
claimed that they studied the 'social aspects' of a domain that was in the last analysis defined by biology. Schneider demonstrated that if biology was removed from this definition, the whole edifice collapsed. Thus Strathern's suggestion that one might 'take nature out of the equation' immediately has the force of destabilising the meaning of kinship: 'think of the Baruya of Melanesia, and one is thinking instead of a system premised on the idea that kinship is the social construction of social relations' (Strathern 1992a: 87). The ethnographic evidence in this volume suggests some alternatives to the conclusions offered by Schneider.

In the Rajasthani case which Lambert describes, we can see a more fluid progression or continuum between different kinds of relatedness than a straightforward opposition between biological and social kinship would imply. Here it is sometimes difficult to ascribe the various forms of relatedness which are important in the local context to one or other of these categories. Instead, the different forms might be said to have more of some qualities, less of others. For the Ifugao, by contrast, as Bodenhorn demonstrates, relatedness is both central to social life and does not have an immutable base derived from what we would term biology. The high value placed by Ifugao on personal autonomy leads them to deny the possibility of birth creating particular obligations of reciprocity. What are immutable are claims based on particular contributions in the work process. Links created by birth to particular parents are not described as determinant in themselves; rather there is a value placed on 'adding on' relations through life. This is achieved through the conferral of multiple names on children which are associated with both personal qualities and kinship relations, through widespread adoption practices, and by marriage. All of these practices emphasise the negotiable qualities of relatedness. Bodenhorn shows how relatedness is central to social life but also crucially involves a denial of permanence, often thought to be an essential quality of kinship (see Bloch 1973; Fortes 1969).

Ifugao relatedness allows for the coexistence of a high degree of individual autonomy together with a sense of moral obligation. But as Bodenhorn emphasises, this kind of relatedness, which is permanently 'under construction', is both hard work and stressful for participants. And this point about the hard work of making and maintaining relations is often overlooked by anthropologists, is one that emerges from other contributions in this volume. Recalling Stafford's rejection of a strong inherent contrast between unilineal and bilateral kinship, it is not surprising to find 'hard work' at the core of the cycles of reciprocity which he discusses in the context of Chinese relatedness. More significant perhaps is the fact that Bodenhorn has no difficulty in describing
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Ifupiaq relatedness in a context in which, as she makes clear, the connection between birth and permanence is constantly denied. It is the work process which creates immutable rights. But this does not appear to mean that ties of relatedness are either irrelevant or unimportant. On the contrary, the fact that Ifupiat are constantly adding them on suggests their high value.

It would seem that we have here a case in which birth or procreation cannot simply be conflated with biology in the sense of a given natural order, nor – according to Ifupiat statements and practices – do birth or procreation define 'kinship'; but this neither lessens the power of relatedness in indigenous terms, nor does it inhibit or invalidate comparison with other cases in this volume. Such comparison is possible if we hold in suspension the analytic terms 'biological' and 'social', allowing that for any particular case these terms may be irrelevant or unhelpful, or that their apparent indigenous equivalents might differ quite markedly from their original use in either Western academic discourse or in the many Western folk discourses in which they occur.

This suggestion recalls an earlier argument made by MacCormack and Strathern (1980) about an equally pervasive contrasting pair of terms in anthropology and in Western folk discourse – 'nature' and 'culture' (see Descola and Palsson 1996). The overlapping domains of nature/biology and culture/society underline the point. While it may be easy to find resemblances between what anthropologists call social and biological aspects of kinship and certain indigenous notions, such resemblances may be misleading. In any one of the examples in this volume, it is clear we would have to be careful to specify what each of these terms might mean, where the division between them might lie, and their relative permeability or boundedness, as well as their relation to indigenous models of knowledge production.12 Hutchinson's description of the conversions which Nuer make between paper and blood, or guns and cattle, vividly conveys the potential to move between what we might call the 'biological' and the 'social' – suggesting, in fact, unity rather than separation. What the terms 'biological' and 'social' would actually mean to particular Nuer or Ifupiat is very much open to question. What we can say quite definitely is that a contrast between the social and biological is central both to the anthropological analysis of kinship and to indigenous northern European discourses and practices of relatedness. And this brings us to the contributions of Edwards and Strathern and of Bouquet in this volume. These authors are concerned to tease out the articulation of these two terms in the experience of being related in England and in the development of anthropological analysis.
Edwards and Strathern begin with what they rightly perceive as 'the impasse set up by imagining kinship as divided between the “social” and “biological” manifestations of itself'. In order to avoid endlessly reproducing the terms of this debate, instead of focusing on the content of the terms social and biological in Alltowners' idioms of relatedness, they explore their intersection or 'interdigitation'.

One resident of Alltown recounts her concerns about losing touch with an adopted cousin. Her husband has a similar concern over his father's half-brother. Both the half-brother and the adopted cousin are understood to have an attenuated link with their families - connected by less 'concentrated' ties than full members of their families. Here the relationships are limited in terms of their apparently weaker biological content. This tenuousness is increased when the cousin and the half-brother move away, disappear, or lose touch - and here a social idiom is brought into play. In their daily lives Alltowners continually add on and truncate their interconnections by bringing into play different kinds of link - belonging to a family, or to a place, various kinds of ownership, names, biological ties, etc. This material provides an interesting contrast with Bodenhorn's, for while the Ilupiat are concerned simply to add on relations, Alltowners also need to limit them. Severance may be caused by simple lack of interest, losing touch, or a trivial or more deliberate act of forgetting, or it may come about through the competing claims of social and biological connection. And here once again Edwards and Strathern point to a significant contrast with the Ilupiat. For the Ilupiat, there is no particular tension between biological and social links between persons; biology does not extend or cut off connections. In English statements about relatedness, however, social and biological claims both link and truncate each other. For example, when a gestational surrogate (who did not contribute the ovum) gave up the child to the commissioning mother, the 'gift' both connected the two mothers and divided them. The commissioning mother spoke in terms of immense gratitude of 'the greatest gift of all'; the surrogate signalled that she was giving up all future claims (cf. Ragoné 1994). 13

Edwards and Strathern discuss how inclusion and belonging carry positive overtones in English sociality, and these are reproduced in academic renditions of kinship. In these renditions we hear little about the negative aspects of kinship or community - connection is seen as intrinsically desirable, while exclusion is cast in negative terms. Although anthropologists long ago pointed out the potentially infinite connections in kinship of the English kind, they have tended to see it as limiting aspects as somehow external to kinship - provided by factors like residence, land ownership, etc. 'Social' action was seen as condi
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straining 'natural' ties. Both Astuti's and Edwards and Strathern's chapters in this volume make reference to a mid-century debate in kinship theory over the 'problem' of cognatic kinship – that it failed to provide a basis for the definition of discrete groups, and hence could not, on its own, provide the organisational base for society (see Freeman 1961). The significance of unilineal descent in this theory was its emergence from a kind of 'natural' undifferentiated background of cognatic kinship, which was, as Strathern (1992c: 88) put it, equivalent to the creation of 'society' out of 'nature'. Astuti shows how, for the Vezo, the unilineal and the cognatic images capture different aspects of the process of relatedness and the achievement of personhood. But it would be quite problematic to see one of these as more 'social' or more 'natural' than the other. Nor would it make sense to consider the depletion of relatedness, which is part of the process of death for the Vezo, apart from the context of relatedness and personhood. Edwards and Strathern argue that, far from being extraneous, the self-limiting aspects of English kinship are an intrinsic part of kinship reckoning.

According to Edwards and Strathern, the combination and division of the social and biological elements is paradigmatic of kinship, as opposed to other forms of association in the Euro-American context. Kinship here is inherently 'hybrid'. They also suggest that there may be a connection between the process of recombination of heterogeneous elements in Euro-American kinship and the contemporary interest in networks which focuses on the interdigitation of the human and non-human, the material and the immaterial. In the theories of Bruno Latour, which they refer to, and which I take up below, networks signify the passage between domains of a different order, and, significantly, he singles out the divide between nature and society. Edwards and Strathern suggest that the interest in networks of this kind may well have something to do with indigenous kinship thinking. Their analysis takes us further in understanding why the separation of these two aspects should have been so central to the development of an anthropological analysis of kinship; it also holds suggestive possibilities for future studies of relatedness.

**Kinship as academic discourse**

Schneider attributed the significance of procreation in anthropological definitions of kinship to its centrality in Western practices and idioms of relatedness. Taking our cue from him, we may go further and suggest that the analytic separation of social and biological aspects of kinship was attributable to the importance of separating them in indigenous.
European relatedness. The creative and dynamic potential of these Euro-American cultures of relatedness resides in part in the endless possibilities offered by the separation and recombination of their constituent biological and social elements, and in the further impact of this mode of reckoning on models of knowledge in general. Analytically, however, one might say that the possibilities offered by a theory of kinship which presumed their separation and precluded the possibility of their recombination were considerably more sterile. The effects of this analytic separation were profound and, as Bouquet demonstrates, to a great extent obscured by academic practice.

Drawing her inspiration from the work of Bruno Latour (1993), Bouquet argues that the division between social and biological aspects of kinship was a replication of another division – between the social and the material in anthropology. Bouquet takes historical ethnographic collections, which are often reckoned to be part of the prehistory of the discipline, to represent the material, and the study of kinship to represent the social. Noting that the demise of anthropology in the museum collections of Europe coincided with the establishment of the discipline in academic institutions, Bouquet suggests that this split replicates the divide in the study of kinship between its biological and social manifestations. She presents us with an ethnography of anthropological practice in the form of two figures – the genealogical diagram and the museum display – using the particular example of the ethnographic collection in Oslo.

Bouquet traces the separation between the domains of kinship study in the academy and the ethnographic collection in the museum, but her argument is that there was an underlying connection. What she calls ‘pedigree thinking’ informed both the museum collection and the study of kinship (see also Bouquet 1993a, 1996a). Both were strongly influenced by nineteenth-century philology, an attempt to trace the connections and origins of languages and people. The collection of kin terminology by Morgan, Rivers, and others, like that of ethnographic artefacts, was premised on the genealogical connectedness of human groups, an idea derived from philology. Real or putative genealogical connections provided the rationale for displays in ethnographic museums and made it possible to systematise the display of peoples of the world, just as they did for the display of kinship information in genealogical diagrams. Rivers’s transformation of pedigree into the genealogical method, and the visual representation of genealogy in diagrams, were critical steps. The diagrams, Bouquet argues, were timeless, less artefacts which, crucially, had a biological referent. They enabled the separation of the ‘biological’ from the ‘social’ in the study of kinship.
creative and dynamic potential of these relatedness resides in part in the endless parasitization and recombination of their components, and in the further impact of this island of knowledge in general. Analytically, the possibilities offered by a theory of r separation and precluded the possibility considerably more sterile. The effects of r profound and, as Bouquet demonstrates, to ideemic practice.

From the work of Bruno Latour (1993), division between social and biological aspects of another division - between the social and the study of kinship to represent the demise of anthropology in the museum. Bouquet takes historical ethnographic conceptions to be part of the prehistory of the satorial, and the study of kinship to represent the demise of anthropology in the museum. With the establishment of the discipline, que suggests that this split replicates the between its biological and social manifestation: ethnography of anthropological practice the genealogical diagram and the museum example of the ethnographic collection in the domains of kinship study of the collection of objects in the museum, but has underlying connection. What she calls both the museum collection and the study (1993a, 1996a). Both were strongly infil- philology, an attempt to trace the connect- ages and people. The collection of kin- ers, and others, like that of ethnography, genealogical connectedness of human philology. Real or putative genealogical thes for displays in ethnographic ra- le to systematise the display of peoples for the display of kinship information in s's transformation of pedigree into the visual representation of genealogy. The diagrams, Bouquet argues, were true had a biological referent. They enabled the from the 'social' in the study of kinship.

Genealogical diagrams allowed kinship to be appropriated at home, just as the museum display represented the appropriation of ethnographic artefacts. The connecting lines of the diagram are 'silent constructions' enabling us to take in kinship 'at a glance', a display of the collection of kinship in counterpart to the collection of objects presented to us in the museum.

Bouquet's excursus into our own intellectual history has implications for contemporary practice. Kinship diagrams, as she notes, remain part of the presentation of ethnography. They represent a kind of 'purified vision' of the people from whom they were collected. Tracing the historical connections between the collection of kinship systems and ethnographic collections enables us not just to reconnect the museum and the academy but also to understand how the separation of the social and the biological in kinship became apparently self-evident. And this point is one which is central to this volume as a whole. Hutchinson's presentation of Nuer relatedness, Stafford's demonstration of how the process of fieldwork crucially affects our view of Chinese kinship, Astuti's attempt to match Yezo relatedness to classical anthropological models of bilateral or patrilocal kinship, Lambert's discussion of Rajasthani ethnography in counterpart to other renditions of Indian society, Edwards and Strathern's detailed examination of the interdigitation of social and biological elements in English kinship - all are premised on making explicit the effects of intellectual practice. They reveal what Bouquet terms the 'awkward layers' of ethnography, the points of contact between indigenous cultures of relatedness and particular anthropological practice.

Conclusion: non-modern kinship

The use Bouquet makes of Bruno Latour's work We Have Never Been Modern (1993) offers some suggestive possibilities for the future of the study of kinship which are worth pursuing further. Latour argues that two processes have shaped the modern trajectory. The first is the 'work of purification', that is, the separation of nature and society, whereby nature is seen as pre-existing social intervention, to be discovered by humans, and society is seen as constructed by humans. Here the non-humanity of nature and the humanity of the social sphere reinforce each other (Latour 1993: 30). The second process is that of 'translation', or 'mediation', which 'creates mixtures between entirely new types of beings, hybrids of nature and culture' (p. 10). It is essential to the modern project that these two processes are kept separate from each other - if we consider them together, then we cease to be modern.
However, translation and purification are linked. Nature is actually constructed in the laboratory, although scientists claim to discover it. The separation between the natural world, which is in fact constructed, and the social world, which is sustained by things, is reinforced by the separation of the work of purification from the work of translation (p. 31).

The paradox is that the modern constitution actually allows the proliferation of hybrids in spite of denying the possibility of their existence:

Everything happens in the middle, everything passes between the two, everything happens by way of mediation, translation and networks, but this space does not exist; it has no place. It is unthinkable, the unconscious of the moderns. (P. 37)

It is in this sense that Latour argues that 'we have never actually been modern. Modernity has never begun' (p. 47). In contrast, those whom the moderns construed as 'pre-moderns' were accused of making a horrible mishmash of things and humans, of objects and signs, while their accusers finally separated them totally - to remix them at once on a scale unknown until now' (p. 39). While 'pre-moderns' endlessly connect nature and culture, the 'moderns' reject these connections, refusing to admit the existence of hybrids.

Latour's argument is, of course, highly relevant to the separation between the social and the biological on which the study of kinship has been based, and which I have discussed here. Just as we can understand the processes set in train by the new reproductive technologies as part of the 'proliferation of hybrids', which in the end highlight the contradictions of the modern constitution, we can also understand some of the analyses presented in this volume as dwelling on the 'connections between nature and culture'. But Latour also offers a way out of this impasse in suggesting that it is the very division between nature and society which is the problem. If we abandon this division, admitting that 'culture is an artefact created by bracketing nature off' (p. 104), then the field of a 'new comparative anthropology' opens up which 'compar nature-cultures' (p. 96) for their similarities and differences in their constructions of the world. Abandoning what he calls the Great Divide offers the possibility of a truly holistic anthropology which focuses on the process of mediation and the production of hybrids.

Latour does not deny the materiality of the physical world or the efficacy of scientific practice. However science 'works', it does so not by its own terms, that is, by being disengaged from society, but despite being thoroughly part of culture and politics. That science and its object 'nature' - cannot be bracketed off from society or politics is precisely the
purification are linked. Nature is actually y, although scientists claim to discover it. natural world, which is in fact constructed, is sustained by things, is reinforced by the purification from the work of translation modern constitution actually allows the despite of denying the possibility of their lie, everything passes between the two, every- translation and networks, but this space z. It is unthinkable, the unconscious of the argues that 'we have never actually been r begun' (p. 47). In contrast, those who 'pre-moderns' 'were accused of making a and humans, of objects and signs, while I them totally - to remix them at once on a (p. 39). While 'pre-moderns' endlessly the 'moderns' reject these connections, of hybrids.

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materiality of the physical world or the however science 'works', it does so not disengaged from society, but despite it and politics. That science and its objects are from society or politics is precisely the point which emerges from Strathern's and others' studies of reproductive technologies which I discussed above. What Latour advocates is a kind of holism which enables us to trace the connections between domains which we have tended to keep analytically separated. Latour's language and project are undoubtedly visionary - not to say idealist. The solution he holds out to us is probably too neat to be entirely convincing. Strathern has noted that, for anthropologists, following 'networks', in Latour's sense, will not always lead to a critique of those pure forms which are of concern to Euro-Americans or appear relevant to a social analysis of science and technology. Indeed, they may lead in other directions - kinship being one (1996: 521). In their chapter in this volume, Edwards and Strathern go further in suggesting that Latour's interest in networks might itself be another manifestation of indigenous Euro-American kinship thinking.

Abandoning the divide between nature and society makes evident other problems for the comparative project - on what basis will we pursue such comparison? And this of course was the very problem which led Schneider to advocate abandoning kinship altogether. Our use of the term relatedness in this volume has effectively broadened the comparative frame, as Stafford makes clear in chapter 2, but it simultaneously begs the question of whether like is being compared with like (cf. Barnard and Good 1984: 188-9; Holy 1996: 167 -70). Holding one set of assumptions in view, we necessarily obscure others. This may suggest that certain kinds of comparison will continue to demand more formalist methods even if we refuse some of the old definitions.

Lambek's (1998) reminder of the widespread occurrence of the kind of cultural dualisms discussed here is pertinent (see n. 12, this chapter). There are good reasons why, rather than abandoning biology, we need to subject its uses in different cultures to closer scrutiny. The cross-cultural comparison of relatedness is undoubtedly one promising area for doing so. But we can only carry out such a project by simultaneously grasping how biology is used in our own - analytic and everyday - statements and practices. It is in this spirit that it may prove fruitful to juxtapose accounts such as those which Bouquet and Edwards and Strathern provide here with, for example, those of Bodenhorn or Middleton for the Hausiat or Karembola. And it is in this spirit that I take Latour's call for a 'symmetrical anthropology' as marking out an avenue for further investigation.

Bouquet's contribution here, and Strathern's (1996) exploration of Latour's concept of 'network' and how networks are limited by concepts of ownership, which she and Edwards purport in this volume, may be regarded as first steps in a 'new comparative anthropology'. What they
offer is the possibility of exploring in the same comparative frame English, Inupiaq, Malay, Chinese, Indian, or Malagasy ways of being related without relying on a very specific analytic distinction between biology and culture, and without making strong presuppositions about what constitutes kinship. It is because this distinction has been so central to the analysis of kinship that we may claim, if nothing else, to have placed their similarities and differences in a fresh light.

This is of course not to reveal some finite truth, but to engage in an intellectual process (cf. Strathern and Lambek 1998a: 24). Others will no doubt pursue the implications of this argument further both by subjecting the division between biology and culture to further interrogation, and by suspending other sets of assumptions. There is no truly authentic anthropological modelling of local cultures of relatedness. Nevertheless, our attempt to privilege these cultures of relatedness over classical anthropological versions of what constitutes kinship may also offer new possibilities of understanding how relatedness may be composed of various components – substance, feeding, living together, procreation, emotion – elements which are themselves not necessarily bounded entities but may overflow or contain parts of each other or take new forms. None of these necessarily has priority or a predefined content beyond that given to it by particular people. The only necessary quality to the combination of these elements in particular cultures of relatedness is that they incorporate the capacity to generate new meanings and new experiences of being related.

Notes

1 In a vein similar to my argument here, Marshall argues forcefully for an approach to kinship which 'allows us to view all connections among persons in a single framework so that we might learn what they have in common and what differentiates them' (1977: 649; original italics). His analysis shows how 'created kinship' among the Trukese has the potential to be transformed into biogenetic links, and that what these various forms of kinship have in common is the concept of sharing. It is somewhat unclear at what level he accepts the separation entailed in his proposition that 'Two logical possibilities exist in the realm of kinship that can be developed and elaborated symbolically: natural (biogenetic) links among persons and cultural (creas tics among persons)' (p. 850; original italics; footnote omitted).

2 In the introduction to their volume Bodies and Persons: Comparative Perspectives from Africa and Melanesia, A. Strathern and M. Lambek (1998) note an increasing tendency either to confine comparison to particular regions or to take a very broad selection; they suggest that there has been a decline in works which are devoted to comparison between specific regions (but see Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995).
exploring in the same comparative frame a sese, Indian, or Malagasy ways of being very specific analytic distinction between not making strong presuppositions about is because this distinction has been so hip that we may claim, if nothing else, to differences in a fresh light.

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Introduction: cultures of relatedness

3 It is interesting to note that the chapter headings of two recent British introductory texts – that of Holy (1996) and Parkin (1997) – suggest a view of kinship for the most part unchanged from the way students learnt it in Britain in the 1970s. The subject can seemingly still be encompassed by headings such as ‘the family’, ‘descent’, ‘lineage theory’, ‘marriage’, ‘relationship terminology’, ‘alliance’. But even here there are signs of change. Holy’s final chapter is an extended discussion which focuses on the role of procreation, the meanings of kinship, and the relationship between biology and culture. The work of Schneider and Strathern is central to his discussion (see 1996: 143–73). Holy states, ‘The most significant development in the study of kinship has been the growing awareness of the cultural specificity of what were previously taken to be the natural facts on which all kinship systems were built’ (p. 165).

4 On the vexed relationship between ‘physical’ and ‘social’ kinship, see also J. A. Barnes (1961, 1973); Beattie (1964); Geimer (1957, 1960).

5 Although my argument here focuses on Schneider, it is worth noting that he was only one among a number of anthropologists who subjected the whole idea of kinship as an autonomous system to a sustained critique. Most famously, Needham demonstrated how kinship and its various components – marriage, descent, incest, and terminologies – were so variable as to be no more than ‘odd-job words’ (1971a: 5). However, whereas Schneider’s analysis led him to an iconoclastic position which suggested that the study of kinship should be abandoned, Needham argued for a more moderate move away from empirical generalisations. Advocating a logical analysis employing formal criteria which would allow more rigorous comparison, he noted that such criteria would also make comparison more difficult (1971a: 10–13; 1971b). See also Leach (1961a, b); H. and C. Geertz (1973). Many of the participants in these debates nevertheless continued to write about kinship or teach it to their students.

6 On the relation between science and culture, and nature and culture, see also Rabinow (1996a, b). Rabinow argues that a future effect of the new biotechnologies (such as the mapping of the human genome) will be that instead of culture being modelled on nature, nature will be modelled on culture. ‘Nature will be known and remade through technique and will finally become artificial, just as culture becomes natural.’ This would then provide a basis for overcoming the divide between nature and culture and imply a dissolution of the category of the ‘social’ (1996a: 99). Similarly, in her more recent work, Haraway (1997) writes of an ‘implosion’ between nature and culture. This ‘enterprise-up’ or ‘artificial’ nature ‘still functions as a foundational resource but in an inverted way, that is, through its artificial’ (p. 102). Here it is by being ‘fully artificial’ that nature becomes a resource – for naturalising technoscience (pp. 102–3). See also Hayden’s analysis of the debates around the Human Genome Diversity Project and biodiversity prospecting, in which she pays close attention to the ‘discursive ricochet’ (1996: 197) between ideas of nature and culture.


8 Indeed, the volume derives from a session at the 1992 American Anthro-
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...logical Association meetings which was held in honour of David Schneider and is dedicated to him.

9 J. Goody’s edited collection *The Developmental Cycle in Domestic Groups* (1958) is in some respects an obvious exception. Fortes’s introduction, however, underlined how the very separation between domestic and politico-jural domains implied an analytic hierarchy—the primary significance of the domestic domain lay in its structural role of furnishing and replenishing the politico-jural rather than in the comparative study of domestic life per se.

10 See also Astuti (1998), who argues that a distinction between what is acquired and what is innate is probably a universal cultural phenomenon. She suggests that the Western categories of sex and gender come quite close to the distinction made by the Vezo between aspects of the body which are given (i.e. genitalia) and what is acquired – the appropriate behaviour for men and women. Broch-Due and Rudde (1993: 32) also argue for the retention of the distinction between sex and gender, not as ‘transcendental categories’ but ‘theoretical constructs’ permitting specific comparisons of the way bodies are interpreted and experienced in different cultural contexts (see also Broch-Due 1993; Gay-y-Blasco 1997).

11 See also Marshall (1977: 649), who notes that Trukese ‘created sibling relationships’ are perceived as ‘an improvement on nature’ in that they avoid the tensions and rivalries that exist between consanguineal siblings.

12 Lambek’s (1998) nuanced discussion of the mind/body distinction is relevant here. As he points out (p. 122 n.12), there is a parallel between this and the nature/culture opposition as well as that between sex and gender (see Astuti 1998). Lambek suggests that such widespread dualisms should be understood in terms of ‘incommensurability’. They reveal ‘a common horizon of ideas’ which may reflect universal aspects of human experience. But he also accepts that local versions of these distinctions will fail to make ‘complete contact’ with their Western equivalents. Rather than sinking into relativism, he advocates engaging in fruitful comparison of such ‘alternative formulations’ (p. 111).

13 Ragone demonstrates how invocation of the gift in the context of surrogacy in America accomplishes a number of desired ends from the point of view of the surrogate mother. It negates a perceived cultural image of the surrogate’s interests as primarily commercial, and substitutes motives of generosity and altruism, which are more appropriate to the domain of kinship (1994: 41, 59–60, 71, 85). At the same time, the fact that this gift is described as passing from the surrogate to the adoptive mother serves to draw attention away from the relation between the surrogate and the genetic father, which carries negative connotations of adultery and illegitimacy. Instead, what is emphasised is a relationship of sharing and reciprocity, and even sisterhood between the two women (1994: 124, 125).

14 See Viveiros de Castro (1998) for a virtuoso attempt to subject the divide between nature and culture to a rigorous critique by contrasting Western categories with those which underlie Amazonian cosmologies.