Exercises

1. Keep a diary for a few days about your everyday movements and encounters. Use this to reflect on how you perform your own identity in different places, and how you think your identity is read by others. Are there places that your body will or won't let you go or where you feel 'out of place'? Are you aware of altering your dress, behaviour, and so on because of the disciplining gaze of friends, lecturers, employers, etc or of exercising self-surveillance in different spaces?
2. Drawing on the work of Seamon (1979, see section 2.3.2), with a small group of friends reflect on and discuss the everyday ways your own bodies move through and occupy everyday spaces, and the relationship of your bodies to their surroundings. To what extent do your experiences parallel those of Seamon's students? How might you criticize his work?
3. Collect a range of different women's and men's magazines. How are different bodies represented in these texts? What discourses can you identify? What are the similarities and differences in the way that men and women are encouraged to locate, evaluate and manage their bodies?
4. Spend some time in on-line chatrooms. Write a field diary about your observations as you would if you were conducting participant observation in an off-line space. Think about how people represent themselves, how you choose to construct your own identity, the nature of the social relations in these disembodied spaces, and the relationship between your on-line and off-line worlds.

Essay Titles

1. Critically evaluate Adrienne Rich's (1986) claim that the body is 'the geography closest in'.
2. Using examples, critically assess the role of the mind/body dualism in shaping the way geographical knowledge has been produced.
3. To what extent do you agree with Shilling's (1993) claim that in contemporary affluent societies we have witnessed the unprecedented individualization of the body?
4. Critically evaluate Law's concept of 'embodied built environments'.

ch 3 The home

3.1 The home
3.2 Housing design
3.3 The meanings of home
3.4 Experiences of home
3.5 The moral economy of the household
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3.7 Homelessness

3.1 The home

The home is not just a three-dimensional structure, a shelter, but it is also a matrix of social relations (being particularly valorized as the site of heterosexual family relationships) and has wider symbolic and ideological meanings (for example, during the Second World War symbolic images of home and homeland were used to mobilize support for the war effort). Traditionally, the home has been constructed as a private space in opposition to the public space of the world of work: an understanding articulated in the construction of postwar suburban housing estates in North America and Europe. As such, it is commonly regarded as a safe, loving and positive space.

It is women who traditionally have been charged with the responsibility of making and maintaining the home, hence its characterization as a 'woman's place'. Feminists have challenged the idealization of the home, pointing to some women's experiences of domestic work, violence and oppression within familial homes. In contrast, black feminist writers have extolled the virtues of the home as a site of resistance in the face of white hegemony.

The home is an important site of consumption. When goods are purchased they are domesticated within the specific social relations of individual households who construct personal economies of meaning. Such processes, however, can be the source of domestic conflict. The home is an important site where spatial and temporal boundaries in relation to both domestic space and public space are negotiated and contested between household members. (Even within the home multiple different temporalities

and spatialities are produced: as a crude example, a child's bedroom can be produced as a very different space from the 'family' living room or the adults' study.)

All estimates suggest that homelessness is a growing social problem, which has been attributed to global processes of economic restructuring, national welfare reforms and individualization. However, there are many different definitions of homelessness, some of which recognize that there is a continuum between being homed and homeless. Empirical work suggests that the so-called 'homeless' create relationships, social networks and appropriate spaces which take on many of the meanings of home which the homed attribute to conventional forms of housing.

This chapter explores each of these themes. It begins by evaluating feminist work which argued that housing designs articulate assumptions about gender roles and relations. It then goes onto explore the literature on the meanings of home, which tends to emphasize it as an ideal location. This is contrasted with diverse accounts of actual experiences of the home as a site of work, as a site of violence, as a site of resistance and as a site of non-heterosexual relationships. The focus then switches to the moral economy of the household and to the way that multiple spatialities and temporalities are negotiated within and beyond the home by household members. The final section explores the causes and experiences of homelessness.

In addition to the understandings of home outlined in this chapter, there are other conceptualizations of home which are addressed in different chapters. Institutional 'homes' such as prisons and asylums are the subject of Chapter 5. The notion of being 'at home', which captures a sense of belonging, identity and rootedness, is not only experienced at the scale of the individual home but also at the scale of the nation. The homeland often has particular importance for diasporic communities, who maintain emotional and physical connections with their countries of origin. This notion, and the sense of displacement and alienation which is experienced by some refugees and migrants who are forced to leave their homes as a result of violence and persecution, are explored in Chapter 9.

■ 3.2 Housing design

We tend to take houses for granted, yet they are not merely neutral containers for our social relationships. They are designed and built by people and are thus the outcome of the society that produced them. In the 1970s and 1980s feminist architects, planners and geographers (Werkele *et al.* 1980, Hayden 1984, Matrix 1984, Women and Geography Study Group 1984) argued that the physical form of housing could literally be read as a map of the social structures and values which produced it. As Jos Boys (1984: 25) wrote at this time, 'Architecture seems to make a physical representation of social relations in the way it organises people in space. It does this both symbolically – through imagery and "appropriateness of place" for a particular activity [and person] – and in reality – through physical boundaries and the spatial relationships made between activities.'

In particular, feminist writers observed that housing designs contained ideas about the proper 'place' of women. They therefore suggested that because the built environment could embody meanings – for example, about what is 'private' and what is 'public' activity and for whom, and what behaviour is appropriate for men and women in particular locations – it could be restrictive, especially for women. In this way, feminist academics argued that the built environment contributed towards perpetuating the **patriarchal** society that produced it.

The following subsections look at some of this work and the criticisms made of it. Although it has been attacked for being simplistic and environmentally deterministic, questions about the relationship between society and space are still important because the buildings and cities we live in are instrumental in shaping our everyday experiences.

■ 3.2.1 Gender and the built environment

Before the development of industrial capitalism in Europe commodity **production** (e.g. weaving, baking, farming) and reproduction (child rearing) took place in the same sphere. There was not the same level of separation of activities into different spaces – home and work – as there is today. Rather, people lived more communal lifestyles. An average household would include not only immediate kin such as parents and children but also other relatives, servants and apprentices. According to a group of feminist designers known as Matrix (1984), this form of social relations was evident in the design and layout of houses at this time. These were basic structures that accommodated reproductive activities such as eating, sleeping, and cooking as well as tasks associated with production and trading.

With the development of industrial capitalism there was a separation of activities, with production increasingly taking place in large-scale factories, and reproduction being removed from the communal sphere of the village and relegated to the private sphere of the home. At the same time the meanings attached to family and home, and to men's and women's roles, also changed (McDowell 1983). Families in pre-industrial societies were not very child-oriented; instead, most acted like small businesses with all members, including children, working in order to contribute to the household economy (England 1991). When production moved out of the home into the workplace the house became a private place for the family – in other words, a home. Whereas before, cooking, childcare, cleaning, and so on had been done on a collective basis, this communal style of living broke down and families became emotionally and physically more enclosed or privatized. This definition of 'home' as a place separate from employment devalued the unpaid work done within it, precisely because it was not paid.

Women's roles also changed. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries women had participated in commercial life; with the privatization of the family and the separation of home and work a new ideology of gender difference emerged. A key element

of this was the 'cult of true womanhood'. Women were perceived as having the sort of emotional qualities necessary to nurture families and run the house (i.e. gentle, mild, passive), whereas men were seen as fiery, active, aggressive and so more suited to the public world of work. Soon the idea that a mother/wife was necessary for the healthy functioning of the family home became an accepted 'norm' (England 1991). Women were regarded as responsible for the upkeep of the house, the emotional wellbeing of the family and reproducing the paid labour force (Bowlby *et al.* 1982). This quote comes from a mid-nineteenth-century engineer: 'Among the working class the wife makes the home . . . The working man's wife is also his housekeeper, cook and several other single domestics rolled into one; and on her being a managing or mismanaging woman depends whether a dwelling will be a home proper, or a house which is not a home' (engineer 1868, cited in Cockburn 1983: 34).

By the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, this privatization of family life and women was articulated in changes in the built environment. On a city scale residential areas developed along road and railway lines, allowing men to travel into the city to the workplace, leaving women and children in residential suburbs in the urban fringe. In other words, the built environment became characterized by a divide between specialist areas of reproduction: the suburbs, and production in the centre of cities. During this time having a non-working wife at home became a hallmark of respectability in upper- and middle-class households. While many low-income, working-class and immigrant women have always been engaged in paid employment outside the home, such households also began to aspire to replicate upper- and middle-class gender ideology (England 1991). The Second World War brought a breakdown in many class divisions and a collapse of divisions between middle- and working-class women (e.g. with the decline in numbers of domestic servants, middle-class women became responsible for the domestic tasks previously carried out by them), leading to the emergence of the classless 'housewife' (Ravetz 1989).

Assumptions about gender roles were articulated in the design and layout of houses built immediately after the Second World (Roberts 1991). One of the major ideals of wartime social policy had been to preserve and protect the sanctity of family life. After the war nuclear families became prioritized over all other household types. Planners in both the UK and the USA took what was called a *pro-natalist* approach to housing design. They were concerned about falling birth rates and argued that improved family housing would persuade more women to have children and remove temptations for them to work outside the home. Lewis Mumford wrote (1945: 9):

> . . . the first consideration of town planning must be to provide an urban environment and an urban mode of life which will not be hostile to biological survival: rather to create one in which processes of life and growth will be so normal to that life, so visible, that by sympathetic magic it will encourage in women of child-bearing age the impulse to bear and rear children, as an essential attribute of their humanness, quite as interesting in all its possibilities as the most glamorous success in an office or factory.

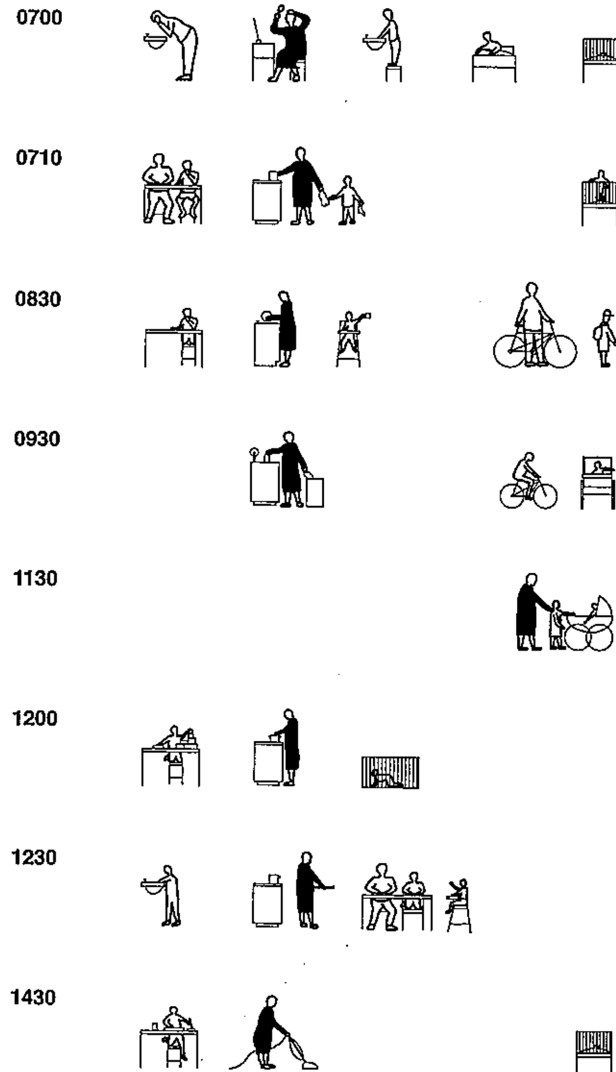
With rising standards of housing after the war also came rising standards of housework. Consumer durables such as washing machines and vacuum cleaners became commonplace. In particular, the development of open-plan houses began to erode traditional divisions between formal and informal space so that women were expected to keep a much larger space clean and tidy for 'show' (Matrix 1984). Domestic ideology was such that housework became understood not just as a set of chores but as a moral undertaking. A woman's moral status could be read from the way she managed her house and, by implication, her family too (Roberts 1991). A dirty home was equated with slovenliness, while cleanliness was equated with goodness. This ideology placed a heavy burden on women, as this statement from Mackintosh illustrates. 'The house is inseparable from the housewife. If it becomes dilapidated it becomes the wheel on which the housewife is broken' (Mackintosh 1952: 110, cited in Roberts 1991: 93).

Despite significant social changes in subsequent decades, the text of the UK housing manual *Housing the Family*, with which all state and most private houses were supposed to comply in the 1970s and early 1980s, continued to reflect and reproduce this ideology about men's and women's roles, and the relationship of space and design to these roles. As the time-space diagram of Mr and Mrs Average and their children (see Figure 3.1) taken from the manual shows, the design guide continued to presume a separation of productive and reproductive activities. It was taken for granted that men spent most of the day in paid employment outside the home: for them the home was understood to be a place of comfort and rest, while for women the home was still assumed to be a place of work in the form of childcare and domestic chores (Matrix 1984).

Similar conservative assumptions about family structure and roles for women were codified and enforced in the designs for the planned suburbs called Greenbelt Towns which were built in the USA from the 1930s onwards (Wagner 1984). The planners assumed that the husband would commute to work, while illustrations in the Resettlement Administration pamphlets showed women engaged in domestic tasks. One caption read: 'Housewives in Greenbelt towns will enjoy complete, airy kitchens, fitted with modern and durable but inexpensive equipment. In the nearby allotment gardens, the housewife can raise her own fruits and vegetables if she wishes' (cited in Wagner 1984: 37). Some of the leases even went so far as to prohibit women from working outside the home and to ban women from using the home for any trade or work without the written permission of the government (Wagner 1984).

In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries the growth in the numbers of women engaged in paid work outside the home, and the emergence of more female-headed households, have led to a contradiction between the urban spatial form and contemporary gender roles and relations (England 1991). Studies suggest that when women are in paid employment they continue to do the lion's share of domestic work and childcare. In trying to juggle these dual roles, woman confront spatial constraints in terms of a lack of affordable childcare in accessible locations and poor public transport, which inhibit their employment opportunities outside the home (Tivers

Figure 3.1 Mr/Mrs Average and their children. Redrawn from *Matrix* (1984), Pluto Press, London



1985). As a result, feminist geographers have argued, the built environment with its dichotomous assumptions about home and work has become dysfunctional for suburban women with multiple roles, and indeed that it never worked for those who were single, lone parents, elderly, or who wanted to live in other household

arrangements (MacKenzie 1984, England 1991). It is a critique shared by the disabled, who point to the 'ableist' assumptions of the design professions and the consequent lack of affordable housing that is built to meet the needs of people with physical impairments (see Imrie 1996, Gathorne-Hardy 1999).

The emphasis within housing design on the stereotype of the nuclear family – which physically represents and reinforces the cultural norm of the reproductive, monogamous heterosexual unit – assumes and reproduces a privatized form of family life in which all tasks such as cooking, eating and childcare are contained within the home. There is a rich history, however, of academics speculating or theorizing about alternative ways of living and of organizing society that transcend the traditional divisions and limitations of home and workplace. For feminist planners and architects this has taken the form of considering what non-sexist housing and non-sexist cities might look like.

Dolores Hayden (1980) makes an argument for designing and building private housing grouped around collective spaces and activity centres (including kitchens, food co-operatives, allotments, childcare and home help services) that would unite housing, services and jobs in one environment and enable food preparation and childcare to be undertaken collectively. She calls for the establishment of a campaign: Homemakers Organisation for a More Egalitarian Society (HOMES) to transform housing and residential neighbourhoods. Her programme to achieve change is based on involving men and women in the unpaid labour associated with housekeeping and childcare on an equal basis; eliminating residential segregation by class, age and race; eliminating all state programmes and laws that offer implicit or explicit reinforcement of the unpaid role of the female homemaker; minimizing unpaid domestic labour and maximizing choices for households concerning recreation and sociability.

While Hayden's (1980) design is an idealized vision, others have tried to put their ideas into practice. In the 1980s a group of ten professionals in Sweden, who named themselves *Bo i gemenskap* (BIG) (which translates as Live In Community), set out to create a housing model for themselves that would combine privacy and community while also being both practical and desirable. They established what they termed co-housing (rather than collective housing), in which residents have their own private flats but share some common facilities. The intention was that, by sharing some space, equipment and tasks, the residents would be able to maximize their personal, economic and spatial resources and so get 'more for less'. The first BIG project, a converted multi-storey house called Stacken ('ant hill') just outside Gothenberg, was followed by 40–50 similar houses built across Sweden (Sangregorio 1998).

3.2.2 Critiques of work on gender and housing

Studies of gender, housing design and the spatial structure of the city played an important part in the development of feminist geography in the 1980s. In particular, by highlighting the social construction of the public as male and the private as female,

and by demonstrating how the home has been regarded as the primary space of women's identification and work as the primary space of men's identification, feminist work has shown how these binary categories have played a part in defining women as secondary and as other in relation to men. In so doing, this feminist writing laid the groundwork for the challenging of dualistic (male/female, public/private, home/work) ways of thinking and the collapsing of these boundaries. However, these studies of gender, housing design and the spatial structure of the city have also been criticized for a number of reasons:

- Much of this writing was based on the misconception that the built environment is a simple metaphor for the society that produced it. Jos Boys (1998) recognizes this failing in her own early work and acknowledges that feminists in the early 1980s often failed to think closely enough about who has access to, and control over how meanings about gender and the built environment are made, and about the mechanisms of translation through which society is articulated in space.
- The work generally assumed uniform approaches to housing design, ignoring the fact that architectural knowledges, and positions within and between architects and builders about 'appropriate' socio-spatial concepts, are contested (Boys 1998).
- It often came close to being environmentally determinist in the way that it cast women as the passive victims of housing designs and urban spatial structures produced by architects, planners, property developers and the State (England 1991). In doing so, it oversimplified complex relationships between society and space, failing to recognize that material environments are physically realized in different ways by different residents or 'consumers' and that confusions about designs, unintended uses, and transgressions therefore often arise. It also underplayed the role of women in actively contesting and transforming housing and the spatial structure of the city. For example, women have set up neighbourhood self-help networks (Genovese 1981 and Stamp 1980) and developed alternative housing and ways of living (Ettore 1978, Holcomb 1986).
- In focusing on male–female and public–private dichotomies, feminist work has also treated men and women as homogeneous groups, ignoring the ways that gender identities are cross-cut by other social identities. Most notably, the research tended to focus on traditional heterosexual, white nuclear family households, thereby overlooking the fact that other social groups (such as lesbians and gay men, women gentrifiers, low-income female-headed households, and so on) may have had different living arrangements, experiences of, and relationships with, their spatial settings.

Despite these criticisms, geographers should not abandon thinking about the relationship between society, housing design and the spatial structure of the urban environment altogether. As Boys (1998: 217) explains, 'while architecture does not "reflect" society, and is only partially shaped by our continuing and contested struggles for identity, the buildings and cities we inhabit remain deeply implicated in shaping our everyday experiences'.

Summary

- In the 1970s–1980s some academics claimed that the physical form of housing could literally be read as a map of the social structures and values which had produced it.
- Feminist writers argued that housing designs and the spatial structure of the city contained ideas about the proper 'place' of women and therefore that the built environment contributed towards perpetuating the patriarchal society that produced it.
- This work has been credited with exposing how binary categories – male/female, public/private, home/work – have played a part in defining women as secondary and as other in relation to men, and with challenging these dualistic ways of thinking.
- There is a rich history of academics speculating about alternative ways of living and what a non-sexist city might look like.
- However, studies of gender, housing design and the spatial structure of the city have also been criticized as simplistic and deterministic.

3.3 The meanings of home

The home is not only a physical location but also a matrix of social relations. It is the location where our routine everyday lives are played out. Not surprisingly, our homes – perhaps more than any other geographical locations – have strong claims on our time, resources and emotions. Stretton (1976: 183, cited in Saunders 1989: 177) explains:

> In affluent societies (as in most others) much more than half of all waking time is spent at home or near it. More than a third of capital is invested there. More than one third of all work is done there. Depending on what you choose to count as goods, some high proportion of all goods are produced there and even more are enjoyed there. More than three quarters of all sustenance, social life, leisure and recreation happen there. Above all, people are produced there and endowed with the values and capacities which will determine most of the quality of their social life and government away from home.

Box 3.1: Meanings of home

'I can dress how I like and do what I like. The kids always brought home who they liked. It's not like other people's places where you have to take your shoes off when you go in.'

Retired man

'To feel at home – you never call it your house, it's your home. It's the way you build it up and the people who live in it... It's the house you build together. A home isn't the bricks and mortar, it's the love that's in it.

Female home owner

'If I bought my own house I think I'd feel it actually belongs to me; whereas with a council house you walk along a row of little boxes until you come to a little box that's yours.'

Male semi-skilled manual worker, council tenant

'When you own you can do a lot more with it, make it more homely because its yours. You don't bother too much when it's rented.'

Female, semi-skilled manual worker, council tenant

'Home relates to happiness, not bricks and mortar. As a house this is very plain – a box – but we've had so much happiness here. And sentiment. It's familiarity with the surroundings I suppose.'

Female, retired clerical worker, home owner

'The things around you become part of you – you grow with them... Home to me is a sanctuary – somewhere you can shut the world out.'

Male, skilled manual worker, owner occupier
Cited in Saunders 1989: 180–7

The home is endowed with powerful meanings, of which Peter Sommerville (1992) identifies seven (see Box 3.1):

- *Shelter*: home is a material structure that provides physical security and protection from the elements.
- *Hearth*: home provides a sense of warmth, relaxation, comfort and a welcoming atmosphere for visitors.
- *Heart*: home is based on relations of mutual support and affection – it is a site of love, emotion, happiness and stability.
- *Privacy*: 'Being in a private place is a central part of what it means to be "at home"' (Allan and Crow 1989: 4). This involves the power to control who can enter the house. Fences, hedges, spyholes, gates, and alarms all create boundaries between the home and the outside world. Legal statues also govern rights of entry and exclusion. Who an occupier allows into the house, and which rooms they are invited into is a signal of the closeness of their relationship with the visitor. Some people are only invited in as part of planned visits, whereas close friends may 'pop in' spontaneously. While some houses may be quite open locations (with friends and neighbours welcome to come and go), others are more spatially closed off or privatized locations (Valentine 1999a). Linked to the notion of privacy is also the concept of privatism. Saunders and Williams (1988) define this as home-centredness. They argue that increased domestic consumption and the commodification of the private sphere (television, the Internet, home shopping, takeaway foods, etc) are leading people to withdraw from public life into the home and that one consequence of this home-centredness is that the streets are becoming more dangerous (see Chapter 6).
- *Roots*: home can be a source of identity and meaningfulness. It helps to reduce our sense of alienation from the mass of society. It is somewhere we feel we belong, and to which we return. Indeed, the home often becomes a symbol of the self. Domestic decor and conspicuous consumption are just some of the ways we can articulate and communicate our sense of identity (see Plate 3.1).
- *Abode*: this meaning can refer to anywhere you happen to stay. It does not have to be a house as we conventionally define it, but could be a tent or a park bench. In this sense, home is nothing but a spatial location, one that does not even have to be fixed. It is merely a place for sleep and rest.
- *Paradise*: this is the idealization of all the positive features of home fused together (a sort of spiritual bliss). In this sense, the home is an ideological construct created from people's emotionally charged experiences of where they happen to live, have lived or want to live again. Indeed, people who are homeless may value this meaning of home, despite the fact that the material underpinnings for it have disappeared, finding new ways of defining 'home' on the streets. In contrast, some people who have a physical house do not consider it to be 'home'. Sommerville (1992) therefore argues that rooflessness rather than homelessness is a more accurate way of describing the reality of having no physical house.

3.3.1 Tenure, lifecourse and the meanings of home

In some respects the meanings of home are independent of tenure but in others they are predicated upon it. Peter Saunders (1989) argues that tenants are more likely to live in one neighbourhood for longer than owner occupiers and so their sense of

Plate 3.1 Domestic decor and conspicuous consumption are some of the ways we articulate our sense of identity within the home (© Becky Ellis)

'home' is often bound up with the neighbourhood 'community'. In contrast, owner occupiers' perceptions of 'home' are often unrelated to their sense of belonging in the locality because there is a much higher turnover of privately owned houses, particularly on suburban estates, as people move up the housing chain (see Chapter 4).

Owner occupiers are more likely to equate the 'home' with the personal possessions which fill it and to see the home as a place where they can go and relax and enjoy home comforts. The greater powers they have than tenants to choose where they live and shape the design, layout and decor of the home means that home owners more readily associate it as a place where they can relax and be themselves; they are more strongly attached than tenants to the houses in which they live; and they get satisfaction and pleasure from working on their homes. In other words, home ownership contributes to a sense of personal autonomy and ontological security. However, this can sometimes be offset by fears about keeping up mortgage payments and about the costs of maintaining a property and its interior (Saunders 1989).

Although tenants can be more carefree about how they treat a house because they do not own it, Saunders (1989) found that local authority tenants often voiced sentiments of alienation from their houses by denying responsibility for them or by complaining that any improvements they made would only benefit the owners (in this case the local authority) rather than themselves.

At different points in the lifecourse the meaning of home can change. People redefine their own space differently as their relationships, family, work and interests develop and they accumulate more personal possessions. Notably, the importance of 'home' increases as people get older and become more home-centred or, in some cases, 'housebound'. Older people tend to be more concerned about the use or quality of their house rather than its monetary value, regarding it as permanent home, whereas for young people the home can be just a commodity, a trading-up point in a housing career trajectory. Saunders' (1989) work suggests that people's desire and willingness to move house declines drastically after the age of 45. His survey found that about 50 per cent of those aged under 45 said they planned to move in the near future, compared with only 15 per cent of those over 65. Over 80 per cent of those of retirement age said that they felt attached to their house and did not want to leave it. For older people the home often becomes a place where they have put down roots, it is an embodiment of the past, somewhere in which they have invested emotionally as well as financially. For example, particular rooms or features in the garden have meanings because they are associated with memories of children who have now grown up and left the family home (see also Chapter 2, section 2.7.2).

In view of this, the elderly often strongly resist having to enter institutional residential care, fearing that they will lose their sense of roots, identity, control and privacy: ' "being in a home", where they may feel "at home" but not "in *my own* home" ' (Hugman 1999: 198, emphasis in the source). Instead, the preferred option is often what is known as 'home care' in countries such as France and Canada or 'community' care in the UK and New Zealand (Hugman 1999), where family members and/or or professionals provide support services within the home. While the recipients of this form of care may still lose some degree of control over, and privacy within, the space of the home, in contrast to those who live in institutions (see Chapter 5), they are at least still able to retain a sense of individuality, normality, belonging and identity by remaining 'at home' (in both senses of the word: location and emotion) (Hugman 1999).

Summary

- The home is more than a physical location; it is also a location which is imbued with meaning.
- The home has multiple meanings. These involve variable distinctions between ideals and reality.
- The meanings of home are (re)produced and experienced differently according to tenure and age.

3.4 Experiences of home

A common theme underlying many of the meanings of home outlined above is the notion that it is a positive place – a sentiment epitomized by popular sayings that the home is 'a haven' or 'a castle'. However, people's actual experiences of home do not always accord with its idealized meanings. The home is not only an enabling social and physical location, it can also be a constraining one; thus, the meanings of home may vary between individuals within homes and between different households.

3.4.1 Home as a site of work

After the Second World War, British and North American governments were concerned about falling birth rates and about the problem of finding work for returning soldiers. One solution was to try to persuade women, many of whom had played an active part in the war filling traditionally male roles such as working in munitions factories and on farms, to return to the home and have children (see also section 3.2.1). This domestic ideology was actively promoted through television, radio and the print media (see Figure 3.2). Cover lines from 1950s American women's magazines included: *Femininity Begins at Home*; *Have Babies While You are Young*; *How to Snare a Male*; *Training Your Daughter to be a Wife*; and *Cooking to Me is Poetry*. Inside, the magazines featured stories of women renouncing their jobs to become homemakers.

In 1963, Betty Friedan wrote a ground-breaking book that became an international bestseller and inspired what is known as the second wave of feminism (the first wave being the suffragette movement of the turn of the century). Her book begins:

> If a woman had a problem in the 1950s and 1960s she knew that something must be wrong with her marriage or herself. Other women were satisfied with their lives, she thought. What kind of woman was she, if she did not feel this mysterious fulfilment waxing the kitchen floor? She was so ashamed to admit her dissatisfaction that she never knew how many other women shared it. But on an April morning in 1959 I heard a mother of four having coffee with four other mothers in a suburban development, say in a tone of quiet desperation: the problem (Friedan 1963: 1)

'The problem' which Friedan (1963) outlined was the sense of alienation, loneliness, boredom and oppression that she identified women as experiencing at home. She quotes one women who explains:

> I'm desperate. I begin to feel I have no personality. I'm a server of food and a putter-on of pants and a bedmaker, somebody who can be called on when you want something. But who am I?

Friedan's book ruptured the 1950s and 1960s imagery of the 'happy housewife'. In the late 1970s and early 1980s white Anglo-American feminists challenged the

Figure 3.2 Domestic ideologies were evident in advertising and the media

Artwork from The Advertising Archives

notion of home as a haven or hearth (Davidoff *et al.* 1979), arguing that 'for women in their domestic role, the ideal single-family home has always been primarily a workplace for their reproductive work, and often a very oppressive and isolating one at that' (MacKenzie and Rose 1983: 159). In particular, socialist feminists argued that, by giving birth to future workers and feeding, clothing and servicing the labour force, women maintained and reproduced the capitalist system both ideologically and materially (Dalla Costa and James 1975). They criticized the domestic ideologies that said 'women belonged at home', arguing that the value of women's invisible labour should be recognized by paying women a wage for their housework.

Other feminists saw this 'wages for housework campaign' as merely reinforcing women's role as domestic workers. They claimed that if this campaign was successful, although working in the home would become a paid occupation, women would still

be seen as 'naturally' domestic and home-loving. In their view, a wage for housework would not in itself challenge the ideology that constructed women as belonging at home and as being the primary homemaker. Instead, it was argued that a wage for housework would merely lock women into this domestic role. Rather, the problem was understood to lie with the ideal of the single-family home as a location divorced from the workplace (see section 3.2.1). Much emphasis was put on getting women into paid employment outside the home and in looking at radical ways of redesigning housing so that domestic labour could be shared by men and women on a collective basis (see section 3.2.1).

Contrary to this work by feminists, a number of studies have suggested that many women are untroubled by domestic inequalities, do not feel any more tied to the home than men, and identify it in equally positive terms (Saunders 1989, Baxter and Western 1998). This may be because the emotional meanings people attach to the home are divorced from what they actually do in the home. It also reflects the expansion in the participation of women in the paid labour market in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries (Holloway 1999). As a result, 'the home is no longer the primary space identified with women but rather one space amongst many, a situation which has contributed to the multiple, frequently contradictory nature of women's identifications' (Gregson and Lowe 1995: 227).

Domestic tasks in middle-class households are increasingly being performed by a combination of waged and unwaged labour. For example, middle-class households (especially where both partners are in full-time paid employment) can afford to buy in help with domestic chores such as cleaning, the laundry and childcare (Gregson and Lowe 1995). However, although middle-class women may no longer have do the domestic chores themselves, this work is still being done in the home by other women.

The absence of affordable collective day-care facilities for the under-fives in the UK means that parents usually have a choice between a nanny who comes into the parental home to care for the child, or a child minder who looks after children within her own home. Nicky Gregson and Michelle Lowe's (1995) research found that, given this choice, most mothers preferred to employ a nanny because she would work in the parental home. They explain that the home was repeatedly cited as 'the *best place* to care for young children whilst the nanny (by virtue of her location within the parental home) was presented . . . as the closet approximation to maternal care and therefore as the *best substitute* for this maternal care' (Gregson and Lowe 1995: 230).

Thus, despite changes in women's economic position, the parental home is still regarded as a safe haven for children, and the home remains unchallenged as the space for mothering. Rather than rejecting the role of 'homemaker' or 'mother' in favour of that of 'professional worker', women in paid employment are attempting to juggle these identities. For the middle classes in contemporary Britain, traditional cultures of domesticity (such as maintaining a clean and tidy home) and motherhood are still important and part and parcel of homemaking; they merely recast and reproduce these ideologies by employing waged domestic labour to do this work for them (Gregson and Lowe 1995).

This leads on to a further criticism of those meanings of home which valorize it as place of relaxation and comfort and which implicitly conceptualize it as a separate and distinct time-space from the workplace, for as the Gregson and Lowe paper implies, the home may be a site of paid work as well as of unpaid domestic labour. In a study of Appalachia, West Virginia, USA, Anne Oberhauser (1995) observes that the loss of traditional male jobs in manufacturing and mining has led to a growth not only in female employment in low-skilled, part-time work but also in home-work. This involves the home-based production of goods and services (such as sewing piecework, knitting, weaving, telephone sales, catalogue marketing, hairdressing, secretarial work, pet care, and so on) that are sold in both the formal and informal sectors.

The use of the home as a workplace can cause conflict between family members over the control and use of domestic space (see also section 3.5). Oberhauser (1995) points out that home-work is often not regarded by other people as 'real work' because it is located in the home and often draws on domestic skills (such as sewing). As such, it is generally seen as an extension of domestic work rather than as paid work. Family and friends also tend to think that because the worker is 'at home' they can interrupt them in a way they would not disturb someone who was working in an office or a factory.

Even where paid work is performed outside the home, work can still invade the porous space of the home (see also Chapter 5). This is demonstrated by Doreen Massey's (1998a) study of men employed in the high-technology sector in Cambridge, UK. The men she interviewed were all dedicated to their work. They placed a strong emphasis on responding to their customers' needs, even if this meant working late or taking telephone calls at home in the middle of the night. To succeed in a labour market where the workplace culture glorified long hours, the employees recognized the need to work long and flexible hours and many of them were happy to do because they loved their jobs. This commitment and one-way temporal flexibility meant that the priorities and pre-occupations of the workplace intruded into their homes far more than the other way round. PCs, modems, faxes, and so on all allowed work to literally spatially invade the home. The men's partners and children also complained that even when they were physically present in the home their minds were often 'at work'. The men too cited examples of getting up in the middle of the night to work on a problem and being unable to switch off their minds, even in the bath. Although some individual employees did try to resist the way work polluted the home – for example, by staying late in the office rather than taking work into the domestic environment – they were also aware this might hinder their careers.

Men who participated in Glendon Smith and Hilary Winchester's (1998) research in Newcastle, Australia, also commented on how the demands of the workplace in terms of long hours and stress affected home and family life. While they attempted to share domestic work and childcare, it was their partners who bore the burden of these responsibilities. Again, there was a great asymmetry of power between the two spaces of home and work. All the negotiation and compromise around

the tensions between competing commitments and temporal flexibility took place in domestic space rather than the workspace.

However, this is not to suggest that the workplace is always the dominant location. It is often assumed that it is paid employment which determines where individuals/households decide to live. Studies of the job search process, for example, often presuppose that individuals will move home in the pursuit of suitable employment. Yet Susan Hanson and Gerry Pratt's (1988) research shows that the home can affect individuals' decisions about whether to work outside the home, the hours they work and the type of work they do. For many people the home is regarded as the fixed point from which they look for work. This immobility can affect what employment they seek and where they work. Likewise, employees' private lives can also intrude into the workplace and contribute to shaping workplace culture and identities (see Chapter 5).

To summarize this section, some of the positive meanings of home (such as hearth) are predicated on an assumption that home and work are separate spaces in which the home is conceptualized as a space of relaxation and pleasure that is located in opposition to the responsibilities and stress of paid employment in the workplace. However, the range of examples cited in this section, including women's unpaid domestic work, waged domestic labour, home-working, paid work invading the home, and the impact of residential location on paid work all demonstrate that home and work are not distinct time-spaces but rather are mutually constituted. These examples challenge binary ways of thinking (work/home, public/private, paid/unpaid, responsibility/relaxation, stress/pleasure) and emphasize the need for geographers to collapse these boundaries and to think more in terms of home/work interdependencies.

3.4.2 Home as a site of violence

Privacy is often identified as a positive meaning of home, yet privacy is not always experienced positively. The elderly can experience it as loneliness, non-working mothers often suffer from lack of contact, and the veil of privacy can also hide abusive domestic relations within households. While the home is generally regarded as a safe haven in a dangerous and heartless world, for those who experience domestic violence this is a paradox. As Elizabeth Wilson (1983) says, 'the place to which most people run to get away from fear and violence can be, for women, the context of "the most frightening violence of all"'.

Although men are occasionally subject to domestic abuse (and it occurs in same-sex relationships too), most statistics show that it is usually women who are the victims and men the perpetrators. Research in the UK suggests that between one and two women are murdered by their male partners each week and that more than a quarter of all violent crime reported to the police is domestic violence. This makes domestic abuse the second most common violent crime in the UK. In London alone, around 100,000 women a year seek medical treatment for violent injuries sustained at home (URL 1). A similar pattern is evident in the USA. The New York City Police Department receives over 200,000 calls per annum about family disputes. Surveys suggest that 7 per cent of US women who are married or living with a partner are subject to physical abuse, 37 per cent are verbally and emotionally abused, and as many as one in three Americans have witnessed an incident of domestic violence (URL 2).

But despite these attempts to quantify domestic violence, the real extent of abuse is largely unknown. As Smith (1989: 6) argues, 'By its intrinsic nature, domestic violence is an elusive research topic: it takes place behind closed doors; is concealed from the public eye; and is often unknown to anyone outside the immediate family.' The general understanding amongst academics and the police is that figures for domestic abuse are almost certainly underestimates. It is thought that the figure for domestic violence may be greater than that for any other crime (Smith 1989).

Qualitative research shows that this violence includes a broad range of forms of abuse which vary in their nature and severity from bruising and cuts, to rape and broken bones (see Box 3.2). In addition to physical injuries, it is common for women, and children witnessing the abuse, to suffer psychological damage, including depression and panic attacks (Stanko 1985).

Dobash and Dobash (1992) argue that two of the main sources of conflict leading to violent attacks are men's expectations concerning women's domestic work in the home and men's belief in their right to punish women for perceived wrongdoing. This logic is also sometimes apparent in the responses of the police and courts

Box 3.2: Three experiences of domestic violence

'I have had ten stitches, three stitches, five stitches, seven stitches where he has cut me. I have had a knife stuck through my stomach; I have had a poker put through my face; I have no teeth where he knocked them all out; I have been burnt with red hot pokers; I have had red hot coals slung over me; I have been sprayed with petrol and stood there while he has flicked lighted matches at me. But I had to stay there because I could not get out. He has told me to get out. Yet if I had stood up I know what would have happened to me. I would have gotten knocked down again.'

'I don't know. I kept thinking he was changing, you know, change for the better ... He's bound to change. Then I used to think it's my blame and I used to lie awake at night wondering if it is my blame – You know, I used to blame myself all the time.'

'I went to my parents and of course he came – I left him because of his hitting and kicking me – I went home to them, but he came there and I had to go. I went back really to keep the peace because my parents weren't able to cope with it.'

Cited in Stanko 1985: 51, 55–6, 58

to cases of domestic violence where women have effectively been put on trial over their ability to look after the house and produce a good home (Edwards 1987). This shows the strength and persistence of ideologies about women's place in the home and domesticity. The ideology that only 'bad' or failed women get hurt is, according to Elizabeth Stanko (1985), one of the reasons why many women are to ashamed to report domestic violence to the police, as well as their concern that the police and judicial system will not be sympathetic to them or able to act effectively.

The traditional binary distinction between public and private space has also contributed to the reluctance of the police to respond to domestic incidents. The public world has been seen as the legitimate arena for intervention by the police, while the home has been regarded as the domain of the family. The relationships within it have therefore been understood to be private, voluntary and non-compulsory and so to be beyond the legitimate control of the state. Hence the popular saying 'a man's home is his castle'. Indeed, when women are subject to abuse most turn in the first instance to their extended family for help rather than to the police (Smith 1989). One tactic employed by Women's AID (an urban social movement established to support women who experience domestic violence) in response to the ineffectiveness of the state at dealing with domestic violence has been to establish alternative 'private' spaces in the form of refuges and safe houses to help women escape from dangerous homes.

3.4.3 Home as a site of resistance

> When I was a young girl the journey across town to my grandmother's house was one of the most intriguing experiences . . . I remember this journey not just because of the stories I would hear. It was a movement away from the segregated blackness of our community into a poor white neighbourhood. I remember the fear, being scared to walk to our grandmother's house because we would have had to pass that terrifying whiteness – those white faces on the porches staring down with hate. Even when empty or vacant, those porches seemed to say 'danger', 'you do not belong here', 'you are not safe'. Oh! that feeling of safety, of arrival, of homecoming when we finally reached the edges of her yard, when we could see the soot black face of our grandfather, Daddy Gus, sitting in his chair on the porch, smell his cigar, and rest on his lap. Such a contrast, that feeling of arrival, of homecoming, this sweetness and the bitterness of that journey, that constant reminder of white power and control (hooks 1991: 41).

bell hooks uses this recollection of her childhood as a springboard to describe how black women have constructed the home as a space of care and nurture in the face of the brutal reality of racist oppression. She claims that 'historically, African-American people believed that the construction of a homeplace, however fragile and tenuous (the slave hut, the wooden shack), had a radical political dimension' (hooks 1991: 42). It was the one site where black people could achieve the dignity and strength which they were refused in the public realm.

For black women, making a homeplace was not just a matter of creating a comfortable domestic environment, it was about the construction of a safe place where black people could affirm their identity, a space where they could be free from white racism and a site for forming political solidarity and organizing resistance. hooks writes (1991: 42): 'We could not learn to love or respect ourselves in the culture of white supremacy, on the outside; it was there on the inside, in that "homeplace" most often created and kept by black women, that we had the opportunity to grow and develop to nurture our spirits.' She further claims that, without the space to construct a homeplace, black men and women cannot build a 'meaningful community of resistance' (hooks 1991: 47).

Her argument is supported by other black writers. Patricia Hill Collins (1990) points out that the terms 'public' and 'private' have different meanings to African Americans than to white Americans. Private is not always just equivalent to the domestic home, it can also refer to black community spaces that are beyond the reach of white people. For example, mothering in a black community might often involve 'other mothers' in the community as well as blood mothers. In this way, private space can be a resource for black women rather than a burden. Thus Hill Collins (1990) argues that the notion of everyday domestic oppression suffered by 'housewives' isolated in the home (see section 3.4.1) is a problem specific to white women.

In this way black writers have exposed the universalism of 1970s feminism and its assumptions that white middle-class women's experiences of the home could stand in for all women's experiences of this space. hooks, for example, takes white feminists to task for focusing on the home as a site of patriarchal domination and oppression. She suggests that by seducing black women into being concerned about domesticity and the domestic division of labour, white feminism encouraged black women to forget the importance of the home as a site of subversion and resistance and that, as a consequence, black liberatory struggles have been undermined. hooks (1991: 48) calls for black people to focus on a revolutionary vision of black liberation built on the foundations of the home. She writes:

> Drawing on past legacies, contemporary black women can begin to reconceptualise ideas of homeplace, once again considering the primacy of domesticity as a site for subversion and resistance. When we renew our concern with homeplace, we can address political issues that most affect our daily lives.

3.4.4 Home as a site of non-heterosexual relationships

The nuclear family is the traditional living arrangement experienced by many people in contemporary Western societies at some point in their lives. Yet we spend a relatively short span of our total life in this household form. As a result of separation, divorce and the growth of other household forms, the nuclear family is becoming a much less common form of living arrangement. Recent figures suggest that

more than two in five marriages end in divorce and three in ten children's parents separate before they are 16 (URL 3). Even within heterosexual family units there may be intermittent disruptions in household membership because, for example, one parent or partner may be absent from home for periods of time because they work in another city or country or because of temporary work commitments. Indeed, Judith Stacey (1990: 269) argues that the family 'is an ideological concept that imposes a mythical homogeneity on the diverse means by which people organise their intimate relationships [such that] "the family" distorts and devalues the rich variety of kinship stories'.

Despite its declining statistical significance, the nuclear heterosexual family is often presented as being synonymous with 'the home'. Yet, the home can take on very different and contradictory meanings for people living in household forms which are not based on kinship, such as single people in shared housing or elderly people in various forms of sheltered accommodation (Valentine 1999b). This section focuses particularly on the experiences of lesbian and gay men who either share a house with heterosexual family members or create their own home space (Johnston and Valentine 1995, Elwood 2000).

Lesbians living in the 'family' house who have not 'come out' to their parents can find that a lack of privacy from the parental gaze constrains their freedom to perform a 'lesbian' identity 'at home' and to have friends and partners to stay (Valentine 1993, Johnston and Valentine 1995, Elwood 2000). In this sense the public/private dichotomy is much more complex than a simple duality. Having privacy from the outside world is not the same thing as having privacy within the home. The distinction between public and private is often hard to draw within households, especially in families where personal boundaries are often blurred by pressures to share activities, socialize with each other, co-ordinate schedules, and so on. Often individual privacy is only recognized at certain times in certain rooms, if at all (Allan and Crow 1989). Although walls and doors can provide some visual privacy in different rooms, aural privacy from noises generated within and between households can be less easy to achieve.

The home is supposed to be a place where family members participate in communal activities, socialize and share their feelings. These basic patterns of social relations are often underlain with a heterosexual ethos. At the kitchen table or round the television the heterosexual family can serve up a relentless diet of heterosexism and homophobia that can alienate gay members of the family and undermine for them many of the positive meanings which are popularly assumed to be associated with the family home (such as roots and hearth).

Although the home is supposed to be a medium for the expression of individual identity, a site of creativity or a symbol of the self, in practice this can mean that family homes express a heterosexual identity in everything from pictures and photographs, to furnishings and record collections, while the lesbian or gay identities of individual household members are submerged or concealed. Because of this, many sexual dissidents can feel 'out of place' and that they do not belong 'at home'. A survey of 239 lesbians and gay men aged 16–26 in Scotland, UK found that one-third had actually been forced to leave their family residence as a result of coming out (Scottish Federation of Housing Associates 1997). The freedom to perform a lesbian identity, to relax, be in control, and to enjoy the ontological security of being at home therefore appears to be best met when lesbians and gay men can create and manage their own home spaces.

Section 3.2.1 pointed out that housing is often designed with the presumption that it will be occupied by nuclear families. Lesbians and gay men often subvert this, for example, by making structural changes to the house to express a non-heterosexual identity or lifestyle, or by decorating the home in appropriate ways (Elwood 2000). However, this can cause a problem when heterosexual relatives or work colleagues call round, and can also provoke hostility from neighbours or property owners (Egerton 1990). The Scottish survey revealed that one in three of those questioned had been harassed because people suspected them of being gay.

Despite these moments, the lesbian home can still be a sanctuary from the heterosexuality of the public world. Indeed, in provincial towns and rural areas (see Chapter 8) where there are no lesbian or gay venues such as bars and clubs, individuals' homes can take on much broader roles as social venues and political meeting places (Valentine 1993, Rothenberg 1995, Kennedy and Davis 1993). As such, the home can also become a site of resistance and a place to build a politics of resistance for sexual dissidents.

Summary

- People's actual experiences of home do not always accord with its idealized meanings, and some valued meanings are not always experienced positively.
- The home can be a site of oppression and danger rather than a haven, and a place of work rather than a space of relaxation.
- The home can be a site of subversion and resistance and a place from which it is possible to build a politics of resistance.
- How the home is experienced depends on who has the power to determine how the space of the home and social relations within it are produced.

3.5 The moral economy of the household

The home is 'the focus and pivot of consumption . . . [it] is not only itself an object of consumption, but it is also the container within which much consumption takes

place' (Saunders 1989: 177). Roger Silverstone and Eric Hirsch (1992: 6) describe the household as a moral economy which they define as 'a social, cultural and economic unit actively engaged in the consumption of objects and meanings'. They argue that objects and technologies such as televisions, computers, food and so on are crucial to the production of households' identities, integrity and security, while also embedding households within the wider public sphere of the formal economy (see for example Morley 1986, Livingstone 1992, Valentine 1999b).

When household members purchase domestic goods these objects cross over from the public sphere, where they have been produced, into the home, where they become part of the everyday dynamics of household life. Here they are domesticated within the context of the specific social relations of individual households who draw on their own biographies, histories, politics and beliefs to construct a personal economy of meaning. Roger Silverstone, Eric Hirsch and David Morley (1992) identify four processes through which this occurs: appropriation, incorporation, objectification and conversion.

First, objects are *appropriated*, that is, they are taken possession of by an individual or household. This can cause disputes between different household members. The meanings given to objects in the home in this way may differ from those ascribed to them in the public sphere.

Second, they are *incorporated* into daily routines through the different ways that they are used. These may be ways that were not intended either by the manufacturer or the purchaser. For example, parents often buy home computers as an educational tool for their children but in practice they emerge as glorified games machines (Valentine, Holloway and Bingham 2000). Where objects are located within the micro-geography of the home, and when or how they are used or consumed by different individuals can also form the basis of processes of differentiation and identification both within, and between, households. For instance, what constitutes a 'proper meal' and where it may be eaten can be a source of identification and conflict along the axes of gender, class, age, etc (see Valentine 1999b).

Third, artefacts are *objectified* through usage and through the different ways that they are spatially displayed within the home. The way that we decorate rooms and organize and arrange the objects within them provides an objectification of the values, aesthetics and meanings of the household or those who identify with them. Examples of studies that have looked at such domestic spatial arrangements include Daniel Miller's (1988) work on kitchens and Tim Putnam and Charles Newtons' (1990) work on living rooms.

Fourth, the process of *conversion* defines the relationship between the household and the outside world. For example, television programmes, computer games, or the purchase of goods such as microwaves and washing machines, are all the source of everyday conversations outside the home. Participation in these exchanges can signal individuals' membership of, and competence within, wider local, national and global cultures. For example, children can use conversations about computer games as a way of being accepted into local peer groups. At the same time the discourses they draw on are part of a wider global cultural language (Holloway and Valentine 2000, see also Chapter 5). In this way, objects may also increase the permeability of domestic boundaries by linking household members into wider networks at school, at work, and so on. In turn, these connections may threaten or change what individuals or households do, or take for granted, in terms of domestic routines. Through the process of conversion 'the boundary of the moral economy of the household is extended into and blended into the public economy' (Silverstone, Hirsch and Morley 1992: 26).

3.5.1 The television

In a study of television in the USA in the 1950s, Lynn Spiegel (1992) examines how the television set was seen as a kind of household glue that would bond together the fragmented lives of families who had been separated during the Second World War. This was also a time when many families had moved out to the new suburbs, leaving friends and extended family members behind in the city. The television was expected to strengthen these isolated households as a family unit, as well as having the added benefit of keeping children off the streets. Having a family room in which the set could be located was identified as important in producing this sense of togetherness. The television replaced the fireplace or piano as the focal point around which seating and other furnishings were arranged. It was, claims Spiegel (1992: 39), a 'cultural symbol par excellence of family life'.

At the same time there were fears in the 1950s that the television might dominate the household. The upper middle classes regarded the set as an eyesore and its public display as the epitome of bad taste. These sorts of shameful meanings led companies to promote furniture designs that would camouflage it.

Even in the 1950s it was children who influenced the purchase of televisions, and, as the most enthusiastic viewers, often appropriated them. This triggered popular concerns that children were becoming addicted to watching television, that this was undermining their education, manners and even causing physical disorders, and that the 'innocent child' (see Chapter 2, section 2.7.1) might be corrupted by inappropriate programmes. These concerns have subsequently been replicated in other generations, and in relation to other domestic objects such as the home personal computer (Buckingham 1997, Oswell 1998, Valentine, Holloway and Bingham 2000). In the 1950s parents were advised to incorporate television into household life in a controlled manner by using the location of the set, and rewards and punishments to discipline children's viewing habits and to encourage them to watch morally uplifting and educational programmes such as documentaries. In this way, national moral panics, and their local interpretations, were expressed in everyday household decisions about who could watch what, when, and with whom. At this time the television was also seen not only as a threat to childhood but to the masculine position of power within the home. In the competition for cultural authority between fathers and the television, the television was assumed to win.

These examples which Spiegel cites from the 1950s demonstrate that, while objects may be given meanings by their owners, objects can also transform their users. The television is a good example of the importance of the relationships which people enter into with objects. When the two come together in practice particular identities or social relationships between different household members may be produced. These are not static; although they may be continually reproduced they can also be undone or changed.

The increase in the number of television sets within the average contemporary home is leading to suggestions that the television (and other technologies too), rather than unifying the modern family, as was claimed in the 1950s, may actually be encouraging the dispersal and fragmentation of the household. There are multiple spatialities and temporalities within homes; for example, living areas have traditionally been 'public' rooms where visitors are entertained and where household members participate in activities such as watching television, listening to music, eating and using the telephone. In contrast, bedrooms have traditionally been more privatized spaces, which have primarily been used for (un)dressing, sex and sleep. However, the expansion of technologies (such as TVs, stereos, computers, telephones) into the bedroom is facilitating the ability of individuals to lead a separate existence from other members of the household, accentuating the privatization of the bedroom as a space. This process is being fuelled by the discordant lifestyles that many contemporary household members lead. The increase in women working in paid employment outside the home; the number of people working in part-time, shift work or demanding jobs; and a growth in after-school institutionalized play and leisure opportunities for children are just some of the factors which are producing complex and diverse life patterns within postmodern families. Thus, although different members of a family may live under the same roof, they may occupy very different time-spaces within the home.

Summary

- The household is a moral economy defined as a social, cultural and economic unit actively engaged in the consumption of objects and meanings.
- Households domesticate 'public' goods to construct a personal economy of meaning through four processes: appropriation, incorporation, objectification and conversion.
- Domestic objects are implicated in the production of households' identities and embed households within the wider public sphere of the formal economy.

3.6 Home rules: negotiating space and time

As section 3.5 hinted, the home is an important site where spatial and temporal boundaries, in relation to both domestic space and public space, are negotiated and contested between household members.

In a study of the living room of 435 Cutler Street, the home of Denis and Ingrid Wood and their two sons Randall (then aged 11) and Chandler (then aged 9), Denis Wood and Robert Beck (1994) identify 223 rules governing the room and the 70 objects it contains (such as the couch, walls, table, sofa, plants and fireplace). In a book appropriately titled *Home Rules* they present a photograph and description of each object in turn and a list of the rules relating to it (see Box 3.3). While the rules are assumed to be self-evident to other adults and are rarely explicitly stated

Box 3.3: Home rules

rules: the glass in the sidelights
30: Don't breathe on them
31: Don't touch the windows
32: Don't let your friends put their noses on the windows
33: Don't wipe off the windows with your hands. You only smear them
34: Don't pound on them
35: Don't spit on them

rules: the white couch
129: Don't throw yourself onto the couch – sit down on it
130: Don't sit on the arms
131: Don't sit on the back
132: Don't hang off the back of the couch
133: Don't mark back with shoes
134: Don't climb over the couch
135: No fighting on the couch
136: No shoes on the couch
137: Don't put food on it
138: Don't throw up on it – go outdoors or in the bathroom
139: Don't get the couch dirty
140: Don't hide things under or behind the pillows
141: Don't take up the pillows and sit underneath them
142: Don't leave the pillows not spiffed up
143: Don't leave things under the couch
144: Don't leave your shoes under the couch

Wood and Beck 1994: 37, 158–9

to them, children are presumed to be less civilized (see also Chapter 2 and Chapter 5) and less able or willing to read or understand the rules in the same way. When children are in a room adults constantly repeat a battery of home rules: 'Mind the vase', 'Close the door', 'Don't smudge the windows', etc. These enable parents to maintain their values by protecting the room from the children, while at the same time reproducing these values by instilling them into their children.

In the analysis accompanying the restrictions Wood and Beck (1994) argue that home rules articulate the values and meanings of objects but they are also part of a wider belief system. For example, while some rules are specific to individual households, others are more universal within contemporary western societies. As they point out, 'You wouldn't do that at home, would you?' is a popular adult refrain heard in public places such as schools or restaurants. In the discussion of universal rules they observe that different rules apply in different rooms, for instance the rules relating to artefacts in the bathroom and living room are not the same. They conclude that the arrangement of a room's parts and objects physically stores or represents how the household members interact together. Thus, because home rules are in part derived from adults' memories of their own childhood homes, the rooms within a house are, in effect, an 'instantiation of a kind of collective memory' (Wood and Beck 1994: xv).

Wood and Beck's (1994) book is a case study of only one family, whereas David Sibley and Geoff Lowe (1992) reflect on the boundaries of acceptable behaviour, which include limits on use of space and time, within different households. They draw on Bernstein's (1971) distinction between positional and personalizing families. Positional families are those in which the parents are authoritarian and establish unambiguous boundaries in terms of adult space and time within the home. In contrast, personalizing families are less constrained by these sorts of arbitrary rules. Rather, children are given a greater voice in negotiating domestic spatial and temporal boundaries. However, in using this distinction Sibley and Lowe (1992) also recognize that 'normal' behaviour is often characterized by a mixture of personalizing and positional tendencies.

In subsequent solo work David Sibley (1995b) draws on data about middle-class childhoods in the UK from a Mass Observation archive which shows how children, when given their own bedrooms, appropriate, transform and secure the boundaries of this space to make it their own. He contrasts these descriptions with those of other spaces in the home where children have less freedom, and are more subject to parental restrictions. In some households, whether a room is a child space or an adult space can change with the time of day. Sibley (1995b) cites the case of a living room which was shared by a mother and the children during the day, but was transformed into an 'adult space' when the father returned home from work. In other cases the timing of activities and division of space can create more liminal zones. He suggests that domestic tensions around home rules and the use of different rooms represent conflicts between adults' desire to establish order, regularity and strong domestic boundaries, and children's preferences for disorder and weak boundaries.

It is not only children's use of domestic space which is the subject of home rules, their spatial range outside the home is also a constant source of negotiation between parents and their offspring within households. Children do not passively adhere to adults' definitions of what they are capable of doing or where they are capable of going at specific biological ages. Rather, they play an active part in negotiating the meanings ascribed to their 'age' within the household (see Chapter 2, section 2.7.1). One tactic some children adopt is to perform or demonstrate competence in one aspect of their lives and then to use this as evidence of their maturity to try to negotiate more independence in other spaces. For instance, a child may use the fact that they are competent enough to use kitchen appliances as a lever to win more autonomy in public space. Definitions of children's competence are not always allowed to spill over from one space into another, however. Understandings of children's maturity at home or in the street can therefore stand in awkward contradiction to each other. In particular, children are often more closely supervised in public space than private space, which illustrates the extent to which contemporary parents consider traffic and stranger dangers to be more important threats to children's safety than domestic hazards (Valentine 1999c).

Mothers and fathers often take on different parenting roles and discipline their children in different ways – although they may try to present a united front at home to their offspring. Children can exhibit a sophisticated knowledge of the gender division of parenting and power dynamics in the family, playing mothers and fathers off against each other (Valentine 1997a). This is particularly the case for children living in reconstituted families with a biological parent and a social parent while maintaining contact with the other biological parent who is now living in a different household, because they can exploit the fact that their welfare is often a source of major tensions between their mothers, their fathers and their parents' new partners.

Household negotiations which determine children's spatial boundaries are also framed in relation to popular public discourses within the law, childcare professions, and the media, about what it is appropriate for children to do at different ages. Conversations between parents within their 'communities' play an important role in informing the way that individuals interpret these public discourses within the home, and produce common-sense definitions of what it means to be a 'good' mother or father (Dyck 1990, Holloway 1998, Valentine 1997a, see also Chapter 4). Parents whose home rules or spatial boundaries are out of line with these local parenting cultures can find themselves stigmatized by other adults. The consequences of individualized domestic practices can also spill over into other spaces such as the school, where any form of 'difference' can be grounds for children to be marginalized or excluded by their peers (see Chapter 5).

Parents sometimes sidestep children's resistance to their spatial boundaries by disguising their attempts to restrict the children's use of space. This is done by subtly structuring children's leisure time, for instance by taking them to after-school clubs, institutional play schemes or sports clubs (Valentine and McKendrick 1997, Smith

and Barker 2000, McKendrick *et al.* 2000), so they do not have the opportunity to be in public space independently (see also Chapter 5). The effect Sibley (1995b: 16) claims is that 'For children in the most highly developed societies, the house is increasingly becoming a haven. At the same time the outside becomes more threatening, populated by potential monsters and abductors so the boundary between the home (safe) and the locality (threatening) is more strongly drawn.' In this way, parental fears and the associated restrictions placed on children's use of space are being blamed for robbing the young of the opportunity for independent environmental exploration and for destroying children's street cultures (see also Chapter 6).

Summary

- The home is a key site where spatial and temporal boundaries in relation to domestic and public space are negotiated between household members.
- Home rules represent conflicts between adults' desire to establish order and strong boundaries, and children's preferences for disorder and weak boundaries.
- Children actively negotiate the meanings ascribed to their 'age' within the household.
- Household negotiations which determine children's spatial boundaries are framed in relation to public discourses and local cultures of parenting.
- Parental restrictions are being blamed for making children's lives home-centred and for destroying their street cultures.

3.7 Homelessness

Early academic definitions of homelessness emphasized the absence of a place to sleep and receive mail as well as what was termed 'social disaffiliation'. More recently, the focus has switched to recognizing that there is a continuum between being homed and being homeless, with people living in temporary, insecure or physically substandard accommodation falling somewhere between these two extremes (Veness 1993). In most cases homelessness is, in any event, a temporary circumstance rather than a permanent condition.

The *official homeless* are those people who are designated homeless by the state and who have applied for housing. The *single homeless* are those with no statutory rights to housing who end up living on the streets or in shelters (Warrington 1996). A further category are the '*hidden homeless*'. These are people who fall outside official definitions of homelessness and are not actually living on the streets because they

are in precarious or unstable housing situations, such as staying with family and friends, or in secure units. The term *protohomeless* has also been coined to describe those households who are at risk of homelessness (Warrington 1996).

Homelessness is often assumed to be an urban problem because homeless people are more numerous and more visible in cities, yet it is a problem in rural areas too. The idyllization of rural lifestyles in the UK and the glorification of the struggles and hardship endured by the pioneers in the USA both contribute to obscuring the extent of rural poverty and social problems in the countryside (see Chapter 8). The poor quality of the rural housing stock and the lack of shelters or transitional units in rural areas produce particularly high levels of hidden homelessness. This includes people who live in cars, camper vans, tents, caves, with relatives, or in inadequate and dilapidated facilities (URL 4).

Figures for the homeless at any given time are difficult to calculate because of the range of definitions of homelessness and the lack of information about the length of time for which people are homeless and the proportion of people who experience repeated episodes of homelessness. Projected estimates for the USA in 1999 suggested that over 700,000 people would be homeless on any given night and up to 2 million people would experience homelessness during one year (National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty 1999). Other studies suggest that over 12 million US residents have been homeless at some time during their life (URL 5).

There is a geography to these statistics as well. The communities that produce homelessness are often not those that end up caring for homeless people. In particular, people experiencing economic, social or housing difficulties often seek work or accommodation in large cities. Many remain there even when they cannot get the work, social support or housing which they were seeking, rather than return to their home town. For example, young people and lesbians and gay men often migrate from small towns and rural areas to major cities to escape tight-knit communities and to forge their own identities in the anonymity of the city (see Chapter 8).

There are also wide variations between places in terms of the service provision for those in need because authorities adopt varying approaches to the homelessness crisis. This reflects differing demand for help but also variations in the institutional and financial capacities of different local government and voluntary organizations, as well as the political will of community leaders in particular cities (Dear 1992, Wolch and Dear 1993, Takahashi 1996, 1998).

The homeless are stigmatized through association with alcoholism, drugs, crime and mental ill-health, and so are often blamed for becoming or remaining homeless (Takahashi 1996, 1998). Indeed, some homeless people, such as the young, are regarded as more worthy of support than others. Those with mental ill-health are the least tolerated. In the USA some authorities attempt to foist their homeless population onto neighbouring cities, for example, by using the police to escort or transport homeless people to other jurisdictions, by enforcing nuisance laws and anti-bum ordinances, by watering public parks to deter homeless people from congregating there, and so on. Neighbourhood communities also help to (re)produce these patterns of

social exclusion by opposing the siting of facilities for the homeless in their midst (so-called NIMBYISM – Not-In-My-Back-Yard, see Chapter 4). Residents and businesses (particularly in affluent areas) commonly claim that the presence of the homeless in the neighbourhoods disrupts the moral order of the streets and undermines their personal safety, property values and quality of life (Dear and Taylor 1982, Dear and Gleeson 1991, Dear 1992, see also Chapter 6). The result is what Takahashi (1996: 297) terms a 'rising tide of rejection' which results in the concentration of services and support for the homeless in relatively few locations.

3.7.1 Causes of homelessness

There is no single pathway to homelessness – different people end up on the streets for different combinations of reasons. However, the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries have been marked by a number of significant economic and social changes which have contributed to a rise in the homeless population.

In the 1970s and 1980s a fundamental restructuring of international and domestic economies occurred. 'This restructuring process has involved fundamental alterations in patterns of international finance and trade, shifts in the mix of industrial outputs and changes in the organisation and geographical location of production systems. Its effect has been to create a transition from *Fordism* (traditional assembly-line, mass-production industry) to a qualitatively different mode of economic organisation, *post-Fordism*' (Wolch and Dear 1993: 3). These changes have resulted in deindustrialization and the retreat of manufacturing in North America and Europe to cheap-labour locations in less developed countries. In rural regions a parallel decline occurred in extractive industries such as mining, timber and fishing (Wolch and Dear 1993).

At the same time new jobs emerged but these were primarily in finance, property, insurance and other professional services. As a result, the service sector has surpassed manufacturing as the mainstay of contemporary Western economies. Post-Fordism also involved flexible specialization: the ability to be sensitive to, and respond rapidly to, changes in consumer preferences or the market. To increase their flexibility and reduce overheads, firms in manufacturing and services restructured their employment practices, hiring part-time and temporary workers – a process which particularly drew women into the labour force. In turn, dual-income households began to employ childcare and other domestic service workers as substitutes for the unpaid work women previously did at home. This trend further promoted the growth of jobs in personal service and the retail trade (Wolch and Dear 1993).

These employment shifts have seen a spiral in long-term unemployment, especially among traditional blue-collar workers, and less-educated, low-skilled workers. Consequently, the gap between those in high-wage jobs in the service sector and those who are unemployed or on low wages has widened drastically, with record numbers of people being cast into poverty and homelessness. In this way, individuals on

the streets of New York, London or Paris are regarded as a local problem for the city, but their presence is a product of global economic processes.

Most contemporary Western societies have a commitment, to a greater or lesser extent, to provide for those citizens who unable to support themselves. After the Second World War most expanded their welfare expenditure and services. However, when economies in countries like the USA and the UK were restructured in the 1980s, welfare provision was also revised and cut back. One aspect of this contraction was a policy of deinstitutionalization which moved psychiatric patients out of state and local mental hospitals into community-based service settings (see Chapter 5). For example, there were over half a million people in US asylums in the 1950s, yet within two decades this population had been cut to under 100,000 (Wolch and Dear 1993). This policy of deinstitutionalization was subsequently also extended to include people with disabilities, the dependent elderly, and people on probation (Takahashi 1996, Kearns and Smith 1993). Yet, though the expenditure on state institutions was slashed, there was no corresponding provision of funding to support local community services. At the same time there was also a general reduction in levels of benefits and definitions of who was entitled to claim support. These cutbacks particularly affected the young. In the absence of support many people ended up drifting into inner-city neighbourhoods where cheap accommodation was available, and from these unstable housing arrangements onto the streets. The stereotype of the homeless used to be middle-aged male alcoholics fallen on hard times, but now homelessness is being democratized, with more women, young people and those from ethnic minority groups joining its ranks.

In effect deinstitutionalization and cuts in welfare expenditure – which were widely adopted across North American and European societies – served to shift responsibility for vulnerable groups from national governments to voluntary agencies, and from the state (i.e. public provision outside the home) to local communities, and especially to families. In other words, there was movement away from public provision outside the home towards an expectation that support would be provided within the wider family home.

These problems were compounded by a lack of affordable housing. Parallel cuts were made in expenditure on subsidized and public housing, marking a general transfer of responsibility for housing provision from national governments to local agencies and charities. This squeeze on supply occurred at a time when a number of demographic shifts were creating a rise in demand for housing, producing a resultant shortfall in provision. These included a drastic increase in single-person households facilitated by the growth in female employment rates which has enabled more women to live independently than ever before; a rise in female-headed households as a result of a decline in marriage and higher divorce rates which particularly fuelled the demand for smaller affordable houses; and the greying of the population (it is estimated that by 2040 there will be 87 million Americans over 65 and 24 million over 85), which also prompted a demand for small housing units, often with special facilities (Wolch and Dear 1993).

These economic and demographic changes in turn also altered the structure of urban housing markets, stimulating **gentrification** (see Chapter 7 and Chapter 8) and exacerbating the homeless problem. Historically, affluent groups have preferred to live in the suburbs but in the 1980s those profiting from economic restructuring began to move back into the central city, a trend which has continued into the twenty-first century. Here rents and prices of properties tended to be low because they were often in a poor condition, but the potential rents were high because of the desirable location and so the properties could be redeveloped at a profit. The effect of gentrification (by mainly young, white professionals) has been to drive up rent and property prices and to increase the competitiveness of the housing market, displacing those on low incomes (mainly blue-collar workers, the elderly and ethnic minorities). Not surprisingly, the poorest and most vulnerable invariably end up homeless.

A final cause of homelessness is personal crisis. The late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries are a period which have been marked by a process of **individualization** (Beck 1992). This is a shift in ways of thinking about how individuals relate to society which has been characterized by a decline in pressures to follow conventional lifepaths and to adhere to traditional institutions such as the church, and the development of new social forms and types of commitment. Biographies are increasingly reflexive in that people can choose between different lifestyles, subcultures and identities (see also Chapter 2, section 2.4.1), but these opportunities have also brought increased risks that individuals may end up on the margins of society as a consequence of their own choices.

As a result of this shift, a number of positive social trends have emerged which have also had negative consequences for some individuals. First, the growing number of women in paid employment has enabled more women to live independently and to leave unsuccessful or abusive relationships. However, because women generally work in lower-paid, lower-skilled jobs than men and maintain responsibility for any children from a relationship, there has been a feminization of poverty. Second, there has been a decline in the nuclear family and increased tolerance of alternative lifestyles. This has given more lesbians and gay men the confidence to 'come out', but, as a consequence, some individuals face discrimination and find themselves evicted from parental homes or rented accommodation. Third, the post-industrial emphasis on hedonism, pleasure and high levels of conspicuous consumption has produced a rise in drug abuse, alcoholism, HIV and individual indebtedness.

Because of this, more individuals have found themselves in situations of personal crisis that have resulted in homelessness. In many cases this is not the outcome of one incident, like the loss of a job, but is the outcome of an extended period of cumulative difficulties in a person's life in which there is a gradual drift or slide into homelessness. The process often involves a series of transitions in which a person loses their house, moves to rented accommodation, then stays with friends or parents before ending up on the street.

3.7.2 Experiences of homelessness

Veness (1993) argues that the traditional dichotomous distinction which is made between the homed and the homeless does not fit the messy and complicated reality of poor people's lives. In a study of three groups of people living in poverty in Delaware, USA she showed that, while badly housed or homeless by society's standards, these people still created homes within homeless shelters and a diverse range of other locations such as cardboard cities, derelict buildings, camper vans, caves and tunnels (see Plates 3.2 and 3.3). Veness argues that these people are neither homed nor homeless, rather she describes them as un-homed, arguing that this is both a valid social category and a lived environment. Indeed, Rowe and Wolch's (1990) study of homeless women on Skid Row in Los Angeles, USA suggests that the social

Plate 3.2 Alternative 'home' spaces (© April Veness)

Plate 3.3 Alternative 'home' spaces (© April Veness)

relations (in terms of gender, perceptions of community, and so on) of the homed and some of their meanings of home are also replicated by people living on the street.

While the homed often stigmatize the homeless as dangerous and a threat to their safety (see Chapter 6), people living on the street are attacked or robbed of their possessions by passers-by and vigilantes. Yet they have little recourse to the police or criminal justice system. Rowe and Wolch (1990) argue that women, in particular, are at much greater risk of assault and feel more vulnerable on Skid Row than men. There are far fewer shelters provided for women than for men and, as a consequence, many women on Skid Row see sexual relationships as a means of gaining some protection. These relationships have other benefits too, because a partner is a person with whom possessions and messages can be left and with whom resources can be pooled. There can even be a quasi-domestic division of labour on the street. In this sense partners can take on the role of 'home base' for each other. Rowe and Wolch (1990) illustrate this with the example of Rita and Paul. Paul would often stay with their possessions in the park where the couple had spent the night, allowing Rita to go and panhandle for money or find food. His location in the park functioned as a home for her: it was a place of continuity, where her day began and ended (see also Box 3.4).

Box 3.4: Life on the streets

Relationships

Pam: 'We didn't have no way, we didn't have nothin' to eat and there ain't no missions or nothin' out there in Santa Monica at all . . . [H]e was tryin' to make a game of it, you know. And you know singing and "A little bit further". Jokin' and laughin' and stuff.'

Being moved on

Lisa: '. . . Otis, Sue, Roger, all these people that lived on our side of the street had been there for all those months. They had been together for years. They were used to this being moved from one place to another. Linda, who had been on the street for seven years, hey, this was nothing new to them. We're just getting moved again. They'd gone from one parking lot to another. This was nothing, to say hey, you got to pack up and go.'

The street encampment

Lisa: '. . . so many people had donated so many things to us. For instance, Thrifty's with all the health supplies, first aid. We had the grills that people had donated. Those beautiful grills that the church people donated. The tents that the church people donated. Fred Jordan's gave me mine.'

Panhandling

Lisa: 'My preference is I'm going to go panhandle, I'll make more money doing that. And so for a couple of days, I made forty dollars. Ah hey, I'm good. Then all of a sudden it went from forty dollars to almost ten, twelve dollars. It was a boom, a real drop.'

Cited in Rowe and Wolch 1990: 194, 195, 196, 197

Such relationships also provide a sense of identity with people even establishing traditional family units. Like the homed, however, the homeless can also become involved in abusive relationships. The parallels continue because, like homed women who experience domestic violence, homeless women also often stay with violent partners because the relationship serves the logistical and material functions of a home base. With no alternative forms of support, many women would rather put up with predictable patterns of abuse than face the unknown dangers of the street alone.

While for some homeless people a relationship becomes a surrogate home, for others groups or networks of other people perform the same role. Rowe and Wolch (1990) found that on Skid Row some homeless people organized informal communities in the form of street camps. These had names, such as Justiceville and Love Camp, and were used as places where possessions and messages could be left and

as social gathering points where news and information could be passed on. Although these camps were not proper physical structures with walls and a roof, Rowe and Wolch (1990) argue the homeless women often preferred them to hostels, shelters and other short-term accommodation provided by the authorities because they provided a sense of identity and belonging and some degree of privacy and control for their 'residents'. In contrast, most shelters and hostels have strict rules to make homeless people conform to ideals of appropriate home life. In a study of homeless policy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the State of New York, USA, Veness (1994) describes how shelters attempted to reproduce middle-class ideologies of cleanliness, order, privacy and material comforts through the imposition of rules about personal hygiene, furnishings, appropriate clothing and behaviour.

Street encampments vary in size and most are temporary because they are dispersed by the police. Ruddick's (1996, 1998) work on young people in Los Angeles, USA, provides a good example of how, in such ways, homeless people are marginalized not only in space but also through space. Her study focused on about 200 punk squatters who rejected the shelters and services provided by the authorities for homeless youth and instead created their own oppositional space. They did this by occupying two derelict residential estates in Hollywood Hills known as Doheny Manor and Errol Flynn Manor, which became sleeping places, and by tactically appropriating and subverting bars on Hollywood's sunset strip as places for gigs, and marginal spaces such as cemeteries as places to gather. In doing so, Ruddick (1996, 1998) shows how the homeless youths were able to transform the meanings both of themselves, and of the spaces to which they were limited, through their use of these environments. However, the authorities eventually demolished the buildings they were occupying. The loss of this strategic space which was controlled by the young people led eventually to the demise of the squatting movement and its substitution by shelters and services defined and controlled by the authorities.

Veness, Rowe and Wolch and Ruddick's work clearly demonstrates that just because the so-called homeless do not have a house does not mean that they do not create homes. Rather, the homeless develop their own matrices of social relations and alternative spaces which provide many of the meanings of home such as continuity, identity, privacy and control (see section 3.3), which the homed attribute to conventional forms of housing.

Summary

- There are many different definitions of homelessness, some of which recognize that there is a continuum between being homed and being homeless.

- Problems of defining and recording homelessness mean that it is hard to calculate how many people are without a home. Estimates suggest that it is a growing social problem.
- There are wide variations between places in terms of the service provision for those in need because authorities and local communities adopt varying approaches to homelessness.
- The rise in homelessness has been attributed to global processes of economic restructuring, national welfare reforms, and individualization.
- Homeless people create relationships, social networks and appropriate spaces which take on many of the meanings of home (e.g. abode, identity, roots), which the homed attribute to conventional forms of housing.

Further Reading

- There are a number of books focusing on gender and housing design, notably: Hayden, D. (1984) *Redesigning the American Dream: The Future of Housing, Work and Family Life*, Norton, New York; Matrix (1984) *Making Space: Women and the Man Made Environment*, Pluto Press, London, and Roberts, M. (1991) *Living in a Man-Made World: Gender Assumptions in Modern Housing Design*, Routledge, London. These issues are also nicely summarized in overview papers by Hayden, D. (1980) 'What would a non-sexist city be like? Speculations on housing, urban design and human work', in *SIGNS: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 5, 170–87; Boys, J. (1984) 'Is there a feminist analysis of architecture?' *Built Environment*, 10, 25–34, and England, K. (1991) 'Gender relations and the spatial structure of the city', *Geoforum*, 22, 135–47. It is important to remember, however, that this work has been subject to a number of criticisms which are nicely outlined by Boys (1998) herself in 'Beyond maps and metaphors? Rethinking the relationships between architecture and gender', in Ainley, R. (ed.) *New Frontiers of Space, Bodies and Gender*, Routledge, London.
- The meanings of home are the subject of three key papers: Saunders, P. (1989) 'The meaning of "home" in contemporary English culture', *Housing Studies*, 4, 177–92; Saunders, P. and Williams, P. (1988) 'The constitution of the home: towards a research agenda', *Housing Studies*, 3, 81–93; Sommerville, P. (1992) 'Homelessness and the meaning of home: rooflessness or rootlessness', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 16, 529–39. These should be read in conjunction with work that explores actual experiences of home, for example: Dobash, R. and Dobash, R. (1980) *Violence Against*

Wives, Open Books, Shepton Mallet; hooks, b. (1992) *Yearning: Race, Gender and Cultural Politics*, Turnaround, London; and Elwood, S. (2000) 'Lesbian living spaces: multiple meanings of home', *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, 4, 11–28. The interdependencies of the home and the workplace are evident in Hanson, S. and Pratt, G. (1988) 'Reconceptualising the links between home and work in urban geography', *Economic Geography*, 64, 299–321; Massey, D. (1998a) 'Blurring the binaries? High tech in Cambridge', in Ainley, R. (ed.) *New Frontiers of Space, Bodies and Gender*, Routledge, London, and Smith, G.D. and Winchester, H.P.M. (1998) 'Negotiating space: alternative masculinities at the work/home boundary', *Australian Geographer*, 29, 327–39.

- The concept of the moral economy is explored in chapters in Silverstone, R. and Hirsch, E. (1992) *Consuming Technologies: Media and Information in Domestic Spaces*, Routledge, London. A specific example of the domestication of the television within the home is provided by Spiegel, L. (1992) *Make Room for TV: Television and the Family in Postwar America*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- The negotiation of household spatialities, temporalities and social relations is captured in a number of studies, such as Wood, D. and Beck, R.J. (1994) *Home Rules*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore; Sibley, D. (1995b) 'Families and domestic routines: constructing the boundaries of childhood', in Pile, S. and Thrift, N. (eds) *Mapping the Subject: Cultural Geographies of Transformation*, Routledge, London, and Valentine, G. (1999c) '"Oh please, Mum. Oh please, Dad": Negotiating children's spatial boundaries', in McKie, L., Bowlby, S. and Gregory, S. (eds) *Gender, Power and the Household*, Macmillan, Basingstoke. An overview of contemporary changes in the 'family' is provided by Stacey, J. (1990) *Brave New Families: Stories of Domestic Upheaval in Late Twentieth Century America*, Basic Books, New York.
- There are lots of geographical studies of homelessness. Some of the most influential work has been produced by three key authors: Michael Dear, Jennifer Wolch and April Veness. Examples of their many books and papers include Dear, M. and Wolch, J. (1987) *Landscapes of Despair From Deinstitutionalisation to Homelessness*, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ; Wolch J. and Dear, M. (1993) *Malign Neglect: Homelessness in an American City*, Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco, CA; Rowe, S. and Wolch J. (1990) 'Social networks in time and space: homeless women in Skid Row, Los Angeles', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 80, 184–204 and Veness, A. (1993) 'Neither homed nor homeless: contested definitions and the personal worlds of the poor', *Political Geography*, 12, 319–40. A more specific (and excellent) study of homeless youth is found in Ruddick, S. (1996) *Young and Homeless in Hollywood*, Routledge, New York.

Exercises

1. Make a list of the ways in which you think conventional housing serves, and does not serve, the needs of employed women and their families, and the disabled. Bearing these in mind, now try to draw a non-sexist and non-ableist housing design. What are the principles behind your design and what might its limitations be? How realistic or idealistic are such utopian housing projects?
2. In a small group, imagine that you live in a small country, Noma. There has just been a revolution and the new government wants to create a more equal and harmonious country. Prior to the revolution, Noma was organized around nuclear family units living in individual and privatized homes (like the contemporary Western society ideal). The new government is concerned that this living arrangement may create unequal social relations and lead to unhappiness and oppression. Hold a public inquiry to decide whether the family home should be abolished as the main social unit. Choose four or five key witnesses (e.g. a homemaker, a homeless person, etc) to prepare different cases for/against the 'traditional home'. They should prepare and make brief arguments (5–10 minutes) outlining their position, based on academic reading but embellished with the character's personality and experiences. When each witness has presented their case, the audience may cross-examine them. Then take a vote on whether the traditional home should or should not be abolished.
3. Choose one object from your own home, or your childhood home (e.g. the television, the computer, the ice-maker). Write a brief account of how this is/was domesticated within the context of your household's social relations.
4. Make a list of all the 'home rules' you remember as a child. How do these compare with the home you live in now? What do these rules tell you about the social relations, and the spatialities and temporalities in your household? How did you as a child negotiate and contest such rules, and how did you appropriate, transform and secure the boundaries of rooms (or parts of rooms) to make particular spaces and times your own?

Essay Titles

1. Critically evaluate the assertion that the plan of a house tells us a lot about how women are expected to organize their lives.
2. Critically assess the popular saying that 'a man's home is his castle'.
3. Critically examine the use of the term 'private' in relation to the home.
4. Using examples, account for the contemporary rise in homelessness.