

INTRODUCTION

Relative Values: Reconfiguring Kinship Studies

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At the core of social and cultural anthropology for decades, and arguably one of the discipline's most distinctive theoretical innovations, the study of kinship is itself symbolic of the anthropological tradition. Like all traditions, it has also undergone periodic reinventions, and it is currently in the midst of a revival that has entailed significant reconfigurations within a range of sites— from rural China to fertility clinics to cyberspace. The new uses of kinship theory, and the novel sites and locations where kinship study is being pursued, open up new possibilities for understanding the age-old question, What is kinship all about? It allows us to look both forward and back— ahead to the as yet little explored worlds of kinship-in-the-making, and back across a rich and varied history of scholarship on kinship and social life.

The chapters in this volume take seriously the challenge to kinship studies posed by new topics such as reproductive technology, international adoption, global capitalism, and virtual life. Kinship study takes on an altered significance in the context of the Human Genome Project or genetic screening programs, and it is to such empirical and theoretical challenges that the contributors to *Relative Values* have responded. These responses are as varied as their author's disparate interests, but they share in common the effort to begin to articulate a vocabulary of kinship analysis that bridges the unique legacy of historical debate about this concept and its ongoing prominence as a feature of social life.

Kinship is investigated in this volume both as a theoretical concept and a social category, and it is the tension between the two that generates many of our central questions. On the one hand, kinship remains a central concept within anthropology despite having undergone many transformations: indeed, this historical legacy gives the idea of kinship its sustained appeal and

enduring flexibility. On the other hand, kinship remains a contested analytic concept. Like all epistemic devices, kinship helps to constitute what it describes so that even imagining its purchase on sets of phenomena, whether in Western societies or elsewhere, may be seen as ideological or circular, and thus complicit with an unreconstructed version of the anthropological project. Interrogating kinship, then, continues to precipitate lively debate concerning not only what kinship is “all about” but also how its uses index wider changes within anthropology as well as within the societies of which anthropologists are a part.

ON THE “NATURE” OF KINSHIP

The reflexive critique of kinship as a Western preoccupation, or as an imposition of Western ontological categories onto other peoples and cultures, is most often associated with David Schneider’s 1984 *A Critique of the Study of Kinship*.¹ Schneider describes the two most prominent assumptions within kinship theory as the “Doctrine of the Genealogical Unity of Mankind,” which “states that genealogical relations are the same in every culture,” and “the assumption that Blood is Thicker Than Water,” which “makes kinship or genealogical relations unlike any other social bonds” (1984, 174). Kinship, according to these assumptions, is seen to be an aftereffect of the natural facts of sexual reproduction. For Schneider, such a formulation produces a tautology:

The notion of a “base in nature” creates a self-justifying and untestable definition of kinship: “kinship” as a sociocultural phenomenon is, in the first instance, defined as entailing those “natural” or “biological” facts which it is at the same time said to be “rooted in” or “based on.” The phenomena which are shown by analysis to be related are already related by definition. (138)

It is not so much the biologism per se of such depictions that concerns Schneider, however, but the extent to which they reproduce “the more general characteristic of European culture toward what might be called ‘biologistic’ ways of constituting and conceiving human character, human nature, and human behavior” (175). The reproduction of this biologism is thus evidence of how “the study of kinship derives directly and practically unaltered from the ethnoepistemology of European culture” (175). In other words, occupied more with the general charge of ethnocentrism than the culturally specific

form of the biologism, Schneider's critique foregrounds his key complaint that the privileging of kinship rests on a tautology.

Schneider was not alone in making this argument: Schneider's (1968, 1972) claim that the theoretical categories of Euro-American kinship study are informed and shaped by Euro-American understandings of kinship was shared by Ernest Gellner (1957) and Rodney Needham (1960). Such criticisms contributed to the rejection of structural-functionalist understandings of kinship as a core social structure—as espoused by A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, Bronislaw Malinowski, E. E. Evans-Pritchard, and Meyer Fortes—and allowed for more varied interpretations of the significance of kinship (as, for instance, in Leach 1967). Moreover, Schneider's 1984 *Critique* was exemplary of a broad shift within anthropology in the 1970s and 1980s toward more self-critical and reflexive approaches (see Marcus and Fischer 1986; Clifford and Marcus 1986), and a rejection of objectivist models in favor of more hermeneutical ones (see Geertz 1973; Rabinow and Sullivan 1979; Wagner 1975).

Schneider was also not the only theorist to identify kinship as a primary site of many of anthropology's most "biologistic" and thus Eurocentric concepts. This point had been extensively argued since the 1970s by feminists, such as Gayle Rubin (1975), who were critical of the latent biologism of both structural-functionalist and structuralist models. Nicole-Claude Mathieu's 1973 critique of the nature-culture models employed in Edwin Ardener's analysis of gender asymmetry (1972) was a major impetus behind the influential volume *Nature, Culture, and Gender* (MacCormack and Strathern 1980), in which the specificity of post-Enlightenment European culture was closely examined. According to this critique, both kinship and gender had for too long been presumed to be based on "natural facts" in a manner that was both essentialist and obfuscating, as well as ethnocentric. This contention directly paralleled Schneider's insistence that "the notion of a pure, pristine state of biological relationships 'out there in reality' which is the same for all mankind is sheer nonsense" (1965, 97).

The critique of "natural facts" that had been a prominent feature of Schneider's critique of kinship was thus widely articulated across a range of anthropological debates from the 1960s onward. Marilyn Strathern's synthetic account of this critique in 1980 cites numerous exponents of this view, including Marshall Sahlins (1976, 52, 101), Roy Wagner (1975, 1978), Jack Goody (1977, 64), and Jean-Marie Benoist (1978, 59) as well as Mathieu (1973). These critiques of the ethnocentrism of Western ideas of the natural and their codi-

fictionation as a nature-culture opposition by Claude Lévi-Strauss as a central tenet within structuralist anthropology significantly reshaped the study of both kinship and gender. Hence, although Schneider has often been singled out as being responsible for the “death of kinship” within anthropology, a more contextual reading of his work demonstrates that his arguments concerning the problematic status of natural facts were shared by others.

Jane Collier and Sylvia Yanagisako’s anthology *Gender and Kinship: Essays toward a Unified Analysis* (1987) offered the first major extension of the critique of natural facts set out in *Nature, Culture, and Gender*. As Yanagisako and Collier observe in their assessment of kinship:

Much of what is written about the atoms of kinship [Lévi-Strauss 1969], the axiom of prescriptive altruism [Fortes 1958, 1969], the universality of the family [Fox 1967], and the centrality of the mother-child bond [Good-enough 1970] is rooted in assumptions about the natural characteristics of women and men and their natural roles in sexual procreation. The standard units of our genealogies, after all, are circles and triangles about which we assume a number of things. Above all, we take for granted that they represent two naturally different categories of people and that the natural difference between them is the basis for human reproduction and, therefore, kinship. (Yanagisako and Collier 1987, 32)

Arguing that such naturalized differences cannot be presumed as the predis-cursive, universal, and timeless basis for kinship, gender, or reproduction, Yanagisako and Collier propose a model of kinship that does not “begin by taking ‘difference’ for granted and treating it as a presocial fact” (29) but instead tries “to unpack the cultural assumptions embodied in [such concepts], which limit our capacity to understand social systems informed by other cultural assumptions” (34).

Since Collier and Yanagisako’s challenging reassessment of kinship and gender, other theorists have extended this project still further. In *Naturalizing Power* (Yanagisako and Delaney 1995a), the argument that naturalization is a *symbolic* activity is widened to demonstrate how profoundly *productive* it is of social inequalities. Moving beyond Schneider’s normative account of biology, the contributors to *Naturalizing Power* examine the productive effects of biological discourse, demonstrating how “inequality and hierarchy come already embedded in symbolic systems” and are “elaborated through contextualized material practices” (ix–x). By critically examining the power of naturalizing discourses to secure or authenticate an “order of things,” the essays

in *Naturalizing Power* challenge the ways in which hierarchical differences are legitimated as “natural,” “biological,” or “genetic” through categories such as “sex,” “gender,” “race,” “reproduction,” and “the family.”² Insofar as “kinship” has been thoroughly imbricated within such essentialized categories, the critique of *naturalization as power* has advanced the analysis both of kinship as a concept and the types of sociocultural practices it is used to describe.

Similarly, the analysis of *naturalization as knowledge* has greatly broadened the scope of kinship study, particularly in the work of Marilyn Strathern, whose accounts of kinship in *After Nature* (1992a) and *Reproducing the Future* (1992b) reconfigure the critique of nature and natural facts as an exegesis of knowledge production more generally. For Strathern, naturalizations are cultural practices that domain knowledge, produce comparisons, and ground contexts for meaning specific to Euro-Americans. Kinship provides a useful example of naturalization as knowledge because of the way in which kin ties are seen to be constituted out of primordial natural facts. As Strathern notes:

Kinship was regarded as an area of primordial identity and inevitable relations. It was at once a part of the natural world that regenerated social life and provided a representation of this relationship between them. Anthropologists, in turn, apprehended kinship as a symbolic construction that took after the natural facts on which society imagined itself based, a microcosm of the relationship between nature, society and symbol. (1992a, 198)

The naturalization of kinship within a reproductive model—where kinship is a “hybrid” institution, connecting nature and culture—depended on the way in which nature could provide not only a grounding function, or context, for society but indeed a model for context itself. Nature, Strathern maintains, “itself provided the very model for domaining” (1992a, 177). This has consequences not only for how one understands what kinship is, means, and does but also for how kinship can be seen to illustrate culturally specific features of what a Euro-American “understanding” is comprised of in itself. Such a view both expands widely what “kinship” can be used to analyze (for instance, knowledge practices) and opens up a whole new dimension of interpretive possibility for how kinship can be applied within a specific context (for example, reproductive technologies; see Edwards et al. 1999).

Writing of kinship in relation to the new reproductive technologies, Strathern suggests that the capacity for nature to be seen as a separate and distinct domain has increasingly been lost because its technological modification in

the name of consumer choice exposes its contingency: “Nature as a ground for the meaning of cultural practices can no longer be taken for granted if Nature itself is regarded as having to be protected and promoted” (1992a, 177). Nature has been “flattened” and “no longer provides a model or analogy for the very idea of context,” Strathern concludes (195).

It is thus possible to trace a challenge to the model of kinship as “based on” or “derived from” a set of natural facts from the 1950s onward, which, far from waning, has continued to gain momentum. Some might assert that such a view of kinship “weakens” its analytic hold, by “deconstructing” its very meaning. In contrast, we argue it is misleading to claim that kinship studies within British and U.S. anthropology have suffered or declined precipitously as a result of these critical interventions. As this volume demonstrates, kinship studies within anthropology have been productively reconfigured and indeed revitalized by the many critical interventions through which they have been transformed.³ Contesting some of the taken-for-granted bases of kinship study has enabled it not only to become more flexible and mobile but also more precise. In turn, kinship theory can address a much wider range of contexts in a more complex and multidimensional way that is, at the same time, more rigorous as a result of being more reflexive. Kinship study has not reawakened, like some disciplinary Sleeping Beauty waiting to be rescued: rather, it has been steadily reinventing itself and, in the process, has undergone a substantial makeover.

As such, *Relative Values* contributes to a tradition of critical attention to both the concept and practice of kinship that has its roots in feminist anthropological debates about nature, culture, and gender in the 1980s, and their parallels in the reevaluation of kinship in the overlapping period. Building on the work of MacCormack and Strathern (1980), Collier and Yanagisako (1987), and Yanagisako and Delaney (1995b), this volume extends the critique of naturalization by using several contexts of comparison to reconfigure kinship study. By using historical and contemporary case studies from both established and nontraditional ethnographic sites, this volume stresses the increasing contemporary uncertainty surrounding ideas about kin relatedness, while attempting also to demonstrate their enduring centrality to various forms of social organization. The question of how kinship may be conceived of outside its ruling sign of biology has been powerfully explored in recent studies of “house societies” (McKinnon 1991; Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995; Carsten 1997), gay and lesbian kinship (Weston 1991), adoption (Modell 1994), and surrogacy (Ragoné 1994). Both the effort to explore “cultures of

relatedness” beyond what kinship has traditionally been used to represent (Carsten 2000) and the project of reimagining what kinship can connect through unfamiliar uses of genealogy (Helmreich 1998) enact the project of “making strange” what kinship means and does, even as the frame of kinship studies is greatly widened.

In bringing these diverse perspectives together and into collision, *Relative Values* challenges the claims of those who advocate a return to more traditional approaches to kinship that assert, as Robert Parkin does, that “all human societies have kinship” because “they all impose some privileged cultural order over the biological universals of sexual relations and continuous human reproduction through birth” (1997, 3).⁴ At the same time, this volume rejects the Schneiderian axiom that “insofar as the comparative study of kinship is tenable or a legitimate endeavor, it must be assumed that kinship is a unitary phenomena. . . . [For] if kinship is not comparable from one society to the next, then it is self-evident that comparative study is out of the question” (Schneider 1984, 177). Seeking instead to open up the category of kinship and examine how it can be put to use in ways that destabilize the “obviousness” of its conventional referents, while expanding the scope of its purchase as well, *Relative Values* (as the title suggests) attempts to shift the terms of anthropological debate about kinship onto more contingent and productive terrain.

The Wenner-Gren international symposium, *New Directions in Kinship Study: A Core Concept Revisited*, brought together twenty-one scholars researching kinship within cultural anthropology, cultural studies, science studies, and biological anthropology.⁵ The explicit aims of the conference were threefold: to reassess the widely noted displacement of kinship studies from the center of anthropological inquiry; to bring together for the first time new ethnographic, theoretical, and methodological approaches to kinship study that have emerged at the intersection of anthropology and cultural analyses of science, gender, race, sexuality, nationalism, and transnational political economy; and to examine a diverse range of new ethnographic sites of kinship studies. In looking back to past configurations of kinship study within anthropology, the symposium provided the opportunity to reexamine analytic concepts and contrast different national traditions (primarily U.S., British, and French). In addressing emergent reconfigurations of kinship and kinship studies, the symposium focused on the transformations of familiar concepts as they are refracted through a range of novel sites of kinship production.

The results of the symposium clearly indicate that kinship studies have neither declined nor been displaced from the center of anthropological in-

quiry: they have instead been transformed and revitalized. Kinship studies continue to be crucial to the discipline, not in spite of having been subject to a thoroughgoing critique but precisely because they no longer look quite the same. Thus, while the study of kinship has altered, it not only continues to be pivotal to a wide range of anthropological concerns but has begun to be more widely used in other areas of study (see, for example, Maynes et al. 1996).

RESITING KINSHIP STUDIES

One of the lasting contributions of the 1982 Wenner-Gren conference on feminism and kinship theory was the critique of the concept of analytic “domains,” which had relegated kinship study to specific “types” of society and to differentially gendered “domains” of society (Collier and Yanagisako 1987; for critiques of analytic domaining practices in anthropology, see Kelly 1977; Yanagisako 1979, 1987; Comaroff 1987; Strathern 1992b; Carsten 1997; Ginsburg and Rapp 1995; Yanagisako and Delaney 1995a; McKinnon 2000). In both evolutionary and structural (functional) theory, kinship was largely studied in non-Western settings, within “primitive,” small-scale, and “prestate” societies. And as Martine Segalen’s essay in this volume documents, when kinship was studied in Europe, it was often among rural peasant communities or the urban working class, and was closely tied to the study of folklore and regional identities along with topics such as consanguinity and ethnicity.

A number of works in this volume — such as Segalen’s on French grandparents — bring kinship studies back into not only the West but also the heart of urban, cosmopolitan, middle-class families — indeed, often into anthropologists’ own families. There is a sense from such studies that kinship has come to again rest among the anthropologists themselves, much as it did for Lewis Henry Morgan, for whom — as Gillian Feeley-Harnik so vividly recounts — the kinship dilemmas of his own family life were ever-present in his theoretical writings. Going still further, in other chapters — such as Signe Howell’s on Norwegian transnational adoption — the analytic separation between Euro-American and other kinship formations collapses altogether in the cultural compressions of transnational movements.

Not only have kinship studies escaped their confinement to non-Euro-American societies (and subordinate groups within Europe and the United States) but they have also, importantly, escaped their confinement to the domestic domain: new sites of kinship production include the biogenetics lab, the transnational adoption agency, and cyberspace. Consequently, it is clearer

than ever before that the meaning of kinship can be understood only by reading *across* different cultural domains (Yanagisako and Delaney 1995a). *Relative Values* amply demonstrates that cultural understandings of kinship are shaped by — and, in turn, contribute to the shaping of — the political dynamics of national and transnational identities, the economic movements of labor and capital, the cosmologies of religion, the cultural hierarchies of race, gender, and species taxonomies, and the epistemologies of science, medicine, and technology. In essays focusing on these topics, it is evident that the work of making kinship in such contexts is both prominent and deliberate. There is a corresponding sense, in settings such as the *in vitro* fertilization (IVF) laboratory or genetic counseling session, that the foundational units or assumptions about what creates kinship are being made explicit — as Marilyn Strathern describes in her work on ideas of the natural in English kinship (1992a), Helena Ragoné shows in the context of surrogacy (1994), Susan Kahn details in her account of Jewish Orthodox debates over assisted conception in Israel (1995, 2000), or Sarah Franklin argues in her analysis of IVF practices in England (1997; see also Edwards et al. 1999; Franklin and Ragoné 1998). Such studies foreground a simultaneous multiplication and division of the substantial-codings from which kinship can be assembled, and an associated self-consciousness about what will count as kinship and how it is brought into being.

Although such familiar contingencies of kinship negotiation may be newly visible in unfamiliar contexts such as genetic medicine, where groups of people brought together by shared bodily substance form kin associations of a very contemporary kind, these settings establish important bases of comparison with other kinds of kinship work-in-progress. For instance, changes in the global economy make it possible to adopt or marry not only locally but across a wide range of national, geographic, cultural, sexual, and ethnic boundaries, as well as across various economic, political, and religious fault lines. While this is hardly a novel phenomenon, the increased intensity and frequency of the movements and migrations involved make kin relations such as those established through transnational adoption more familiar to ever-increasing numbers of people in various parts of the world. In this sense, kinship can be said to be subject to the same globalizing effects that are transforming definitions of the nation-state, through an intensification of transnational flows of labor, capital, information, and media (see Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton 1992). The new hybridities often associated with global culture are noticeable not only in the West but in countries such as China, where Yun-

xiang Yan describes a decreasing emphasis on traditional patrilineal forms of kinship and an increasing reliance on nonkin (such as friends, fellow villagers, and work associates) in forms of traditional exchange (*guanxi*). As Yan demonstrates, the changing conditions of the Chinese political economy and the de-traditionalization of Chinese society have produced innovative techniques of relation making, which, in turn, demand of the anthropologist new kinds of analytic self-consciousness.

These new contexts of kinship and kinship study reveal a highly diverse range of interrelated phenomena of markedly different scales—from the gene to the body, to the family or species, to the commodity form and cyberspace. One of the challenges of the new kinship studies will be to trace the connections and conceptual crossovers between phenomena at these vastly different scales of embodiment.

WHAT SIGNIFIES KINSHIP

One important achievement of this volume is the exploration and complication of anthropological understandings of the symbolic density of the substances and codes that come to signify kinship, and their relation to the formation of kinship and other ties. In considering a range of analytic and cultural understandings of the substantial-codings of kinship (to use a formulation provoked by Janet Carsten's chapter), we find that they are as thick and dense with meanings as their negotiations are delicate and subtle.

Substantial-Codings: From Blood to Hypertext

In a detailed historical exegesis of the connection between Morgan's work on kinship and on the American beaver, Feeley-Harnik documents how he relied not on modern notions of biology but on a thick layering of connections among linguistic, zoological, geologic, and hydrologic flows and formations. It was in a deeply spiritual sense that Morgan tracked between biblical, indigenous Native American (Iroquois) and evolutionary frameworks through which his "channels of blood" linked together ideas about land, animals, water, railroads, indigenous peoples, their languages, and the afterlife. Moving from the late nineteenth to the late twentieth century, both Carsten and Franklin probe what we mean analytically and ethnographically by the terms *substance* and *biology*, respectively, arguing that these have been operating as broad and often poorly defined categories in kinship analysis. Carsten makes a valuable contribution by demonstrating the ambiguity and multivo-

cality of the term *substance* as it is used analytically and as it has been deployed in the different ethnographic contexts of Melanesia, Malaysia, and India. In the process, she shows how profoundly other cultural understandings can interrogate and de-familiarize Euro-American cultural and analytic presuppositions about what constitutes kinship, and about the relation between nature and culture, substance and code. Franklin, in a similar fashion, traces the complexities of the varied understandings of biological “facts” in the context of the new biologies of commercial biotechnological innovation. Exploring the geneticization of biology and, in particular, the commodification of genetic information as intellectual property, she challenges the fixity of the notion of biological “substance.”

Following the threads of Euro-American kinship analogies — from biology to blood to genes to code to information — it becomes evident that in late-twentieth-century Euro-American cultures, the substantial-codings that might signify kinship include a diverse range of phenomena — including genetic disease syndromes, the “informatics” of computer programming, and family photography. The chapter by Rayna Rapp, Deborah Heath, and Karen-Sue Taussig shows how a shared gene — for Down’s syndrome, Marfan’s syndrome, or achondroplasia — becomes the basis for new forms of kinship biosociality emerging out of genetic disease support groups. Providing a striking example of the analogic unfolding of what signifies kinship, Stefan Helmreich explores how artificial life scientists read genes as “information” and “code,” which then allows them to read the “information” and “coding” of computer programs as equivalent to “life itself.” The running of computer programs is seen by these scientists to be equivalent to the evolutionary unfolding of kinship relations over time. Likewise, Mary Bouquet’s piece invites reflection on the ways in which the generic conventions of family photography have become one of the primary substantial-codings of kinship relations in both Euro-American cultures and ethnographic representations.

In the end, it is clear that not only what we mean by terms such as *substance* and *biology* is much richer and more diverse than we thought but also that what count as the substantial-codings of kinship have undergone significant historical transformation. As understandings of the “substances” of kinship change — from the Bible’s transubstantiation of divinity through Abraham’s seed, to Morgan’s transubstantiated kinship across rivers of water and blood, to modern biology’s definition of human nature and kinship in terms of genetic codes — so too is the capacity to make and unmake kinship out of them transformed. For example, as genes are described as a code, so kinship has ac-

quired the capacity to become informatic, in the form of virtual genealogies linking lineages of algorithmic progeny in the laboratories of Artificial Life scientists. As informatic relation “overflows substance,” Helmreich argues, it becomes possible to draw new “genealogical” connections between humans, animals, and machines.

Kinship Negotiations: What's Biology Not/Got to Do with It?

Given the multiplication, division, and fluidity of what might count as kinship in late-twentieth-century Euro-American cultures—and indeed, in many other cultures as well—it becomes imperative to examine the processes through which potential kinship ties are both assembled and disassembled. The chapters in this volume make significant contributions to understanding the mechanisms by which possible lines of relation are brought into being or erased by foregrounding and backgrounding various substantial connections and cultural codings. While agency, “choice,” and negotiation become foci of scrutiny, the authors are careful to frame their use of such terms by an analysis of the complex historical and sociocultural forces that produce the possibility (or negation) of agency and choice.

In considering the decisions made in the context of the unprecedented combinatory practices of the new reproductive technologies in infertility clinics, Charis Thompson provides an account of the divergent biological and social models mobilized to decide which of several possible mothers—genetic, gestational, social—will be recognized as the “real” mother of a child. Arguments that foreground one possible line of relationality simultaneously background and erase other potential avenues to the creation of kinship ties. For instance, the same shared tie through genetic substance might be foregrounded to connect a mother to her child through her daughter’s egg, but effaced when such close physical links threaten conjugal integrity or look too much like incest. Similarly, Kath Weston’s piece shows how a range of shifting solidarities is established by foregrounding the same shared bodily substance—blood—in different contexts to create lines of “transfusion” across racial or class divisions. In other contexts, however—for example, blood banks—the disembodiment, standardization, and commodification of blood both obscure tensions and close down possibilities for solidarities and alliances across race and class lines. In her essay on transnational adoption, Howell offers a different perspective on the tensions between various strategies of creating kinship ties by illustrating how Norwegians move between contradictory ex-

planatory frames that naturalize adoptive relations in biological terms, stress social nurturance, and biologize culture as a form of heredity.

Novel recombinatory possibilities are conspicuous not only in what are most evidently the “new” contexts of kinship—such as transnational adoption or reproductive technologies—and not only in Western or Euro-American contexts. As Yan observes in his account of new “privatized” family formations in rural northern China, changes in both customary exchange relations (*guanxi*) and the wider commercial economy in China have introduced new forms of “practical kinship” that foreground more egalitarian links between friends, affines, fellow villagers, and religious associates while backgrounding more traditional, hierarchical patrilineal relations. More flexible, these practical networks are more suited to the changing realities of economy, class, and the influence of cultural tradition. Examining changing kinship patterns in France—in particular, the “recomposed families” resulting from multiple divorces and remarriages—Segalen describes how the emergence of an active, healthy, grandparental “third age” has altered the intergenerational flow of resources (inheritance, property), sociality, and child care within newly flexible urban families. Grandparenting relationships, Segalen contends, are an important site for reinscribing filial stability into increasingly unstable family configurations, even as the flexibility of third-generation relationships is itself an expression of an emphasis on individual choice that contributes to family instability to begin with.

These chapters compel us to consider how kinship is created in ways that coexist with, push against, complement, contradict, erase, and make explicit divergent means of connection and disconnection—that is, they prompt us to “connect less familiar dots,” as Weston urges. It is not simply that kinship must always be created, negotiated, and brought into being in practice, as Yan and others argue. It is also that the lines between kinship and other forms of relationality are fluid (see Carsten 2000). On the one hand, friends, villagers, religious associates, “racialized” others, and strangers can be made into kin, while mothers, grandparents, and patrilineal relations can be made into strangers, or “just” friends. On the other hand, the same substance (blood, genes, eggs, sperm) that is mobilized to create kinship ties in one context, will in different institutional contexts—given different historical, political-economic, and religious forces as well as different individual perspectives—be made to create other kinds of relations, or no relation at all. Kinship is not a preexisting thing but rather something “congealed,” and all these essays ad-

dress, in varying ways, the question that Weston poses at the end of her piece: “Congealed how, for whose benefit, and from what?”

Moving across Cultural Registers:

The Traffic between “Science” and “Culture”

Schneider drew attention to the manner in which scientific—specifically biogenetic—representations are privileged in the United States in the determination of “what kinship is all about” (1968, 1972, 1984). Nevertheless, he did not consider either how biological/scientific representations came to have such a hold on Euro-American cultural understandings of kinship or how those biological/scientific representations are themselves shaped by cultural understandings—including those relating to kinship. In the period since Schneider’s work, a burgeoning field of cultural studies of science has made evident both the cultural context within which scientific knowledge is created and the cultural content of scientific ideas, theories, and practices (for a review of science studies, see Franklin 1995). The chapters in this volume take up this issue of the traffic between different cultural registers as ideas about kinship travel in and out of the scientific lab and through a multiplicity of other cultural contexts. Thus, Jonathan Marks and Stefan Helmreich show how specifically Euro-American cultural ideas about kinship—including paternity, maternity, descent, genealogy, marriage, bounded and unbounded groupings—shape scientific research on the human genome and artificial life, respectively. Carsten and Bouquet examine how cultural tropes of relatedness concerning substance and the visual-substantial representations of family, respectively, have had a specific history and particular consequences for the disciplinary discourse within the “science” of anthropology. Franklin’s investigation of the concept of biology traces the complex crisscrossing of cultural registers in the historical transformation of this crucial idea. The essay by Rapp, Heath, and Taussig is especially rich in its exploration of the multi-directional traffic between scientific and other cultural registers: not only do tropes of kinship and genealogy organize the relations and production of scientific ideas about genetic diseases but the latter are mobilized by people with genetic diseases in the creation of new kinship formations based on shared genetic traits. Moreover, their chapter also points to the productive possibilities of a close, critical, and mutually respectful relationship between scientists and those with whom they are working. By contrast, the potential for scientific representations to be used to define, control, subordinate, and exploit human populations in a variety of contexts is addressed in Jonathan Marks’s

account of genetics and the Human Genome Diversity Project and in Melbourne Tapper's history of the colonial uses of medical research on sickling in Africa. As Daniel Segal noted in his summary comments at the symposium, the question is not primarily whether the science here is good or bad (although that is certainly something to consider) but rather how to understand the complex traffic between different cultural registers, including that of science. This is essential in order to comprehend not only the inseparability of science and other cultural registers as mutually constituting discourses but also the peculiar authority and hold that science is granted—at least in Euro-American societies—in defining and naturalizing the modalities of human relations.

WHAT KINSHIP SIGNIFIES

Kinship systems, like gender, have often been theorized as classification systems and even as grammars. In turn, such social technologies of naming and classifying, or of sorting and dividing, are seen to be generative of the kinds of material, relational, and cultural worlds that are possible, and for whom. As a classificatory technology, kinship can be mobilized to signify not only specific kinds of connection and inclusion but also specific kinds of disconnection and exclusion—as well as the boundary-crossing trickster movements that confound such classifications. Since relations of power are central to the articulation of such classificatory boundaries and movements, kinship is also utilized to articulate the possibilities for social relations of equality, hierarchy, amity, ambivalence, and violence. In so doing, it becomes evident that kinship's classificatory maneuvers can be mobilized to bring into being *other* categories of relationality—including genders, sexualities, races, species, machines, nature, and culture. In what follows, we explore some of the signifying characteristics of kinship in Euro-American cultures. We do so, however, without losing sight of the fact that the cultural specificity of these Euro-American understandings of kinship are only made visible through comparative work (both theoretical and ethnographic) that simultaneously opens windows onto other cultural visions of relationality.

Nature, Culture, and the Properties of Kinship

In her recent work, to which the concept of kinship is primary, Donna Haraway defines kinship as “a technology for producing the material and semiotic effect of natural relationship, of shared kind” (1997, 53). Yet as Strathern points

out, kinship's naturalizing function is two-way. For Euro-Americans, kinship is a "hybrid" between nature and culture, or biology and society (Strathern 1992b, 16–17). It therefore becomes a cultural technology not only for naturalizing relationships but also, and at the same time, for the reverse—for transforming naturalized relations into cultural forms. "*Kinship thus connects the two domains*" (Strathern 1992b, 17) and works in both directions—moving back and forth between what counts as natural/given and cultural/created. In the process, kinship becomes the site for producing what will count as the *difference* between nature and culture.

In the Euro-American tradition, this difference is often additive: culture, for example, is configured as "after nature" (Strathern 1992a), as "something more" added to and transformative of nature. It is for this reason that definitions of property, enterprise, paternity, and their formal configurations as patent, copyright, or commodity—which all depend on the idea of adding something more to nature—become key to the narratives of kinship that articulate the origins of culture and significance of scientific invention. Analyzing these linkages, McKinnon's and Franklin's chapters look at the relationship between kinship, property, and paternity in the anthropological stories of the origin of culture and the contemporary stories of scientific progress, respectively. Both sets of narratives outline a developmental trajectory marked by the "enterprising up" (Strathern 1992b; Haraway 1997) of naturalized kinship relations into the property relations that signal both cultural and scientific progress. Examining two contrasting "origin stories" in the work of Morgan and Lévi-Strauss, McKinnon considers how—despite different (indeed opposite) starting points—both theorists imagine the development of culture as the transformation of naturalized forms of kinship (maternal, female, consanguineal) into transcendent cultural forms marked by the simultaneous discovery and coalescence of paternity and property (whether conceptualized in terms of inheritance or exchange). The paternal enterprise that is the mark of civilization is thus nearly indistinguishable from the enterprise that creates relations of property out of more naturalized forms of kinship. Similarly, in her discussion of the changing meanings of biological facts in the context of the new genetics and biotechnology, Franklin explores the significance of commercial propriety in the generation of new life-forms, such as transgenic animals and cloned sheep. Asking whether biological facts are doing the same kind of naturalizing work when they have become commercial transactions marketed under trademarks, she expands the linkages examined by McKin-

non, Haraway, and Strathern between property, paternity, and enterprise as they occur in the context of the new biologies.

'R' Genes US? Genetics and the Uses of Genealogies

The use of the concepts of blood, genes, genetics, and genealogy to produce social classifications and definitions of the “family of man” is not a recent phenomenon. The chapters in this volume, however, take critical steps in advancing our understanding of how the acceleration of scientific and medical research into human phylogeny and disease comprises a powerful force in society, in relation to which kinship definitions are actively reconstructed in a range of contexts. Together, these essays provide a contrastive frame in which it is possible to theorize the multiple uses of gene/alogy—as it can be mobilized both in the service of discrimination and subordination, and as the basis for new communities of shared concern.

Several works address the scientific-political uses of kinship in the production of naturalized or racialized types and discriminations. Marks traces the naturalization of the idea of “isolated” and “pure” human populations—which draw clear lines of exclusion and inclusion—through various scientific studies of genes and race up to and including the Human Genome Diversity Project (HGDP). In the process, he warns of the consequences of the unexamined classificatory maneuvers deployed by the HGDP, especially in light of those of an earlier era that distinguished populations subject to eugenic interventions and were a means for establishing hierarchical control over genetic resources. Similarly, Tapper’s historical reading of the scientific construction of sickle cell anemia in Africa demonstrates how colonial scientists and administrators used sickling rates to naturalize tribal relations as biogenetic categories. Mapping racial categories “in the blood” reshaped not only the practice of medicine but also, through it, the structures of government by means of which African people became racialized tribes subject to colonial subordination and control.

By contrast, other chapters investigate the innovative uses of the analogies of kinship to create new forms of inclusiveness and egalitarian community. For instance, Rapp, Heath, and Taussig show how the scientific identification of genetic mutations has enabled the renegotiation of the meaning of disease and disability, and has provided the basis for the creation of genetic genealogies and kinship communities, which have arisen in the context of genetic disease support groups. Although some of these communities have, at

different times, reinscribed hierarchies based on the relative valuation of genetic differences, others have focused on shared genetic inheritance to create communities based on equality rather than hierarchy, inclusion rather than exclusion.

From Amity to the Ambivalence and Violence of Kinship

One of the purposes of this book is to explore the ways in which ideologies of kinship become embedded in and signifiers of relations of power that draw lines of hierarchy and exclusion, bring about relations of dominance and subordination, and generate a range of violences in the heart of kinship. While these are as central to kinship as “amity” or “diffuse enduring solidarity,” the emphasis on kinship as a form of connection has often led to a neglect of its equally important constitution out of acts of disconnection or rupture (see Dominguez 1986; Martinez-Alier 1974; Strathern 1981; Williams 1995).

Returning to the biblical story of Abraham, Carol Delaney traces the ways in which ideas about paternity entail ideas about ownership and inheritance that have multiple consequences for who is included and excluded in the genealogy of Abraham. The father has rights (here, the right to sacrifice) over his children that are not accorded to the mother; and genealogical lines are drawn to include the children of some mothers (married) but not others (unmarried), and some children (male) but not others (female). The entailments of religious ideas about paternity in the Abraham story, Delaney contends, not only place an act of violence (the willingness to sacrifice one’s child) at the heart of kinship but also explicitly delineate which forms of relation will and will not count as kinship. As such, kinship becomes a signifier of the power relations, inclusions, and exclusions that are definitive of religious faith and community. In a similar fashion, Pauline Turner Strong delves into the ways in which extra-tribal adoptions of Native American children, undertaken in the so-called best interests of the child, are experienced by Native Americans as a violent assault on their identity and culture—one that also makes evident the relations of power as well as the cultural differences between Native Americans and the dominant political-social-economic order of the United States.

Once the focus of inquiry includes both inclusions and exclusions, both the amity and the violence at the core of kinship, and both the egalitarian and hierarchical lines of relation, ambivalence emerges as an important avenue for understanding the complexities of kinship relations. In his chapter, Michael G. Peletz argues that an emphasis on ambivalence yields insights into

the nature of kinship as it is shaped by the tensions and contradictions between differential relations of power and resistance, individual agency and desire, and diverse rights, demands, and obligations. And as Peletz, Howell, and Yan all note, attention to ambivalence and emotional valences produces a different perspective not only on kinship and family but also on the meaning of social structure and the means of theorizing its determining influence. In this way, the self-conscious shift toward the use of practice theory in both Yan's and Peletz's accounts reveals again how close the connection is between the ways kinship is signified analytically and what shows up as kinship as a result.

Cultures of Inclusion and Exclusion: Fixing and Crossing Boundaries

If, as has been argued, kinship has long been used to conceptualize ideas about the bounded integrity of nations (Schneider 1969; Heng and Devan 1992; Delaney 1995), races and castes (Williams 1995; Haraway 1997), species (Haraway 1992, 1997), and bodies and machines (Haraway 1991; Helmreich 1998), it has also been and, especially now, has increasingly become a medium through which both the fixing and crossing of boundaries between these categories is signified. For example, while Delaney (1995) has shown how the bounded integrity of the Turkish nation-state is conceptualized through the figures of paternity and maternity, Veena Das (1995) demonstrates how the partition of India in 1947 was negotiated and literally embodied through the boundary-crossing kidnapping and marriage of Indian and Pakistani women by their respective enemies as well as through their subsequent repatriation. In this latter case, affinal relations became a primary figure through which to articulate not only the bounding but also the crossing and subsequent uncrossing of political and religious identities. The chapters in this volume explore various ways in which kinship is mobilized to articulate these kinds of bounding and boundary-crossing effects.

With regard to ideas about *race*, Tapper's essay illustrates how discourses concerning blood (and specifically sickling) could be used in the colonial context to bring into effect rigid distinctions between "races" and "tribes," while Weston's chapter explores how discourses concerning blood transfusions could bring into relief both racial fears of miscegenation and narratives of the cross-racial kinship solidarity of common blood. With regard to ideas about *culture* and *nation*, Strong's piece shows how adoptions of Native American children by Euro-American couples take place in a context of differential power and operate under a hegemonic definition of what constitutes a family—thereby working to effect the exclusion and erasure of nondomi-

nant forms of family relation. In the process, distinct lines between two cultures (and nations) are drawn by reference to different understandings of what counts as family. From a different perspective, Howell examines the ways in which Norwegians who have adopted Korean children work hard to create unambiguously Norwegian children at the same time that they effect a kind of bridging between the two cultures and nations—as Norwegians travel to Korea to find their children’s so-called roots and as they attempt to re-create Korean culture in Norwegian meeting halls. With regard to *species*, Franklin’s work investigates the emerging terrain of transgenic species boundary crossing, while Helmreich pushes the frontiers of kinship into human-machine hybridities that extend out into cyberspace. In all these examples, kinship becomes a medium through which to think about, configure, and articulate the shape and consequences of such boundary crossings and boundary enforcement as well as their respective embodiments.

RECONTEXTUALIZING KINSHIP STUDIES

The trajectory of kinship studies described by the chapters in this volume directly challenges those outlined in recent books on kinship by Robert Parkin (1997) and Linda Stone (1997), in which the distinction between biological and social facts is defended, a return to more traditional approaches to kinship is advocated (Parkin 1997, 137–38), and the critique of the concept of kinship offered by Yanagisako and Collier (1987) is rejected (Stone 1997, 4). In the midst of ongoing debates within anthropology—including those concerning the scientific authority of the discipline or the relationship of anthropology to cultural studies—it is likely that the study of kinship will continue to register broader currents of the discipline, much as it has always done.

For the authors in this book, Ladislav Holy’s observation in his astute review of anthropological perspectives on kinship is aptly succinct: “New insights into kinship have been gained, as they are always gained, through shift[s] in contextualization” (1996, 6). Indeed, we have argued here that a number of shifts in contextualization, both theoretical and ethnographic, have produced new insights into what signifies kinship and what kinship signifies.

In contemplating the consequences of these shifts for transforming kinship studies, the authors in *Relative Values* have been confronted with multiple tasks. As much as we are concerned to trace the new lines of recombinatory logic—which produce kinship in the unfamiliar contexts of patented or arti-

ficial life-forms, transspecies hybrids, and local-global compressions—we are concerned to avoid both overestimating the novelty of such phenomena and overly celebrating their transgressiveness. While responsive to what is distinctive about the emergent “hybrid” possibilities associated with biotechnology, for example, we think it equally important to map out the points where such combinations and fusions are prohibited, suppressed, or unacknowledged, and for whom new technologies are put to use. As much as we are intrigued by the ways in which boundaries—of nations, cultures, species, races, persons, bodies, cells—have been breached, we are equally concerned to draw attention to the ways in which such ruptures become occasions to reestablish and reinforce familiar normative categories (see Cannell 1990). As much as we focus on the destabilization of foundational certainties, we also highlight the ways in which categories such as the natural and human continue to be used to signify what is certain, essential, and given in the nature of things. As much as we turn to the role of process, negotiation, and choice, we are also attentive to the restrictions that make them possible for some people in some contexts but not for others. And as much as we wish to map out new directions in kinship studies, we are deeply mindful of the complex ways in which older directions and questions become newly relevant by the recontextualization of kinship studies.

NOTES

- 1 Mary Bouquet (1993) demonstrates that it is impossible to characterize the analytic categories of kinship study as generically “Western”: her study of the difficulties of teaching kinship theory in Portugal make evident the peculiarly “British” nature of many of the categories used in kinship analysis (see also Kahn 2000).
- 2 The critique of naturalization outlined by Sylvia Yanagisako and Carol Delaney foregrounds the importance of scientific discourse, in particular, as a form of reproducing inequalities. For example, the use of scientific racial categories is cited as “a system of social categories constructed *in terms of biological difference*” (1995a, 20). Although we do not discuss the more recent debates within the anthropology of science or “science as culture” here in this introduction, the links between the critique of natural facts in anthropology and the reexamination of Western scientific knowledge more generally are explored in several chapters below.
- 3 For reviews of contemporary kinship studies, see Faubion 1996; and Peletz 1996.
- 4 Similarly, Linda Stone asserts that “a male/female difference in reproduction is universal (however varied the cultural constructions of this difference might be) and that on the basis of this ‘fact’ we can begin to make meaningful cross-cultural comparisons” (1997, 4). Stone’s bracketing of “this ‘fact’” expresses precisely the instability

of its place at the center of her proposed model of kinship study, in a somewhat paradoxical recapitulation of its uncertainty even as she claims it as a “basis” for “meaningful cross-cultural comparisons.”

- 5 The participants in the symposium included Mary Bouquet (University of Utrecht), Janet Carsten (University of Edinburgh), Charis Thompson (Harvard University), Carol Delaney (Stanford University), Gillian Feeley-Harnik (University of Michigan), Sarah Franklin (Lancaster University), Christine Gailey (University of California, Riverside), Corinne Hayden (University of California, Santa Cruz), Stefan Helmreich (New York University), Signe Howell (University of Oslo), Jonathan Marks (University of North Carolina, Charlotte), Susan McKinnon (University of Virginia), Michael Peletz (Colgate University), Rayna Rapp (New York University), Daniel Segal (Pitzer College), Martine Segalen (University of Paris X, Nanterre), Sydel Silverman (Wenner-Gren Foundation), Verena Stolcke (Universidad Autonoma, Barcelona), Marilyn Strathern (University of Cambridge), Pauline Turner Strong (University of Texas, Austin), Melbourne Tapper (independent scholar), Kath Weston (Harvard University), and Yunxiang Yan (University of California, Los Angeles).

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