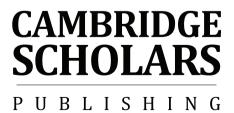# Research on Work-Family Discourses

Researching Work-Family Discourses:
Step-by-Step Audiovisual Analysis
of the British Sitcom *Only Fools and Horses*
(1981-2003)

By

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P U B L I S H I N G

To Inés, my dearest co-juggler.

To Hugo and Adriana, my two scallywag clowns.

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FOREWORD

As Eduardo Infante correctly states at the start of this book "the domination of men over women is a constant materialised reality" that has had diverse consequences for both men and women over many centuries. These consequences have been explored, debated and contested over the years. A key topic of those explorations has been the link between work and domestic spheres and the interfaces between the two. This interface is seen as a key site of the negotiation and contestation of gender relations. This book takes a novel approach to investigating these issues. For those of you who may be unfamiliar with the territory, it is safe to say that Only Fools and Horses is a much-loved British television programme. Although it is some time since the original episodes were made, the British television viewer can still see regular repeats of their favourite episodes and many would be able to tell you their favourite anecdotes about Del boy, Rodney, Trigger and their friends and families. In this book keen attention is paid to the nuanced delights of the English language as used and abused by the Trotter family and their accomplices. However, this attention is turned to the somewhat serious issue of how through an everyday British sitcom gender relations and the work-family interface are interplayed. As such the novel methods in use here lead to an alternative and insightful account of contemporary debates.

Although the conclusions may be that there is still a long way to go before androgynous roles are acceptable, the analysis presented provides an insightful and interesting account of some of the reasons why this might be the case.

—Professor Catherine Cassell
Manchester, March 2011

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

INTRODUCTORY NOTES

If you are a female reading this book, your life has always been socially hindered by men's thoughts and wishes from the very time you were born. As far back as we can recall, the history of humanity has always been written with androcentric ink since ancient times. Excluding certain periods full of mythological literature or romantic prose (*see* Bachofen 1861; Morgan 1877; McLennan 1970; Maine 1960), the domination of men over women has been a constant, materialised reality that has served as a structural principle for individual gender identities. This has been the inherited basis for the horizontal and vertical segregation of the labour market (Engels 1973; Delphi 1977; Scott 1990; Blackburn, Browne, Brooks and Jarman 2002), among many other forms of discrimination. However, the "universal logic" of this social principle is nowadays weakened as social and economic demands of globalisation are calling for new means of adaptation. The male cultural "weapons" of the *sex-gender system* and *gender roles* are now being reinvented under the new features of contemporary employment and today's labour market, different from those that helped Rubin in the mid-1970s define these very psychosocial terms (Rubin 1975). It is a must for new generations to gain insight into the new societal relationships that are giving hope to equality between the sexes as part of the degenderised contemporary society of the twenty-first century. Paradoxically, the onset of these humanised rules seems to be commanded by the effects of modern technology.

While computers were entering the workplace and households throughout the twentieth century, we were progressively altering the old rules of inherited, industrialised settings that have finally modified the composition of the labour force and the whole nature of work and family domains (Kanter 1995; Peiró, Prieto & Roe 1996; Orrange 2003; Castells 2004). Modern technologies have enabled people to be in constant, fast communication and have contributed to closer relationships between the work and family domains. The new social reality is also influenced by the so-called *knowledge economy*, the impact of which on employees' lives should be better acknowledged when deconstructing work and family spheres. This new reality demands and reveals that work-family interchanges embedded in the philosophy of a globalised economy have nothing to do with past times and force people to negotiate new power

positions and societal roles (Seddon 2007). By means of modern technologies, globalisation implies growing mobility across frontiers, the mobility of goods, information, and, to a lesser extent, people. Thus, the idea of separate, developmental human spheres is quite weak in contemporary societies. Consequently, work-family dichotomies historically inherited and reinforced during the Industrial Revolution cannot be assumed anymore because the impact of new technologies contributes to the merger of both spheres. The consolidation of the capitalist model only considered "work" as an economically rewarded activity performed under contractual conditions and therefore empowered only those citizens-traditionally men- occupying public positions. This conception was even explained through *naturalistic* and *essentialist* theories by many authors (e.g. Ortner 1974; Rosaldo 1974; Sack 1975). But it was also attacked by feminist movements that campaigned for gender equality. These theories stated that allocations of sex roles were allocated in consideration of the natural, biological differences between men and women. Such theories have long impacted modern societies by feeding gender discourses and dichotomist social representations of work and family spheres that cannot be tolerated any longer.

As scientists and practitioners, we are still in debt to the twenty-first century for providing and detecting the subtle and persuasive social messages that could free us from gender roles in order to become complete citizens inside degenderised societies. Notwithstanding this duty, we sail unsafely through dangerous and mysterious waters fighting against sex stereotypes and a power imbalance between men and women, among other excluded citizens and roles. These constraints, strongly reinforced by certain religious and socio-political thoughts, have clouded our vision of new options for social change. In this sense, it is still difficult to conceive of a leading business woman in the social imaginary, and it is even more bizarre to picture a scene of men tenderly looking after their children´s health free from social comment or prejudice.

Consequently, how can we promote new images and portraits of social, genderless roles? How can we convince the audience that free women can be a threat to powerful men, but not to the equilibrium of society? How can we persuade women to co-delegate the burden of child rearing with men? Which contemporary models of degendered roles are to be adopted as the preferable ones?

This book aims to contribute to the description of traditional and emergent gender roles in order to disclose contemporary social representations of work and family spheres. The book underlines the importance and consequences of new (fe)male degendered roles and seeks

to understand the means by which men and women create new means of adaptation through the blur of traditional gender roles that seem to be unsustainable. It should be easy to prove that gender roles fall under the heading of female discrimination at the work-family interface; and therefore, the study of role-making among them is essential to promoting new work-family discourses and family-friendly policies among citizens and organisations, respectively.

This book attempts to do so by analysing work-family roles and discourses that strive to degenderise society from the influence of the most-awarded sitcom ever shown on British television, "*Only Fools and Horses*" (OFAH), aired between 1981 and 2003. This BBC sitcom has long impacted British cultural life and even today is popular among huge conventions of fans that still re-watch the episodes. OFAH has its own entry in Wikipedia where you can find many facts about its success both in- and outside of Britain, including the fact that the term "lovely jubbly", which is frequently used by the main character *Del Boy*, found its way into the Oxford English Dictionary in 2003.

A secondary goal of the book is the promotion of audiovisual analysis as a useful methodology for researching work-family issues as a complement to the traditional quantitative studies most often used in the research arena. Both discourse and content analyses (Johnstone 2001) will be used to further discussions on the issues by means of a step-by-step procedure using NVivo and other collateral software.

If the reader happens to be ignorant of the OFAH sitcom, (which probably means that (s)he has been living in a bunker for the last 20 years), I would recommend watching a couple of the episodes available online (http://tv.blinkx.com/show/only-fools-and-horses/h9Qm9bttt0OrMjc _) in order to better comprehend this book. However, this is not absolutely necessary because the audiovisual analysis will actually place the reader in each scene with quotations, and a synopsis for each analysed chapter can also be found in Appendix D. Otherwise, the book will certainly be enjoyable for worldwide OFAH fans who will have the opportunity to recall the funny adventures of the *Trotter* family. The sitcom was also shown in the US and Australia and an American version was said to be planned around the year 2010.

PART I

PERSPECTIVES IN THE STUDY OF HUMAN DOMAINS

CHAPTER ONE

POST-INDUSTRIAL CONSTRICTIONS
OF THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Marx's historical materialism understands work and family domains as realities historically conditioned by the infrastructure level of a society and influenced by the type of economy and technology used in them. Therefore, when studying work and family domains, we must bear in mind that those spheres are temporal, dynamic realities that vary in accordance with societal advances (Marx 1932; Godelier 1984). We need to be clearly aware of relevant social, political, and economic changes that may affect work and family spheres. Even more, according to functional structuralism (Parsons 1959), both work and family domains progressively modify their contents and functions in order to adapt themselves to new environmental conditions due to *homeostatic processes*, as if they were living systems. For instance, Parson was able to explain that the nuclear family structure that derived from the deep impact of the mid-eighteenth century Industrial Revolution had greater chances of adaptability than the traditional extended family which enabled the radicalization of gender roles throughout the Victorian middle classes. Although the debate still remains in the literature (Reisman 1998; Twomey 2001), we can identify one last, significant technological advance in contemporary societies since 1974— termed the *Third Industrial Revolution* by Greenwood (1999)[1]—which also brought us new adaptational challenges.

The starting point of these changes can be found in the capitalist post-industrial economy, which foreshadowed new information technologies (Reisman 1998; Estefanía 1996; Peiró, Prieto, and Roe 1996; López López 2000; Twomey 2001). Nearly sixty years ago, technologies such as

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[1] The Second Industrial Revolution is said to have started at the end of the nineteenth century with the emergence of electrification in the 1880s, and ended by the beginning of the first World War when mass production at factories became widespread in the 1920s.

computers, robotics, cybernetics and PCs took people away from "pen and paper" work, and nowadays allow individuals and societies to work and communicate regardless of the distances between them like never seen before. The first consequence of this is the creation of new machinery that operates faultless and quicker than human minds and actions. For instance, the automobile industry has reduced the time it takes to design a complete car model using a handful of workers per work unit by using Delcam, AutoCad and other specialised software (Grolier Encyclopaedia 1993). Informatics, office automation, domotics and robotics can accurately replace human effort and relieve people from hard, menial tasks. Geographical distance among workers is merely a minor hindrance today because of long-distance communications and contact with customers is more diverse, closer and faster than ever before (e.g., distance shopping, telemarketing, videoconferences, and telework). According to Castells (2004), the development of the *Internet*—the second information technology revolution—is said to have sound implications on the organisation of economic activities and increased productivity. These implications erode the old work-family borders inherited from the Industrial Revolution that had at one time established work and family inside urban and rural environments, respectively, and placed societal relationships within and between countries in the globalisation processes. As countries were physically brought closer together, the relationships and exchanges among them also increased, and new rules and agreements had to be created in order to re-establish the status quo of societies. Basically, political and economic rules had to provide for more flexibility and huge international mergers between large powerful multinational companies, sometimes yielding precarious and poor working conditions for the sake of profitable competitiveness. At the same time, trade unions and small communities complained about the decreasing civil rights that seemed to come along with globalisation and the fact that cultural identities were in danger of extinction. To this sense, sociologist Roland Robertson (1999) coined the term *glocalisation* to describe certain communities' desire to maintain their own cultural localist or nationalist identities as they are affected by globalisation processes that increase external relationships with other cultures. "Think globally, act locally" is the glocalisation motto which expresses the need and right of local communities to influence their own culture and environment in spite of the homogenisation that occurs in conjunction with globalisation processes.

These features of today's labour market draw an incoming, intangible world primarily based on the essential handling of information and

communication processes to produce and provide services or goods. Employers who are looking to incorporate new human resources into their companies will (should) not search for manual workers and those who are willing to hold a job in this century will (should) not look for a single position or employer (Super 1980; Staines 1986; Rendon et al. 1997; Parker and Kropp 2008). In most economic sectors, relationships between employers and employees now have to do with buying and selling ideas—and, to a lesser extent, "hiring" physical efforts—within a temporary period of mutual compromise (Handy 1997). Compared to mental activity, physical work is no longer as frequent and tedious as it used to be (Peiró, Prieto, and Roe 1996; Patterson 2001) and most of it turns into mental processes. Visualising objects, creating procedures, thinking through and communicating ideas seem to substitute the physical labour of the immediate past such as operating tools, lifting weights or moving objects. Therefore, the new information technologies decrease the use of human power and effort and, on the other hand, increase the mental activity of workers in a process known as *work mentalization* (Peiró, Prieto, and Roe 1996; Patterson 2001). Through the mentalization process, menial jobs fade away and many of them are redesigned with technological innovations. For example, brokers in New York and Tokyo have been eliminated from economic scenarios after 100 years of history and a complex information system is now being used instead. From healthcare services to financial companies, the impact of new information technology is evident in the greater use of data and information, both intangible working tools. As many products from other sectors are also delivered online, the line between "product" and "service" is becoming less distinct. Modern societies concentrate the highest peak of productivity on the service sector which deals with information exchange and intangible, temporary products across continents (Bray 1991). Precisely the service sector is said to account for up to 70% of the total wealth of Western contemporary societies where communication skills are certainly an important asset (Peiró, Prieto, and Roe 1996). Thirty billion pounds were spent last year in the United Kingdom Internet market with a 40% increase in customers (1.4 billion sellers). Not surprisingly, over two-thirds of these customers spent half of their money online during the 2006 Christmas period alone (Ryan 2007).

In the new working conditions, the most valued employees are those who have a set of skills that cannot be easily replicated or automatised, commonly linked to knowledge-based assets. Knowledge workers are those who continue to maintain their jobs in tenure track positions

compared to those workers that are being forced to work intermittent jobs or even to be excluded from the post-industrialised labour market. Heart surgeons, nurses, nuclear engineers, chemists and lawyers are typical examples of knowledge workers because they are able to operate and innovate with sound ideas. Although limited by the nature of the job, any employee can also play an active part in the knowledge economy as long as they contribute with new ways of thinking, performing, and managing their job effectively. No matter who employs them, knowledge-based workers are, for all intents and purposes, their own business and, as such, they are more prepared for unstable and unpredictable work environments. Consequently, the future of the labour market is certain only for those who constantly innovate and provide significant contributions.

The workplace has also been redefined by new telematics technology. The new workplace enables individuals to perform their tasks at home or anywhere else just by using laptops and mobile phones; thus, many workers are no longer required to travel to an office (Rifkin 1996; Twomey 2001; Perrons 2003). This new workplace mainly affects most of the bureaucratic and service positions which encompass the vast majority of non-physical jobs, while many manual jobs are disappearing or being delegated to customers. For instance, customers can now hire a place to clean, maintain and even repair their own cars, or they can purchase their shopping items using self-checkout machines and even put together their purchases themselves at home (e.g. Ikea's successful self-assembled products). Moreover, consumers can use advanced technology to buy almost anything over the Internet at excellent, reduced prices. According to Handy (2002), offices will be as necessary during the new century as churches[2].

A workplace designed telematically will certainly impact work-family responsibilities for most of us in the so-called 24/7 society, as we will be able to jump instantly from different human spheres (Twomey 2001). Twenty-four-seven should not be understood as always being available to work (i.e. twenty-four hour shops), but rather as having non-stop opportunities to accomplish both work and non-work demands with the help of technology and self-management. In this sense, workers will have to learn to effectively switch work and family duties on and off, making the

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[2] Lack of faith is another feature of contemporary societies according to many writers (Halman 1991; Ester et al. 1993; Orizo 1991; Savater 1996), therefore rendering churches useless as people have not accepted the imposition of unproved theories. Many churches in England, in fact, are being restored or redesigned for flat accommodations as a way to solve the shortage of building sites.

best of their time management. As recently stated by Cooper (2005), this flexible working scenario is a liberating experience for individuals who prove to have adequate skills and attitudes in order to manage their own lives and personal development.

In summary, the labour market and work activity are culturally becoming "soft" rather than "hard" as a result of the labour mentalization process that comes from the globalisation of modern capitalism. "Soft" culture involves the mind, flexibility, adaptability, mobility, impermanence and blends as well as ethereal realities. On the other hand, "hard" culture is devoted to strength, and static, physical, and tangible realities. Some authors have stated that the mentalization process is the reason for organisations getting rid of physical, tangible resources such as buildings, jobs, hierarchies or commercial stocks (Patterson 2001; Twomey 2001; Handy 2002). Society has witnessed the implementation of new business related activities such as temporary work, delocalisation, downsizing, empowerment, outsourcing, just in time, and so forth, in an attempt to save expenses. The development of information technologies permits all these new trends in organisational policies and strategies (Galinsky and Stain 1990; Allen 2001; Patterson 2001).

The globalisation of the knowledge economy that began with the development and exchange of new information technology allows big companies to operate in a wider market because of their need to be highly competitive. According to Reich's 1993 study (see Peiró, Prieto, and Roe 1996), nowadays products, services, money and technology can easily be exchanged; so a country's wealth depends more upon its citizens' or workers' ideas and creativity than on its material resources. Employees seem to have to create their own work activity or commercial image to satisfy personal or other people's expectations, and firms will probably only use a given idea for a short period of time, as they will quickly deem it outdated (Patterson 2001; Perrons 2003). Employers and employees are both engaged in temporary work relationships to achieve common goals using qualitative rather than quantitative efforts. The outlook for the near future shows a labour market with a few large super-companies, and many others selling or servicing their products. The same products will be delivered everywhere around the world with no cultural feature other than the production company trademark.

As stated by Handy (2002), the structural conditions of work environments will evolve into minimal expressions with the enrichment of ideas. Labour interactions will not be based on hierarchical positions anymore, and the concept of power and authority will be weakened to a

great extent, especially in democratic societies (Handy 1997; Infante 2001). This downsizing effect and empowerment strategy may be due to the impossibility of controlling employees in a technologised world where we can always be "in touch" but not "touchable". Moreover, employees have fewer permanent workplaces and are involved in frequent business travel and geographical or functional mobility. This lack of control encourages or even forces employers to delegate duties among staff and promote democratic, horizontal communications in which to appraise the development of ideas and final outcomes rather than supervised actions of continuous, monotonous activities.

Downsizing and empowerment also affect gender construction and relationships. Power-based imbalances between men and women, especially those related to economic resources, are disappearing, and therefore, the traditional contents of complementary gender roles need to be altered (Pleck, Lamb and Levine 1986; Badinter 1989; Woodhill and Samuels 2004; Uriarte 2008). Consequently, gender expectancies will not serve as a means to esteem a worker who could be suitable regardless of his or her sex. This is commonly evident in virtual teams where the lack of social cues in mediated communication prevents the formation of prejudices and stereotypes and where the members are listened to only because of their appropriated ideas.

The use of this new technology, the Internet, intranets, e-mail, iPods, MP3s, pen drives, laptops and the like is also profoundly changing our way of thinking and living, primarily giving us a sense of power to *construct* and *deconstruct* in a probable extension of a "cut-and-paste" activity (Miall 2005). In our society, everything seems to be true and false, good and bad, and legal and illegal at the same time depending on how the ideas in support are portrayed. The debate encourages us to actively participate with great flexibility as workers and citizens in order to adapt ourselves to the ongoing changes of labour markets and social environments. Consequently, the ability to deconstruct the world is the key to success in work and life (Bosshart 2006). The new social order demands and shows work-family exchanges inside the globalised economy philosophy that have nothing to do with the past and is forcing people to negotiate new power positions and roles. The most significant demands calling for new ways of social participation are described below:

* Diversification of the labour market: the progressive presence of women in the labour market together with the entry of new workers from diverse countries—especially South American and Eastern European countries in

Europe—forces us to bear in mind qualitative and affective factors in human resources management and work policies such as culture, diversity, communication skills and teamwork (Gutek, Larwood and Stemberg 1986; Goodstein 1994). We need to learn how people from different cultures do things because when we accept them as part of our democratic culture— mainly as part of the workforce—it is then a must to facilitate acculturation processes by which diverse cultural values and social practices are exchanged through direct, daily contacts in a will of mutual enrichment. This idea is not even new: we have historically enriched our world by copying or adapting foreign practices (e.g., total quality from Japan); however, what we do now is import not only new ideas but also the people that hold them. In the task of demonstrating positive attitudes to admit new ways of doing things and rely on other thoughts and views, communication and teamwork are essential. Effective communication is assured by removing powerful positions in hierarchical relationships and assuring face-to-face, horizontal interactions inside flattened organisations. The nineteenth century socio-centric ideology that presented Western societies as more civilised and advanced in comparison to the so-called primitive ones needs to be updated[3]. Therefore, when tending to workforce diversity, the concept of power is reinvented to promote rich exchanges between white Western European males and the rest, including white Western European females. This downsizing effect is also improving the luck of working women who aim to achieve organizational top positions and higher working responsibilities. The progressive entrance of women into the labour market serves as a starting point for gradually generating changes in culture as men are found inside the home more often than ever before (Orizo 1991; Peiró, Prieto, and Roe 1996).

* Labour flexibility: The majority of post-industrial governments have drifted among flexible modifications of the inner aspects of work in order to assist with the adaptation processes of organisations inside frequently changing environments. Flexible timetables, part-time jobs, geographical and functional mobility, outplacement, complex salary structures, the updating of professional categories, and early retirement, among others, are commonplace strategies nowadays (Super 1980; Staines 1986). The flexibility is sometimes extreme as certain jobs are disappearing and employees who survived workforce cuts are constantly moved about by the

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[3] Unfortunately, our social imaginery still makes uneven distinctions between Western and Middle Eastern countries that portray savage and primitive pictures of foreign communities, which legitimate bellicous actions from and towards them.

effects of those flexible commands that might affect non-work spheres (e.g., geographical mobility, expatriate professionals, "ad hoc" projects, etc.). Even countries and cultures where the concept of *"a job for life"* was the social norm are now suffering the inescapable reality of important job cuts in every economic sector and especially in public services and welfare (Moreno 1999a; Lu and Lin 2002). For many workers, working life is a rather continuous set of temporal and elusive attachments within group or organisational projects. Flexibility may also endanger the use of written contracts between organisations and employees. As pointed out by Handy (1997), work contracts are useless because good workers do not need them—because we trust in them—and bad workers do not deserve them. Thus, organisations are looking for new ways of providing salaries not exclusively connected to money-based contractual relationships.

* Irrational behaviour: Important enquiries into modern organisations reveal different forms of creativity, action research, innovation, effective negotiation, organisational health and development, blended learning, work ethics, and so on (Gutek, Searle and Klepa 1991). Many of these organisational strategies call for a reinforcement of the irrational way of thinking or acting with respect to the traditional view of companies as rational entities with fixed tasks, aims, and positions (Weber, 1969; Simon 1969; Ruwhiu and Cone 2010). The irrational view of organisations is linked to the notion of change management by which employed people and organisations plan useful ways of predicting, or better said, "inventing" the future. Change management fosters non-structured thinking methods and decision-making techniques such as communicational networks or informal channels thus allowing the use of unorganised messages and data at work. In this sense, a recent organisational survey indicated that 96% of the employees consulted wanted a socialised working life and admitted to bantering and gossiping at work at least three times per week (M.E.N. 2007). The company will surely be urged to control these informal activities but should never eliminate them completely as it would compromise creativity and inspiration at work. Irrational behaviour at organisations is also perceived in the evolution of common workplace stressors as workload stress is less reported than harassment or mobbing cases. The increase in social or group stressors indicates that irrational behaviour is also taking a real part in organisational life, sometimes—as in these examples—acting against the positive organisational climate. As is stated in organisational conflict literature, the correct management of irrational behaviour within organisations can be a source of useful ways of

change and learning opportunities rather than denying the inner, conflictive nature of human beings[4].

* New labour "locus": One special effect of labour flexibility involves the modification of the workplace. With the help of new telematics technology, workers will avoid going to the office and will be able to perform their duties or business at home or anywhere with just a laptop. The numbers of teleworkers and homeworkers in the UK have increased since 1997 up to 8% and 11%, respectively, two-thirds being men (Hotopp 2002; Ruiz and Walling 2005). Telework systems will certainly impact the time devoted to and space allocated for family responsibilities. As menctioned previously, workers will have to learn to effectively switch work and family duties on and off and discriminate between tasks, projects, and options.

* Increased free time and leisure: People are assumed to devote more time to fun and leisure activities than in previous epochs. Some authors have even announced the "end of the working society" (Rifkin 1996; Bouffartigue 1997). Although work is a socially well-valued domain, other human spheres are competing for time, efforts and resources, the family being just one of them. Family duties may be a useful excuse for personal complaints of a stressful life, but idle matters and entertainment (e.g., weekend sprees) are more important "time thieves" in our lives, especially for men. As citizens, we are embedded in a neo-consumption society primarily situated in the service sector economy. As parents, we find great difficulties drawing a line between work and non-work activities (Kabanoff 1980). Moreover, people are partially involved in volunteer work or in NGOs that are often entirely separate from their daily work.

* Encouraged self-employment: Today's youth face an uncertain labour future with few job options and opportunities, at least as far as holding long-term positions. Therefore, self-employment is showing to be a good alternative for unemployed workers who refuse to financially depend on employers. Freelancers represent a significant and growing part of the UK workforce. Their numbers have increased by 14% in a decade to 1.4 million (Kitching and Smallbone 2008). Freelance work is relatively

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[4] The inner, conflictual nature of human beings was denied by the so-called *model of order* denounced by Tjosvold (1993) in conflict literature. Conflict situations between members of organisations were always considered as negative and forced employers to root them out.

uncommon in Europe, but it's growing—especially with the use of the Internet which allows for significant cost reductions. Freelancers need to be very skilful at balancing work and non-work activities which are often mixed. Self-employment can also be described as the outcome of the do-it-yourself philosophy in the working sphere.

In short, globalisation—and its "opposite" term glocalisation—force flexibility in work scenarios and at the same time soften the rigid, mechanic nature of the family sphere. Both domains make their contents and functions flexible by means of three common, deconstructive processes: *dehierarchisation*, or no hierarchies between members, which is a radical effect of the downsizing policy; *decentralisation*, or no unilateral decisions made by powerful members; and finally, *delocalisation*, or the continuous movement of members or institutions toward favourable settlements. Delocalisation is close to the anthropological term of *neolocalism* applied to family functioning, and it defines the present need of young generations to move away from the birthing place or nuclear-family home to study or occupy jobs. The former, long-used strategy in previous times was that of *matrilocalism*; in other words, being close to the mother's family of origin, living in the same building or house, and taking advantage of having—and seldom sharing—common expenses. Dehierarchisation and decentralisation processes are calling for the promotion of horizontal communication and the democratisation of educational rights to guarantee the quality of followers' decisions and loyalty under a similar relationship of power bases. Power bases are eliminated or diminished because with modern technology, which enables immediate and secret messages between individuals, close supervision of employees cannot be imposed as was the case before. However, as was stated previously, knowledge technology is crucial for many companies that hope to be highly competitive in a globalised market. The fact that if you or your business is not on the Internet then you do not exist is real evidence for the two-thirds of customers and clients that search the web to buy or to get information on where to buy (Ryan 2007). With the impact of delocalisation on organisations and of neolocalism on individuals, the traditional social support that institutions and individuals once had within their environments is not available anymore. Therefore, organisations and individuals—employees or parents—are surrounded by highly changing environments which they need to control and adapt to by means of new and uncertain strategies and learnings. Thus, for instance, companies have to study the foreign laws of their host countries, or parents have to trust

unknown babysitters—grannies are reluctant to continue with their "slave-like conditions"—to delegate childcare duties. These daily decisions configure a rather chaotic world in which the only fact that remains stable is change itself, and for that reason organisations and individuals should learn to efficiently manage change on a daily basis. However, work and family adjustments in contemporary societies have ruffled new generations' mental schemes that sometimes fail to achieve good social adaptations. In the search for positive adaptations, we must admit that there is not one single magic performance; it would be more highly recommended to keep an open mind so as to evaluate all possible arguments to rethink work-family relationships and roles. The debate is out on the streets, with plenty of social representations constructed about those who complain about or boast of their work or family lives. The following pages gather some of the historical frameworks and theories that address these concerns in order to understand the relationship between work and family and its impact on men and women´s social roles.

CHAPTER TWO

WORK AND FAMILY INSIDE
THE POSITIVIST AGENDA

The meta-analysis by Harold Christensen and by Doherty and his colleagues concluded by distinguishing up to five stages in the development of family studies (Christensen 1964; Doherty, Boos, LaRossa and Schumm 1993): (1) a first period prior to 1850 of philosophical speculations, (2) a sociological period influenced by a social Darwinism approach to the study of family until the early 1920s, (3) a psychosocial perspective mainly introduced by Burgess´s contribution of 1926, (4) a period of conceptual frame revision and systematic theoretical construction that lasted until 1979, and finally, (5) a recent stage mainly based on a drift from positivist perspectives in the philosophical bases of family studies towards a more interpretative and critical view of the issue. We could probably cluster these stages into just two, bearing in mind this later shift when doing scientific research. According to Sgritta (1989), the development of family studies in past decades can be understood as a reaction to contemporary changes in the production of knowledge that has altered the universal, unique vision of the modern family making the search for theoretical integration, general theories or meta concepts impossible. The eruption of post positivism in the development of sciences is in fact a reflection of the inclusion of societies in post-materialism and its attempt to unveil the hidden agendas of human beings (i.e., men´s productions with the political discourse that surround them). In this sense Thomas and Wilcox (1987) refer to post-positivist views as knowledge in social sciences that is not only socially constructed but also tentative and incomplete. If the world once desacralised God—or Gods in polytheist cultures—as the centre of the universe for the sake of scientists, we now desacralise those scientists for being falsely aseptic in their good actions and wise thoughts as they are forced to declare what is really being promoted with their discourses. The old idea that the world is ruled by certain scientific theories to be discovered irrespectively of human action and will is brushed aside when

reconsidering that scientific minds are not naïve in their understanding of the surrounding world and are challenged to also be a part of their object of study. This change of attitude in research has brought us new ways of describing and explaining the world in terms of mutual subject/object influences that constantly enrich and reinvent their relationships.

Organisational studies have also suffered the influences of these philosophical and epistemological turns moving from the naïve, simplistic Weberian contributions within the *rational* or *goal paradigm* to the socio-cognitive and political views of organisations (Benson 1977; Bacharach and Lawler 1980; Pfeffer 1981, among others), that portray them as a set of members´ interests interacting in a negotiated mission and for the sake of a certain community (Munduate 1997; Infante 2007). In both work and family literature, pluralism and relativism in theoretical and practical approaches are fully guaranteed. The following pages will provide evidence of the complex variety of work-family studies and the mutual epistemological links that both entities have shared for decades. In accordance with the previous explanation, the positivist approach and post-positivist perspectives in the study of human domains have traditionally been distinguished. Systemic, interaction and role theory perspectives will be reviewed in the positivist scope, while the socio-constructivist and gender theory approaches will be considered in the post-positivist drift. Although didactic, this distinction is certainly artificial because different scopes and perspectives always cross over into each other.

Work and Family as Systems

The concept of *system* is a key element in the theoretical background of many branches of sciences regardless of their particular nature. The systemic perspective, which accurately describes the structure and function of social systems, was inspired both by the *general system theory* put forth by Von Bertalanffy (1975) and by Weiner's (1948) cybernetics. Within this perspective, family and work are perceived as a set of members in mutual, continuous interactions searching for external equilibrium with their environments (Burgess 1926; Boss 1988). Families and organisations are social systems because they show the following systemic features: (1) *totalness*, when the inner members self-perceive themselves as parts of something larger; (2) *non-addition*, where families and organisations produce behavioural patterns that exceed the sum of individual contributions as a Gestalt attribute; (3) interdependency or *circularity*, when family or organisational units are interdependent; in other words, when the