This chapter continues to analyze the liberal deployment of othering as a core element of the liberal ability to intervene upon reality. The term “patriarchy” in the title is used as an umbrella concept to designate forms of othering structured by the nodal points of gender/sex and (hetero) sexuality, that is, to designate an array of mechanisms that work to construct an order of reality in which both woman and the homosexual are Other and inferior to a man defined as both the normal liberal citizen and the naturally dominant father. The use of the term “patriarchy,” therefore, does not assume there is one universal form of power/knowledge relations that describes the oppression of women or homosexuals, but affirms that the vast diversity of such forms of power and knowledge relations has its foundations in a process of othering in relation to the nodal points of gender/sex and sexuality.

The analysis in this chapter insists on “family,” a governmental element that as undoubtedly already apparent from the analysis so far, performs crucial tactical functions in liberalism: in the same way in which replacing the term “race” with “culture” allows the legitimate continuation of racist liberal othering, imposing the family as the natural (true) and optimal (good) form of “private” social organization permits dressing up patriarchy as neutral governmental quest for the social well-being. More precisely, contemporary U.S. liberal “familism,” or the discourses of patriarchal othering formulated in the language of the “bourgeois nuclear family\(^1\) as natural and ultimate social good,” allows the legitimate reproduction of othering along gendered and sexuality axes under the banner of securing the happiness and
prosperity of the nation according to scientific (biomedical and psy) knowledge.

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I shall not dedicate much space to the discussion of the family’s (and, implicitly, sexuality’s) role in the organization of biopower since this topic has been already explored, especially after the publication of Foucault’s *History of Sexuality*. Of course, Foucault’s book is dedicated to the (preliminary) analysis of the relation between bourgeois selfhood and the deployment of sexuality as a political technique, in which deployment the family represents a central element. Foucault succinctly sketches the elements of an analysis of the family as biopolitical relay that reveals the double conditioning between intrafamilial power tactics and the wider strategies of power that make the family into a support for their “maneuvers”: for the “Malthusian control of the birthrate, for the populationist incitements, for the medicalization of sex and the psychiatrization of its nongenital forms” (Foucault 1990, 100). It is also within the family that the bourgeoisie begins considering its own sex as something important and starts constituting itself as a “class” around power techniques focused on the body, vigor, longevity, hygiene, race, progeniture, and descent (123). At the same time, the discourses on bourgeois respectability and sexual morality and the focus on the familial environment as that which cultivates those class qualities and ensures proper child rearing cannot be understood in isolation from the discourses on sexuality emerging in the European colonies, where sexual practices separate bourgeoisie and its Others. In the colonies, eroticism, sensuality and sexuality are systematically associated with the (lack of) purity of bourgeois European blood. And an orderly family life; sexual, and especially reproductive, habits confined to the heterosexual, patriarchal nuclear family; and sexual normality (as opposed to perversion) represent crucibles of the classical bourgeois selfhood; in this racialized economy of sex of the colony, European women and men win respectability by investing their desires in legitimate paternity and intensive maternal care, in family and in conjugal love (Stoler 1995, 106–115).

Moreover, in Foucault’s analysis the family is a crucial site for the liberal apparatuses because it is the interface that allows, from the eighteenth century on, the coupling of juridical law and biopolitical norm, more specifically the coupling of alliance (marriage, development and fixation of kinship ties, transmission of name and possessions) with